

Essay XXIV: Generativity Four— Extending the Space

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Many Sage leaders muse about the ways they are most helpful at the strategic level of their favored organizations. They exemplify the push in Generativity Four toward expanding the space in which they deeply care. This expanding of space comes in two important forms: (1) increased diversity of civic engagements and (2) movement to a broader perspective regarding how to impact on one's community.

We have found that most of our Generative Four leaders start civic engagement by first working with one or two organizations. They are then likely to get involved in an increasingly diverse set of activities and organizations. This diversification is poignantly portrayed in the narrative on civic engagement offered by Sally, our *Featured Player* who was once honored as "citizen of the year" in Los Angeles and is now ever-expanding her role as a civic leader in Nevada County:

Generativity Four leaders not only tend to expand their activities once involved with civic activities; they also believe they do their best work when addressing the "big picture." They are able to sit back and link global perspectives to specific concerns of persons with whom they are working. For instance, Sage leaders often sit on nonprofit boards, and as board members they help to identify the rich resources and diverse perspectives that each board member brings to the table. They also help their board to formulate a unified strategic plan, and that usually draws on their entire life experience in working on behalf of a whole range of organizations.

At an even more expanded level we see Generativity Four operating among those members of the Western Nevada County community who are involved not only in their own civic engagement, but also in the encouragement and preparation of other women and men for active engagement in their community. Each of our four *Featured Players* has been involved in not only the Sage Leadership Project but also in the Center for Nonprofit Leadership (CNL), which was the sponsoring agency for the Sage project and has played a major role in promoting and guiding civic leadership in Nevada County. We turn to the narrative offered by Dale, the retired telecommunication executive who is one of the co-founders of CNL:

Most of my mentoring here in Nevada County has been in helping to found and guide the Center for Nonprofit Leadership during its formative years. Because of my background in corporate leadership, and later as coach and consultant to nonprofit organizations, I had a level of

knowledge and expertise that most other co-founders did not possess. I shared what I knew by serving as chair of the executive leadership committee for two years, then chaired and for many years served on the curriculum committee as well. I also planned and led numerous workshops during the past decade and was responsible for leading three, six month leadership seminars.

Dale certainly has conceived of his Generativity Four role as one of expanding the picture of civic engagement. Much as Generativity One organizational founders and leaders often expand into Generativity Two time and space by helping to prepare other men and women as mentors and motivators for organizational leadership roles, so Dale is expanding Generativity Four time and space by preparing men and women for civic engagement. He is mentoring his Generativity Four colleagues, but this mentoring seems to be much "bigger" than is the case with the Generativity Two role played within specific organizations.

What is this bigger picture all about? We know from adult development literature that mature adults tend to resist narrow focus after they reach their 50s and 60s. They become systemic in their world view and seek to understand how everything connects, rather than emphasizing gaps in ideas, problems, and perspectives. We are once again reminded of the career of Peter Seeger, who helped coin the phrase "Think globally but act locally" — a guiding mantra for many community activists. Seeger's perspective is appealing to many Senior Sage leaders as well because he suggests we must be interdisciplinary when tackling a local problem: We have to simultaneously consider economic, environmental, political, sociological, historical, and cultural issues when plotting a local initiative. And we must think beyond the confines of our own community. This seems to describe the mind-set and motivations of Dale and relate to the sources of satisfaction he finds in his Generativity Four work. We turn specifically to the issues of satisfaction and motivation in our next essays.