Changing the Conversation
Creating an Entrepreneurial Culture in Your Region
Entrepreneurs Have the Power to Change the World
You Have the Power to Change Their Environment
That’s Exciting!
What Does it Mean to Change the Conversation?

A tale of two cities…sort of
What is Your Conversation?

- What is your region’s current conversation?
- Are there two conversations in your region?
- What do you want the conversation to be?
- What are you willing to do to start, change or continue it?
How do You Change the Conversation?

By developing an entrepreneurial culture that expands across your entire community.
Culture Rules!

- “Culture is the last mile. It’s the most important part of an entrepreneurial community—and the hardest to achieve.”
- “Entrepreneurs dress differently, talk differently and act differently.”
- “Creating the right culture is about changing attitudes.”
- “You don’t change culture overnight.”
What is Culture?

• The feeling that this is a place where you can do just about anything!
• Easy access to very good resources
• Access to strong networks
• Service providers and universities that “get it”
• Celebrations of success
• No fear of or stigma from failure
• Informal and organic networks
• Cool places for cool people
How do you get it?

• Get excited!
• Think outside your comfort zone
• Think like your audience
• Think big
• Don’t make it so difficult to get a seat at the table
• Don’t be afraid to look weird
• Don’t get scared off when people say you’re weird
• Kiss a lot of frogs – not everyone will get this
• Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate
• Become an awesome storyteller
Culture is About Being Smart!

Do you understand your community?
Do You Know Your Stakeholders?

• Do you know your Entrepreneur Support Organizations?
• Who leads them?
• What do they do?
• How are they communicating?
• If there are barriers, what will it take to break them down?
Possible Action Steps

• Facilitate quarterly meetings for stakeholders
• Acknowledge and reward ESOs who stay true to their purple cow
• Become the repository of the entrepreneurs’ roadmap
Do You Know Your Businesses?

- Understand your region’s niches/clusters
- Talk **with** them instead of always **to** them
- Follow through
- Remind them what you’ve done for them lately
Understanding Your Businesses

If you really want to understand, you must listen and be willing to look beyond the obvious.
Would You Turn Yourself Upside Down for Them?

The strongest organizations allow ideas to flow from the bottom up instead of always from the top down.

Edward Lowe
EDWARD LOWE FOUNDATION
Does Your Culture Look Like Theirs?

- Do you listen to ideas, then act and implement quickly?
- Can you live with making mistakes?
- Are you willing to change some of your direction?
- Do you understand outside audiences well enough to be a matchmaker?
- Is it OK if you don’t know everything?
- Has your team bought into the culture?
- Is the rest of your audience ready to come to the table?
Balanced Growth

What’s culture got to do with it?

“It’s a lot easier to go out and attract a new company, or even build a new stadium, than it is to alter the psychological makeup of a region.” … Richard Florida
Being Real

You Don’t Have to be Perky All the Time

You Don’t Have to Hide From What Didn’t Work
Know Your Squelchers

“Squelchers are control freaks who think they know what’s best for their city or region, even as their leadership, or lack thereof, causes a hemorrhage of bright, talented and creative people. Squelchers are the kind of leaders that use the word “no” a lot. They constantly put up roadblocks in the way of community energy and initiatives.” … Jane Jacobs, “The Death and Life of Great American Cities”
How Do You Celebrate Success?

- Celebrate early and often
- Celebrate incremental successes
- The new ribbon cutting
Why We Love Companies to Watch

• Night of good news!
• Companies you have never seen before
• Turns you into awesome storytellers
Changing the Conversation Should Start With You

The attitude of the leader determines the speed of the pack.
Be the Change!

“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” … Ghandi
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