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Working Together

The importance of collaboration

NATHAN CRANE



A few years ago, my wife and daughter and I travelled the United States and interviewed forty-nine different people from all over the country about sustainability.

When I talk about sustainability I'm speaking about it from a holistic perspective, one that includes social systems, food systems, communities, education, healthcare, relationships, politics, family, clothing, building materials, water, music and art.

We interviewed politicians from Washington DC, organic farmers in Portland Oregon, self reliance experts in Austin Texas, educational institutions in Arizona, and many others. We then organized this into a thirteen-episode online documentary series called *The Search for Sustainability*, made it available for free for three weeks and received over 150,000 views on the series in that short time. People really seemed to enjoy it and learn from it. The first episode is still free online via YouTube. As far as we know it was the first documentary to bring together all of these important facets of sustainability into an organized and practical format for inspiring and educating all of us about how to live more sustainably.

The following year, partly funded by the Visionary Ethics Foundation, I flew to Costa Rica and conducted twenty-five interviews over two weeks. During that time I learned lots more about sustainability from people in all corners of this incredibly green-conscious country.

However, one of the things I noticed in Costa Rica was something I had also noticed in my travels around the USA. Which was that while there are many small pockets of people and organizations working towards a greener and more sustainable future, they are not necessarily working *together*. The various organizations, schools, and leaders often know of each other or have at least met, but more often than not I find they do not collaborate or organize co-creative projects together.

I have found that when organizations, schools, activists, leaders, communities, and families come together to work towards a common goal and support each other, they not only multiply their reach and their resources, they also multiply their ability to share tasks, increase productivity, improve impact, and so much more.

So often, we end up in our own little corners working towards our goals and achieving our missions. This is fine, but if we want to achieve a greater impact in the world and to reach and help more people while doing it all much faster, we have to learn to work together.

When I first started The Panacea Community back in 2011 in San Diego, we began the company with the core principle of collaboration. I began reaching out to other organizations and leaders in the health, wellness, spirituality, and green sectors and started conversations about collaborating and supporting each other. Some were open to it, some were not. But because of collaboration we now have over 90,000 people in our direct community via email newsletter and social media and have collaborated and supported hundreds of authors, leaders, and organizations in reaching and helping millions of people around the world.

Without the power of collaboration we would just be a tiny company still in the garage of a house in Vista, California. But because of collaboration we've been able to achieve incredible things. We've published award winning books, reached hundreds of thousands with our documentary series, supported magazines and media outlets, launched the careers of sustainability experts, inspired and educated millions of people, and so much more.

And this is just the beginning. As you continue to grow in your reach and your influence, you are then better received by larger organizations. You then multiply your ability to support humanity exponentially. Whether you just want a brighter future for your family, or you want to leave a legacy for all future generations, collaboration is key.

Collaboration works by focusing on similar goals and initiatives, then coming up with ways you can support someone else with the skills, talent, influence, reach, and resources that you have while taking into account all of your own talents and resources. Email newsletter lists,

YouTube channels, social media accounts, special skills, and partners are just the beginning. There's no end to the creative possibility of your talents and resources when you really dig deep and see what value you can bring to someone else.

Then you find a way to create an agreement where everyone wins. That means you provide support in some way to your collaborator, and they provide support to you in a reciprocal way. You both determine what that looks like and how you can benefit each other and the greater community. One example of collaboration is that you have, say, 5,000 people on your email newsletter and 10,000 people following you on social media. And your collaborator has 10,000 people on their email newsletter and 20,000 people on social media. So one proposal of collaboration might be that you offer to send two newsletters and two social media posts about their initiative/project/service/product/etc... and they agree to send one newsletter and one social media post about yours. This is simple math and you want to always find a way to make collaboration fair and balanced so everyone benefits.

There are infinite ways of collaboration and it really just depends on what you're able to bring to someone else in terms of value and find out what they can bring to you. Then you both put your talents and focus together and you help the community with your offering.

To create a sustainable future where all people can live in harmony with the land, have access to clean and healthy food and water, and each of us living more locally and self-reliant, we have to collaborate.

Collaborating with your neighbors and nearby community is critical. Some forms of community collaboration can be taking turns growing specific crops, then sharing with each other. Trading food, clothing, water, services or skills with your neighbors is a form of collaboration. Creating alliances so that everyone has a hand in something that will benefit the community is another form.

We used to live this way all over the world for hundreds of thousands of years. Some tribes fought and some lived together in harmony. The ones who lived together in harmony and collaborated were the ones who were the happiest and most successful. The ones who fought for resources ended up living in fear and tyranny.

As we all walk forward towards creating this new world of sustainability I encourage you to focus intently on how you can bring more collaboration to the world to create a brighter future. Think of how you can collaborate with your neighbors, with your community, with organizations, politicians, schools, parents, children, and others. Think about what value you can bring them and vice versa and

create a win-win-win scenario. This is the way of the future and the way we are all going to move all of humanity forward towards sustainable living.

The most meaningful and important way I've recently begun taking collaboration to a whole new level is by producing a transformational festival dedicated to sustainable living that brings together thousands of people to learn to live sustainably while having an amazing party and community experience doing it. It's called UNIFY FEST and it's about unifying all people from all walks of life.

We are collaborating with hundreds of musicians, artists, educators, workshop teachers, yoga instructors, and more to bring their offerings to the community and out to the world. We are collaborating with hundreds of volunteers who trade their time for learning experience, access to the festival, and contribution to the greater whole. We are collaborating with dozens of team leaders and community members who run various departments all throughout the festival. We are collaborating with local businesses to help them share their products and services with the community, and so much more.

The long-term vision of UNIFY FEST is to raise awareness and funding to build a sustainable community and eco-school in Santa Fe where collaboration, Permaculture, organic sustainable food production, self-reliance, spiritual unity, and sustainable living are at the center of the community and at the heart of the educational curriculum. We want to teach these important skills to children and families so we can continue to lead by example of collaborative and sustainable living.

So as an action item I would encourage you to take account of the skills and value that you can bring to your local community and find new ways to collaborate with and support those on a similar path, with the intent of creating harmony between your goals and theirs. Your life will be much richer as a result.

Nathan Crane is an award winning author, inspirational speaker, and conscious filmmaker. From addiction, dependency, jail, and homelessness, to a profound spiritual awakening he has become a highly sought after international educator of personal empowerment, helping people experience more health, joy, and fulfillment in their lives. More recently, he has dedicated his heart, mind, energy, and resources to the blossoming of UNIFY FEST, a 4-day transformational festival with world renowned musicians, keynote speakers, workshop teachers, yoga instructors, and indigenous leaders focused on helping unify humanity for the common good of people, animals, plants, and the planet. See: www.UNIFYFEST.com