

PATH OF DISRUPTION

The Community Leader Series

For the people closest to
the problem — who have
always been closest to
the answer.

These eleven cards are drawn from the back matter of **Disruptive Giving** — the ones written specifically for community leaders holding networks together with trust and time. They are not for donors. They are not for founders in the traditional sense. They are for the people the system has been extracting from for a long time — and who are finally being told, clearly, what the system owes them.

Read them once, straight through. Then keep them close. Each card is a self-contained move — no card depends on the ones before it. Take the one that reads like it was written about your week and do that one first.

C1 Name What You've Already Built

C2 Set the Terms Before the Table

C3 Stop Performing Gratitude

C4 Document the Expertise

C5 Build the Flywheel

C7 Make the Invisible Costs Visible

C8 Write Your Own Story First

C9 Protect the Trust You've Built

C10 Ask for What You Actually Need

C11 Be the Standard, Not the Exception

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C1

Name What You've Already Built

WHY IT MATTERS

The system cannot resource what it cannot see. And it cannot see what you haven't named.

DO THIS NEXT

Write down exactly what you have built. Not what you want to build. What already exists. The trust, the network, the knowledge, the relationships. Give it a name. Ask: if this disappeared tomorrow, who would feel it? That's your proof of impact.

It wasn't invisible. They just weren't looking.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C2

Set the Terms Before the Table

WHY IT MATTERS

You will be invited into rooms. Some of those rooms will want your knowledge without your governance. Know the difference before you walk in.

DO THIS NEXT

Before your next partnership conversation, write down three non-negotiables. Not requests. Not preferences. The conditions without which you will not proceed. Decision rights. Community consent. Ownership structure.

I don't need a seat at your table. I need a say in where the table goes.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C3

Stop Performing Gratitude for Inadequate Help

WHY IT MATTERS

Gratitude is appropriate. Performance of gratitude in exchange for resources that fall short of what's needed is a tax on your dignity.

DO THIS NEXT

The next time someone offers help that doesn't match the need, say so. With specificity. "What we actually need is X. What you're offering is Y. Can we talk about the gap?"

Thank you is not a contract. Neither is need.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C4

Document the Expertise You've Never Been Paid For

WHY IT MATTERS

You have been providing free consulting to every organization that has ever studied your community. That expertise has value.

DO THIS NEXT

List five things you know about your community that no outside organization knows. The next time someone asks for your insight, ask what the exchange is.

Fifteen years of expertise isn't lived experience. It's a credential. Act accordingly.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C5

Build the Flywheel With What You Have

WHY IT MATTERS

You do not need to be fully resourced to begin building momentum. The flywheel starts with the smallest sustainable loop.

DO THIS NEXT

Identify the one thing in your network that is already self-reinforcing. Trust that compounds. Referrals that build. Invest in that one thing first. Then ask: what is the smallest amount of resource that would let this loop spin faster?

The engine was already running. I just needed fuel.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C6

Choose Your Donors Like You Choose Your Partners

WHY IT MATTERS

Not all funding is equal. Money with the wrong conditions attached costs more than it gives.

DO THIS NEXT

Before your next funding conversation, ask: What does success look like to you, and who gets to define it? What happens if we need to change direction? Have you ever funded something that failed?

I'm not applying. I'm deciding.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C7

Make the Invisible Costs Visible

WHY IT MATTERS

The nonprofit sector runs on the hidden labor of community members who are never compensated for the work of being studied, consulted, and served.

DO THIS NEXT

For one month, track every hour you spend in unpaid service to organizations. Apply a modest hourly rate. Then decide: which investments are worth making, and which are extractions?

My time is not a donation. It is a resource. I choose where it goes.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C8

Write Your Own Story First

WHY IT MATTERS

If you don't write your community's story, someone else will — and they will write it in a way that justifies their role in it.

DO THIS NEXT

Write a one-page account of what your community has built — not suffered, not needed, but built — in the last five years. Be specific. Be proud. Use first person plural.

We are not our worst moment. We are everything we built after it.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C9

Protect the Trust You've Built

WHY IT MATTERS

Trust is the most valuable asset in your network and the one most frequently extracted by outside organizations without compensation.

DO THIS NEXT

Establish a clear internal policy about what your community will and will not share with outside organizations, and under what conditions. Who gives consent? Who benefits?

They needed our trust more than we needed their program.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C10

Ask for What You Actually Need

WHY IT MATTERS

The sector has trained community leaders to ask for what they think they can get, not what they actually need. That gap is where transformation goes to die.

DO THIS NEXT

Write down what you actually need. The full version. The five-year version. Then write down what you've been asking for instead. Look at the gap. That gap is not realism.

The audacious ask was always the honest one.

PATH OF DISRUPTION · C11

Be the Standard, Not the Exception

WHY IT MATTERS

When community leaders succeed within broken systems, the system takes credit. The goal is not to be the exception. It is to change the rule.

DO THIS NEXT

Find one other community leader doing what you're doing and share everything — your model, your failures, your funding sources. Freely. Your success is only disruptive if it multiplies.

I'm not here to be the one who made it. I'm here to make the path.

A NOTE TO THE READER

These prompts were written for Amara — and for everyone like her who has been building in the gap, holding communities together with nothing but trust and time and the refusal to stop.

The system was not designed for you. Build the one that is.