



#12 | The Power of Local Leadership

I am so excited you are joining me on this episode, because today I'm going to be talking about a topic that is dear to my heart: Local Community Leadership. And when I talk about community today, I'm not talking about your professional community (while that is important too), I'm talking about your local community. Your geographic location where you work. And you are doubly lucky if you also live in this same community.

I landed on this topic because we recently received the Beyond Business Award for Chill Digital Marketing from our favorite non-profit, Realities for Children Boulder County. This award was in recognition of work we do in our community that is beyond the business services we provide. Trust me, I'm the queen of eating humble pie, so please do not take this as an ego session. The reason I'm mentioning all this is because I'm hoping this can give inspiration to another small business owners out there to see what they can do in their community. And to share examples of ways I've given myself back to my own community and the ways it comes back to us.

Have you ever heard "You really can't afford to donate to charities until you are making a substantial profit"? I certainly have. And it didn't really sit well with me. And the reason it never felt right was because there are so many things we can do as business owners that do not take dollar bills. Yes, your time is a precious commodity, but your time could be what makes a difference for a local non-profit to be able to get their services to the people and locations they need to be. And sometimes you gain more than you could ever expect.

So, let's start with a pretty obvious one that is a little more business focused. And that is your local Chamber of Commerce. Pretty much most urban and suburban areas will have multiple Chambers. And I would even guess many rural areas have one as well. This is going to be a central hub for business activity within your community. Most Chambers have tiered membership levels, so that can really benefit the budget conscious small business owner. If you do decide to join a local Chamber, do not fall into the mindset that because you are now a member, business will just come your way.

You have to utilize your membership to the best of your abilities. In the traditional marketing funnel, people have to know, like and trust you before they will buy from you. So, go to as many local events they put on that you can. This may be in the form of breakfasts, lunches or happy hours. They may also have signature events throughout the year where more people attend. Get your face out there so people begin to learn who you are.

One thing I want to impress upon you is to NOT go to one of these events prepared to shove your business card into the hands of as many people as you can. Go with a set goal in mind. Like I want to meet 3 people that I want to go for coffee a few days after this event to learn more about their business. Or, I want to meet 4 people that have just started their business. Or I

want to meet 2 people that are thinking about retiring. Whatever business you are in, have your strategy surrounded by what you do. For me, I would probably be on the lookout for someone just getting started with their new business. And this is so I could introduce them to our workshops to teach them what they need to be doing for their digital marketing.

Once you have engaged with your local Chamber for a while, look into other areas where you can contribute to the organization. You may want to up your game a little and sponsor events if your marketing budget allows for it. Or, as an example, I became an Ambassador for our Boulder Chamber for about 5 years. In doing so, I was at most events to help with setup, registration, cleanup and more. This had me in front of the attendees all the time. Eventually I became a familiar face to many regulars, so it was easier to strike up conversations. One of the things you want to keep in mind as well, is that not everyone you get to know will become a client. But they may KNOW someone who fits the bill. Another benefit I had being an Ambassador was every event I signed up to “work”, I got free admission to. All their events had fees, some were nominal (like \$15) while the larger ones were more (like \$65).

Another place I volunteered within our Chamber was becoming the Chair of the Business Women’s Leadership Group. That was a yearlong commitment, and had me in front of 40-60 business women every month. And from that position, I chaired the Women Who Light the Community signature event for 3 years. Every time I held one of these positions, Chill Digital Marketing was tied to my name. So be sure to do a little investigating to see if there are sub-sections of your local Chamber that you could become more involved in.

Then in 2016 at one of the signature events called Celebration of Leadership, I received an award for all that I had done with our Chamber. Did I do all that work for that recognition, of course not. I did it knowing I was giving back to my community through a local organization. And I was doing it through the name of my business. I was using Chill to be a vehicle to do good.

Another place you can look to see what is going on in your community is MeetUp. There are many free events you can find within a certain mile radius from you. Some may be community volunteer groups and some may be business related (of course there are a lot of personal interest groups too, but I’m trying to stay business focused here). I mention MeetUp because I’m involved in a group called The Referral Partnership (which we call TRP). While I was introduced to this group by Realities for Children no less, we do have a pretty active group on MeetUp. We get several visitors each week that find us on that platform.

Within my first year in the group, I started helping with marketing on the leadership team. While yes, this particular group has an annual membership fee (which is really low I might add), I knew I could contribute more by offering my suggestions in the area of marketing. Is that a requirement to be in the group? Of course not. But I’m just drawn to help and lead where I can.

Another thing to think about if you are looking into joining a leads or referral or networking group is to investigate what types of things they do for the community. For years, TRP has volunteered to be responsible for getting members to show up the first Sunday each month to feed the homeless with a local non-profit. And guess what? My oldest son and I feed the homeless every first Sunday together. We love doing this so much that we’ve also volunteered multiple Sundays in a month. Do I do this for recognition? Of course not! There is a huge need

in our community to help our less fortunate citizens and we want to be a part of making sure this gets done.

A quote that our TRP founder says all the time is that “Givers gain”. And it couldn’t be more true than in this group. Do not join a group like this expecting to have the referrals pouring in. Go into the group with a mindset that you want to serve. Help where you can. And if the group that you join doesn’t do a type of community service, be the one to introduce that concept. And if you can’t find a group that is what you are looking for, why not create one? I’m pretty sure there are other business owners in your community that may be looking for the same thing.

That leads me to a similar suggestion of creating a group to fill a need in your community. For example, I started a political activism group in January 2017. There were other similar groups in the surrounding areas, but nothing in Boulder proper. So I started one. Because of my digital marketing knowledge, I was able to get a Facebook Group going in minutes. Within 48 hours, I also had a Facebook Page, Instagram Business Account, Twitter Account, and Website all set up and running. Within a week, I also had a MailChimp account set up for emails.

Right from the beginning we were having monthly meetings. At each meeting I would get items to give away at the end and stated they were sponsored by Chill Digital Marketing. I wasn’t promoting my business directly, rather subtly. Last year, one of the prizes was a seat at the table I sponsored for Realities for Children’s annual luncheon (the same event I was recognized at this year). It was like a double whammy of love!

The point I’m trying to drive home here is that you are a business owner. You know what it takes to organize something. You have the smarts to lead others like you lead your business. Even if you are a solopreneur and thinking “I’m only one person, I’m not leading in my business”, I want you to quit thinking that way my friend. You are leading yourself! You are driving the car to the success highway!

Another example I have in my community chest is a group I was involved in that was a mixture of business development, mastermind & peer review/support. The group existed under an umbrella of a system that someone else created, and the facilitator was like a franchisee. We met 2 times a month for 2 hours. The first meeting of the month was an education session and the second one was to review how we all did in our businesses incorporating the new content. The way this group was structured was that we needed a leadership team (president, vice president, and secretary). I volunteered to be the President for 2 years with that group. I knew my organizational skills were a great asset to lead this new group.

And while it was a few years later, I did do a digital strategy consulting job with one of my co-members. I’ve also referred work to other members of that group. As important as the work you do when you are putting yourself in those leadership positions, it’s the relationships you are forming while doing the work that end up meaning a lot.

An additional way to get you and your business doing more in your community is to consider sitting on the Board of Directors for a local non-profit. While they all have certain requirements of time and possibly money, it is still a great way to give back. Not only can you add this to your

resume, LinkedIn profile and about section on your website, but usually your business name is tied to your name wherever Board members are mentioned for the organization. Simply being on a board puts you in a leadership position in your community.

I was on the Board of Directors for a local non-profit that put on fun runs to raise money for other local charities. I was able to be a part of the planning and strategy meetings to help steer the direction we wanted to take the organization. Back when I was active on that Board, it was with my first business (which was a salon & spa). So, my business was able to set up a tent at every run to offer chair massages and products. It was a great way to continue having my business in front of the community while serving a great cause.

Speaking of my previous business, if you have tangible products or have a B2C business, then you should also consider donations to local fundraisers. We were always creating baskets that were donated to local non-profits (and schools) to be auctioned off in silent auctions. We would have hair and skincare products along with gift cards for our services. Be strategic in how much you can realistically give away, but know that this is another low to no cost way to get your brand in front of your community. You may think this doesn't really have to do with leadership, but it shows you are leading your business in a manner that is philanthropic in your community.

I also wanted to share my experiences with Realities for Children Boulder County. This organization is so unique that you probably won't find something like this in your community, but it's such a great concept. Our organization is the younger sibling of the first Realities for Children in Laramie County (both in Colorado). They are a two-part organization that has a 501(c)3 that raises money for children in their respective communities that have experienced abuse and/or neglect. Often working with local human services organizations as well. The other part of Realities is a conglomerate of business members that pay monthly dues to be a part of the organization. These monthly dues cover the administrative and overhead costs to run the non-profit side. This also allows all donor dollars to go straight to the kids and families they serve.

I mention this structure because Realities advocates for their business members in the community. Meaning they make the ask that people in their community should do business with these heart first businesses that are part of and support their organization. I'm going to get to some statistics in a few minutes of why THAT is so important. There are so many reasons why this model is so wonderful. From a technical side, we get some backlink SEO by having our business linked on their site. We also offer a member to member discount for our workshops. Meaning, if another business is a member of Realities, their employees can get 35% off our in-person workshops. And other businesses have similar offers. A local coffee shop gives all members a % off and if you are there meeting someone to tell them about Realities, your drinks are on the house!

I am also an Ambassador for Realities. So, when I am out in the community networking in any fashion, I am also asking if the person I'm talking to has heard about Realities. I facilitate meetings between that person and the organization to see if they would like to join the Realities family. It is a way that I put my leadership and organization skills out to serve in the community. I also provide digital marketing services to them, so that they are making their dollars go further.

While you may not have an organization like Realities in your community, there could be something similar. For instance, we also have this group (if you will) called Moxie Moms. You pay a nominal fee to be a member (like \$45 per year) and they send you a plastic membership card. Then they have partnered with local businesses that you could go to and receive a discount when you show your card. The discounts vary depending on what the company negotiated with Moxie Moms. And then, Moxie Moms partners with local non-profits where they support them through fundraising events and maybe proceeds from membership dues. So, you can check to see if there is something similar in your community. This is a way to show you support a group of people in your community. When I had my salon & spa I was a partner with Moxie Moms because their audience was also our target audience. This also showed we cared about where they decided to spend their money and knowing it also benefited local charities.

I have a question for you, do you have employees in your business? If yes, another way you can engage in your community is to have a day of service where your whole office works on a project. My brother's company does this. They have a day of service every 6 months. The employees still get paid for the day, but they get to choose from 2-3 different local charity projects. They do things like helping with the upkeep of local trails, pulling invasive species in open spaces, planting trees, preparing meals and feeding the homeless, and more. So that is another way you can look at having a bigger impact with service in your community.

Another idea you could do during the holiday season if you have employees is to sponsor a family to provide gifts for them. We have done that in the past with our local I Have A Dream Foundation organization. They are a national non-profit, so check to see if there is one near you. They create a list of families in the community that your business can sign up to sponsor during the holiday season. You could have a tree in your office that has the families gift wishes written on paper ornaments. Then, employees take a paper ornament off the tree and get that item.

Now this all brings me back to my statement I made earlier about people doing business with companies that are giving back to their community. With Millennials making up a large portion of our population, they are defining how they shop from or work for businesses. Fortune found "2/3 of Millennials are somewhat more likely to want to work for a company that gives to charity than one that does not". They also shared that "Millennials also were more likely than other generations to buy products from a company that gives to charity or to recommend that business to a friend."

This reinforces the quote of "Givers Gain". We should never do good deeds with the expectation of getting something in return. That is not really what this episode is about. It's about showing you different ways you can become a leader in your community. Different ways you can use your business as a vehicle to do good. If you see a need, determine if you have the skill set to fill that need. If you learn of an organization that speaks to you and ignites passion in you, start working with them. If you want to improve the voice of your local business community, join organizations that work on that. As our tagline at Realities states "Make it your business to make a difference."

Hopefully I've given you some examples of how you can get involved in your own community beyond giving money to charities. Think about ways you can tap into your leadership skills to make your community a better place.

If you head over to our show notes page at chilldigitalmarketing.com/12, I have listed links to the organizations I've mentioned today. If you are local here in Boulder, Colorado, then consider getting involved with one or more of them. If you do not live here, still check out their websites so you can get ideas on how they operate to see if there are similar organizations in your local community.

So that's a wrap for this week's episode. I hope you found this information valuable for you and your business. We'd love to hear what you think about this podcast, so please leave us a review on whichever platform you listened to this episode. And if you want to get the latest news from the major social media platforms, be sure to check out our sister podcast Chill Digital Marketing's Week In Review. You can find those show notes at: chilldigitalmarketing.com/weekinreview

Thanks for joining us! We'll see you next week.

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