



 <http://nurturedevelopment.org/>

 info@nurturedevelopment.org

Nurture Development
UK Office
2.2 Montpellier House
Montpellier Drive
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
GL50 1TY
UK

Tel: +44 (0)1242 223 877

Nurture Development
Irish Office
Nurture Development
91 Bird Avenue
Clonskeagh
Dublin 14
Ireland

Tel: +353 87 928 0998

The 8th camel

Story for workshop, keynote or meetings

Purpose of the story

1. Illustrate the point that Community Builders usually only bring something that helps communities to see and use what they have to secure what they need.



The story

- A Community Builder decides to take a holiday – a rather unusual holiday. He/she flies off to the Sahara desert, hires a camel and embarks on a solitary journey across the sands.
- As he/she nears the end of his journey, he/she spots 3 men at an oasis ahead.
- They are clearly distraught over something, hugging, crying, fighting, yelling, sitting with their head in their hands.
- Being the generous spirit that he/she is, he/she stops at the oasis and gently offers his help to the men; “is there anything I can do?”
- A little hesitant at first, the men begin to talk to the Community Builder, telling him/her that they are in fact brothers and they have recently lost their father.
- As he/she offers the brothers his/her condolences, the brothers thank him/her but say that while they’re sad at their fathers’ passing, he had lived a long and happy life and was ready to go. Their distress was at their inability to do what he asked of them on his death bed.
- In their culture, the brothers explained how important it was to fulfil the last wishes of a dying man and they were beside themselves with the thought that they wouldn’t be able to fulfil their fathers wishes. They just couldn’t get the maths to work...
- Intrigued, the Community Builder invited them to talk more about their challenge. They told him/her that their father had asked the 3 brothers to divide all his worldly possession between them but in a particular way. The eldest brother is to get a half, the middle brother is to get a third and the youngest is to get a ninth.

The story

- The trouble is that all their fathers worldly possessions amounted to 17 camels (half = 8.5, third = 5.6, ninth = 1.8)... They couldn't even begin to think about cutting them up!
- Well, said the Community Builder, take my camel. That way you will have 18 and will be able to divide your fathers possessions up a he wished (half = 9, third = 6 , ninth = 2)
- It took some persuading but after a lengthy discussion the brothers gladly accepted the offer, took the Community Builder back to their home and treated him/her to a home-cooked meal.
- Over dinner, the youngest brother stopped eating. He looked around the table and laughed. He'd done the maths... $9 + 6 + 2 = 17$. The Community Builder nodded knowingly and, after dinner, he/she left on his/her camel.



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