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Ah! Summer By: Paul Born



Community Collaborations often slow down in the summer. People head out on holidays, meetings are postponed to the fall and community engagement work is suspended. I need to be honest – I like it this way and welcome a more relaxed summer pace when we can best enjoy the outdoors, barbeques and time away with family and friends, gardening and summer sports like golf make this my favourite season of the year.

There are those who never take summer vacations (most prefer fall and winter) and when I ask them why they say, “it is the perfect time to do the strategic and reflective work that you never get to do the rest of the year when the external demands are ever constant”. Here are five tips I have harvested from these “summer workers” that all of us can implement:



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1. **Organize:** Reserve the Friday before the last weekend in June to clean up your office and to organize your files - including emptying your email in box. (To be honest I have been known to just select ALL and then hit delete – my summer philosophy is that if I really need something it will be emailed to me again). Then practice checking email just once a day.
2. **Build Trust:** Summer is a perfect time to meet one-on-one with some of your key supporters and staff. Reflect on the year, plan and build those relationships.
3. **Write:** Select a writing project or two and set aside an “I am not in week” to write them. (In the summer we expect auto reply messages and few people expect quick replies.)
4. **Reflect:** Take reflection walks regularly by yourself and with colleagues – pick a topic like, *Which of my top 100 partners are not engaged and why* – then ponder this question while you walk. You will be amazed at the creativity that emerges being outdoors.
5. **Have Fun:** Summer is the perfect time to practice having fun at work. I do not mean be less productive, fool around, or stop working. What I mean is smile more, wear shorts once in a while, meet while walking rather than sitting at a table, go to the park with a laptop and write. Listen to your colleagues and get to know them as people. You will be surprised by how productive you will be having fun.

A Note of Thanks: Engage! When we think of headlines from our learning community as we lead into the summer they might go like this: Michael Quinn Patton's seminar fills in less than 3 hours – hundreds more sign up to get the post event email; and, The Communities Collaborating Institute (CCI) sells out - More than 150 people coming to the CCI this fall. I really want to say thanks for this vote of confidence in Tamarack's work. The summer will be amazing but I can hardly wait for the fall.

Related Links:

- Find more [Innovative Ideas](#) at Tamarack's Resource Library
- [Share your feedback on this article](#)

Evaluating Social Innovation By: Mark Cabaj

For many years evaluators and evaluation methodologies have tended to focus on three broad purposes. *Formative Evaluation* is used to help improve a program or policy. *Summative Evaluation* is employed to judge the merit or worth of a program or policy to determine whether it should be sustained, discontinued or scaled up. *Accountability Evaluation* is used to assess the extent to which an organization or group is 'implementing a detailed model with fidelity' to an already approved – often rigid - blueprint.



There are, however, plenty of 'developmental' situations where formative, summative or accountability evaluations are not appropriate and may even be counter-productive. These include: creating an entirely new program or policy out of thin air; adapting a proven program or policy in a fast moving environment; importing a program or policy that proved effective in one context into a new one; scaling up a successful models; and, dealing with complex issues where solutions are uncertain and/or stakeholders are not on the same page.

Using formative, summative or accountability approaches to evaluation in these situations is likely to lead to rigorous evaluations that sit on the shelf or short circuit the creative and adaptive leadership and management style these situations require.

Developmental Evaluation is an emerging approach to organizational development, planning, management and leadership designed to help decision-makers navigate developmental situations through rapid feedback, critical thinking and rigorous "sense-making". It is an approach ideally suited for the creative and adaptive leadership and management style required of many social innovations.

Never heard about it? Well, now you have and if you are interested in more, you are in luck. Michael Quinn Patton, one of the world's best known evaluation thinkers and practitioners, has just released his new book, *Developmental*

Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use, which shares his experience with developmental evaluations designed to help – not hinder – the work of social innovators and change makers in an increasingly complex world.

Share your questions or anecdotes about *Developmental Evaluation* with us via email to: tamarack@tamarackcommunity.ca by August 20th for use in a future issue of *Engage!* and you'll be entered in a draw to receive one of five free copies of Michael Quinn Patton's latest book.

Related Links:

- Order [Developmental Evaluation](#) by Michael Quinn Patton from Amazon.ca
- Listen to Tamarack's June 30th, 2010 tele-learning seminar with Michael Quinn Patton
- Learn more about [Michael Quinn Patton](#)
- Read an [interview](#) with Michael Quinn Patton about Developmental Evaluation
- Read an [interview on trends in evaluation](#) with Michael Quinn Patton
- [Email us](#) your question or story about Developmental Evaluation

Ideas we're following...

Federal Action to Eliminate Poverty By: [Sylvia Cheuy](#)

On June 16th the *Poverty Elimination Act* was introduced into the House of Commons in Ottawa – marking a new level of federal engagement in poverty reduction. When combined with work already underway at the provincial and municipal levels, this Act could generate real momentum and impact in reducing poverty in Canada.

Related Links:

- Read the [Poverty Elimination Act](#)
- View the [Press Conference - Part 1](#)
- View the [Press Conference - Part 2](#)
- Access the Vibrant Communities [Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategies](#) Audio Seminar Series

500 Voices: Community Survey By: Paul Born

Last year nearly 500 members of Tamarack’s learning community shared their thoughts about community in a survey that is now being released one question at a time. Below you will find the survey results and analysis for the question:

What does “the benefit of community” mean to you?

To me, the benefit of community is...

“A sense of belonging, a beautiful place to live, strong friendships and supports for all when they need it with the opportunity to give back when they can.

A true community means everyone is using the talents & gifts they have to contribute to a greater whole and they have the freedom to ask for support when they need it so that we have a society that relies on each other rather than government & institutions for our help.

The benefit of a real Community means everyone has real support when they need it, the way they need it and at the time they need it. It means that the community decides on its own needs so that solutions are found that truly reflect the nature of the problem and address it in a more complete & effective way. It means we have stronger & healthier families”

Excerpts from people’s responses are found in the column entitled Descriptive Examples. Please remember that there are no winners here - the higher the percentage only means how often that this concept was mentioned. To learn how we conducted the survey go [here](#).

CATEGORY	%	DESCRIPTIVE EXAMPLES
Inter-connected relationships, helping others helps us	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When I give to community I receive from community• The gifts that are exchanged through participation with others - mutual sharing with resultant advantage to both• To me the benefit of community is about having social needs met and connecting with

		others in a meaningful way
Positive outcome - the greater good of the community	38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact of being part of something bigger, with greater resilience • It means that the whole community gains something • Whole is greater than the sum of its parts
Inclusion/ diversity/ belonging/ safety	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It means that I feel that I belong and I have a place that I fit • Inclusion of all, acceptance adaptation and tolerance
Working together to improve physical community	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results of working together with people in my community - It can be as simple as my neighbour picking up my mail while I'm away, or as big as having a major roadway shifted so that the neighbourhood deals with less noise and air pollution
Access to services/ recreation	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in surroundings that support optimal health and well-being - from all perspectives (physical and social) • Provision of elements necessary for living, shopping, learning and earning
Other	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charity • Quality of life

Analysis of the Survey:

The responses to this question were realistic and not naïvely optimistic. Most understood that “the benefit of community” meant some form of connection to other people - an aspect of give and take that often resulted in mutual gain. A sense that for community to have some benefits you must give something to get something. A similar idea was expressed and understood to mean a result that leads to something positive for the community, often referring in their responses to a greater good, or to the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Less often participants referred to the emotional aspects of belonging, inclusiveness, safety, and feeling at home. Only a handful of people mentioned the physical/geographical

benefits of living in a community such as opportunities for recreation and a clean environment, this surprised me.

Related Links:

- Download the survey results for: [What does “the benefit of community” mean to you?](#)
- For more on how this survey was conducted read [500 Voices: Meaning of Community Survey Process](#)
- [Listen to podcasts and tele-learning seminars](#) from Tamarack’s Seeking Community series
- [Share your feedback on this article](#)

Falling Down the Social Media Rabbit Hole By: Anne Makhoul

I admit it. Every time I tried opening my Facebook and Twitter accounts, I seemed to run into password walls and treacherous sinkholes. Why was this so hard?

I was seriously contemplating hunkering down and waiting for the social media parade to pass. And then I went to Toronto in early June and experienced the second *MyCharityConnects* conference. Part of *Net Change* week at MaRS (#ncwk on Twitter), the sold-out event took me from avid avoider to ardent adopter.

I now feel like Alice after the ‘eat me’ cake: much, much taller. I’ve experienced the technical delights and dazzling examples of people using social media to do breathtaking and important work. I’m also much, much smaller as I realize the vastness of the internet and the problems we face. I feel both challenged and hopeful.

Our kids understand social media. They are also hungry for a better world. The rest of us need to take our social media brakes off and plunge down that rabbit hole with them. And, so here are some of my initial recommendations for things to think about when exploring social media:

1. *Change your Mentality* – Social Media is about going from a *library mentality* (“here’s our stuff, read it and get smart”) to a *sandbox mentality* (“here’s our cool sandbox – let’s see what we can create together”).

2. *Use Pilot Projects* – US social media expert [Beth Kanter](#) says to launch small pilot projects, learn and reiterate. Use the right metrics (e.g., fan growth, engagement scores) to understand what is and isn't working.
3. *It's Not About Your Website* – The average site visit duration (of people that have already decided to follow you) is 56 seconds! Your ultimate purpose is to have your content live on the internet elsewhere – not on your actual website. For a great example check out Toyota's "[swagger wagon](#)" ad on YouTube.
4. *Define and Track Metrics* – Sign up your site with Google Analytics to track metrics. If you can't measure something, it doesn't count.
5. *Get Inspired!* - Social media offers a way to reclaim idealism, release energy and solve the big problems. For inspiration, visit www.350.org (350 ppm CO2, that is), [GetUp! - Action For Australia](#), and [DC Central Kitchen](#).
6. *Learn More* – For more on the the Social Media Revolution view www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFYPQjYhv8.

Related Links:

- Access highlights from the [MyCharityConnects Conference](#)
- Find other resources shared as part of [Net Change Week 2010](#)
- Read how social media is building awareness about poverty issues in [Vibrant Calgary Rides the Social Media Wave](#)

Place: Grounding for Leadership [By: Michael Jones](#)

Think of a story of a place where you experienced the greatest sense of aliveness, vitality and connection? How did this connection to place shape how you think of your leadership and your community?

The power of a place is that it is not only a destination to return to - all places are fleeting – it is also a presence to grow out from. From this first primary love of place we learn over time to also love other things.

When a group of community leaders in Atlantic Canada were asked about how their connection to place influenced their thoughts about community and leadership,

they found common ground in their deep ties to land and sea - to a mist-filled land both gentle and unyielding and to the enduring loyalty to their stories and community. This long history of living on a sea bound coast gave them the gift of a perspective larger than any one person or any individual's self interest.

For a local Chippewa First Nations community near Orillia Ontario the defining narrative of place is that their land sits on the confluence of two distinct biospheres, where the Canadian Shield to the north meets the limestone plain to the south running from Georgian Bay and following the south edge of the shield to Kingston Ontario. This is *The Land Between* and their stories are about creating meeting spaces because, through many generations, place has helped them to discover how to make the best of these two worlds.

Too often we attempt to undertake large systemic transformational changes without taking into account the unique characteristics –and the gift – of the place we come from. Most communities are not at a loss for innovative ideas. But in considering the issues, principles, strategies and tactics of leadership, the notion of anchoring in - and partnering with - place is overlooked. Yet when the soil of place is well nurtured the seeds of innovation have a better opportunity to take root and grow.

In a time when everything around us looks the same, we need to re-align around the emerging work of leaders as *place-makers*. To partner with place in a way that ensures it is free to express itself, as itself, in a manner that is true to its own nature, through the work of our communities, our leadership and ourselves.

Related Links:

- Visit Michael's [Michael Jones' website](#)
- To learn more about place-based leadership visit the [Powers of Place Initiative](#)
- Access Michael's article *Recovering the Soul of Place* [here](#)
- Read Michael's writings on the significance of place on the [World Cafe Community Blog](#)

Exotic Chicken Salad By: Sylvia Cheuy

When our family left Toronto for the rolling hills of Caledon, I'll admit I was nervous. How would we adjust to woods and pastoral landscapes after years in the vibrant, multi-cultural hustle and bustle of the city?

Not long after moving in, we received a flyer for a Canada Day, roving neighbourhood picnic – something of an annual summer tradition in our rural subdivision. Different neighbours teamed up to host different courses featuring foods from their own ethnic traditions.

Neighbours, carrying their lawn chairs from house to house, were treated to a feast of Jamaican jerk chicken appetizers, Italian bocconioni salad, East Indian butter chicken and chai, Chinese stir fry and Latin American black beans and rice. The evening ended around a camp fire, with everyone singing *Oh Canada* amid a spectacular fireworks display.

Wandering home at the end of the evening, we realized that acquaintances had become friends, and our new home had brought us something we hadn't known we were missing: a community.

Here is one of my favorite (and very simple) summer recipes. It's a real crowd pleaser. If you are vegetarian – replace the chicken with some firm tofu that you have marinated in a bit of soy sauce.

Exotic Chicken Salad

Salad

- 2½ - 3 lbs of cooked chicken, cubed
- 1 large can of water chestnuts, drained
- 2 lbs seedless green grapes
- 2 cups celery, chopped
- 1 large can of pineapple chunks, drained
- 2-3 cups tamari (soy flavoured) or smoked almonds

Dressing

- 1½ cups light mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp. soy sauce
- ½ tbsp. curry powder

Mix chicken, water chestnuts, grapes, celery, pineapple and 2 cups of almonds together. Mix dressing ingredients. Toss salad with dressing and let chill for several hours. Spoon onto nests of lettuce and top with almonds (serves 12)

Related Links:

- Access more [Tamarack Recipes](#)



Engage! is published by Tamarack to bring you inspiration, ideas, and the skills you need to envision and create vibrant communities. More about Tamarack at: <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g1s2.html>