

Bank Notes

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Community Bankers — Your Role in the Community of the Future

Just as you are the heart and soul of our Association, we know that communities are the heart and soul of community banks. We know how much you care about your community and its well-being and future. That's why this year's after-dinner speaker during our 2006 group meetings is **Jim Dittoe, president of Winning Communities™**, a professional community-consulting company that helps communities and organizations envision the future and develop goals, measurable objectives and action plans for achievement. Dittoe has 30 years of experience in community and economic development, having been the chief executive officer of Chambers of Commerce in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. He has led efforts that resulted in the successful completion of highways, revitalized downtowns, airports, education foundations and other value-added projects.

Titled "**Community Bankers — Your Role in the Community of the Future**," Dittoe's interactive presentation discusses change and its challenges; proves that community growth is asset growth; defines the future with other community organizations; discusses globalization and Main Street, USA; explains how to rekindle the American dream; examines what is vision; and addresses how to put the vision into action.

(See following article.)



Community Bankers — Leading Community Change in the New Economy

Jim Dittoe
President and Founder

Winning Communities, Inc.

Our communities have all experienced significant change. Whether positive or negative, these changes cause challenges that our communities must overcome in order to succeed. How can we, as leaders, facilitate that change while helping to define the future of our communities?

First, we must understand how this change has occurred.

Communities and the Global Economy

The new economy is an international economy. Globalization can affect both large and small communities in substantial ways. The positive and negative impact of this change ranges from new jobs or new market opportunities to lower paying jobs moving overseas.

To give you an example of globalization's impact, it is noted in the new best seller by Thomas Friedman *The World is Flat*, that outsourced tax preparation work with any firm in the U.S. can now be done overseas. According to Friedman in 2003, 25,000 U.S. individual tax returns were prepared in India. In 2004, the number was 100,000, and the outsourced work expanded beyond individual tax returns to trusts, partnerships and corporations. In 2005, the number of outsourced work was projected at 400,000. How does this affect Peoria, Illinois-based Clifton Gunderson or Patterson Accounting in Decatur, Illinois?

This is just one of the effects of globalization in our Midwestern communities. Globalization increases the pressure for efficiency and cost-savings in business, yet encourages competition. Technology has enabled communities to connect with the entire world like never before, yet it can leave our communities behind if we do not utilize it.

What do these trends mean for the future of our communities?

The old way of doing business locally no longer works in an international economy. To succeed in the new economy, communities need a plan in place to create and sustain future growth — growth in the form of job creation, production, population, education, health care, recreational, social and cultural opportunities for residents, the revitalization of downtowns, and more.

We must not leave the future of our communities to chance. All organizations from both the private and public sectors must become involved to create the power that is the ability to get things done.

As community bankers and leaders, you are community. You are close to the people. You no doubt have great pride in your communities and you care about community growth and development because it is important to the citizens of your community. But you should also care because it affects your bottom line, as asset growth is often directly tied into the development of your community. As leaders, you have a role, a responsibility, and an opportunity to unite citizens and help create positive change.

In 1994, Winning Communities was created because, after having worked for chambers of commerce in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, and serving on numerous economic development councils, it became apparent that by working together, communities could achieve positive results. But I have also witnessed many communities fall behind and struggle to maintain growth in the last decade, particularly in the small, rural cities, towns and counties in the Midwest. Communities need to be encouraged to work together — to question, dream, think and plan for a better future — and know that it is possible to achieve it.

Positive Community Change is Possible.

There are many “winning” communities who have already created and are implementing vision and action plans for the future. In Northeast Indiana’s Huntington County, for example, 23 organizations both sponsored and participated in a vision and action planning process in 2004. As a result of this process the community received a \$150,000 implementation grant for a new Technology and Entrepreneurial program. Travis Holdman, former Chairman of the Board of the Community Bankers Association of Indiana (CBAI-IN) and President and CEO of Markle Bank, helped lead the project. Here is what he had to say about the process:

“Just as no business should be without a plan - no community should be without a strategic plan. The Winning Communities initiative in our county has provided the impetus for a number of community and countywide projects. Our economic development corporation, United Way, community foundation and the three community banks in the county have been key players to develop collaboration on a number of needs that beg our attention.”

Mr. Holdman recognized the value of a community vision plan. More importantly, he supported Winning Communities’ emphasis on action steps that would help his community achieve measurable results.

Certified Winning Communities™ Program: A Program with Bottom Line Results

The focus on planning, but also on bottom line results, fit in well with the banker’s mentality, so Mr. Holdman felt it was a good program to have in other communities. It was during this process in Huntington that it was discovered that by giving communities the opportunity to become Certified Winning Communities (in which a community would only be rewarded if it has completed several action steps toward achieving its identified goals and objectives), the certification was a way to hold the community accountable for action and results — and to assure that a community vision plan would not simply sit on a shelf. Joe DeHaven, the President of the CBAI-IN, agreed that the Certified Winning Communities program would benefit his members, so he helped establish the process and the Board endorsed it. Mr. DeHaven commented about the Winning Communities program:

“We have worked with Jim Dittoe and his company Winning Communities since 2004. Jim is working with several of our members to assist their communities in developing a strategic plan for the community and assisting in monitoring the accomplishment of the plan. It is truly a great feeling for me to see that ‘Certified Winning Community’ sign as you enter a town or county because I know that the local people in that community have come together to accomplish their collective vision of what they want their community to become in the future.”

Now the Certified Winning Communities program is at work in several communities in Indiana, and it is hoped that it can expand its reach and impact to more communities throughout Illinois, the Midwest and the United States. In Blackford County, Indiana, the community is aggressively working to achieve several goals from its vision and action plan, completed in the winter of 2005. To date, Blackford County has raised more than \$50,000 toward projects ranging from a countywide book club, a leadership academy, and an image improvement campaign. The county hopes to receive a matching grant from a special United Way program that would help fund the projects. Ted Leas, President of Pacesetter Bank in Hartford City, Indiana, remarked about the Certified Winning Communities program:

"The Winning Communities program has injected a new spirit of "can do" attitudes in our community. Our location in East Central Indiana has been somewhat depressed and attitudes are down. We have seen a renewal of enthusiasm and cooperation among a wide cross-section of our population that is very encouraging. Through this process we have been able to identify areas needing improvement, and put a plan of action together to address those areas in the next few years."

"Our community bank will certainly benefit from a community that envisions itself as unified and progressive as we work together to accomplish our common goals. We believe these efforts will help to maintain and grow our county in the coming years."

How can you get more involved in community vision and action planning?

One of my favorite quotes is by New York Yankee great Yogi Berra. He once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else."

As community bankers, you have the opportunity to lead the charge and change the future of your community for the better. You can do this simply by bringing individuals and organizations together, such as your local chambers of commerce, community foundations, mayors, city managers and others interested in the development of the community to start the self-examination process. Talk to other communities who have gone through a strategic planning process. Analyze previous community vision or economic development plans if they exist. But at least get in the game. Be competitive. You will be amazed at what your community can accomplish with a little bit of vision, some leadership and the hard work of dedicated citizens.

Jim Dittoe is president and founder of Winning Communities, Inc., a company that helps communities and organizations envision the future and develop goals and action plans for achievement, through his interactive community planning process and unique Certified Winning Communities™ program. Jim has served as past board member and president of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Executives Association and past executive committee member and treasurer of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives Association. He was active as a member of both the Indiana and Ohio Economic Development Councils, and taught community analysis at the Institute for Organization Management at Notre Dame University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Delaware. Jim can be reached at (317) 402-0524 or by email at winningcomm@aol.com. For more information about Winning Communities, visit www.winningcommunities.com.

You can also hear Jim Dittoe speak at the upcoming Community Bankers Association of Illinois group meetings in April, May and June of 2006.