

# Loss or Lost: It's Our Decision

How We React to Circumstances  
Can Impact Results

BY LIZ SOSA



Liz Sosa

**I'm not going to lie.** I was lost. Somewhere along the Big Bow county road, I should have trusted my gut instinct to keep going. Instead, I let the fear of going too far entice me down paved Road 23.

Despite the arsenal of gadgets at my disposal—smart phone map app, printed Rand-McNally directions, and life-experience on Kansas back roads—I still lacked the confidence needed to reach my destination. Finally, I realized too late that had I turned one paved road too soon. So I retraced my path back to the very place where I had made my first wrong decision.

Frustrated with my lack of trust in myself, I hurried on to the next paved county road, knowing I would be late for the meeting I was to help facilitate. Finally reaching my destination, I raced inside to find The Morton 4 Steering Committee happy to greet and feed their tardy co-facilitator and ready to get to work rebuilding the human infrastructure of their county. Huge, scrumptious home-made tortillas put my feet and soul back on the ground.

This committee had been through a great deal over the past month since we last met. One member had lost his twin brother in an accident, a tragedy that was felt through the whole county. Two other members had submitted resignations due to overwhelming obligations that left them feeling over-committed and unable to give themselves wholly to the work necessary over the next year. A couple of other committee members acknowledged that the group had lost some of the momentum so prevalent at the last gathering.

I was struck by the correlation between my experience of being lost en route to this meeting and the various senses of “loss” this group was feeling: how promises unfulfilled can so easily lead to a lack of perseverance if we allow our

“It's easier to follow a path that has already been paved. But it takes committed individuals to take that unfamiliar back road.”

sense of “loss” to become a feeling of being “lost” with no road out.

The mission of Public Square Communities is to “identify, connect, and develop civic leaders.” Sadly, many citizens feel they have lost their connection to the very community they are trying to impact. The feeling of losing one's voice, literally or figuratively, averts the communication necessary to make progress and shift a community's culture from small pockets of sub-groups working chaotically to that of a unified effort creating community-wide goals.

The sense of loss can also prevail when many previous attempts to fix what's broken haven't worked as hoped, or when projects and consultants have frequently come and gone. Those who gave their all to these failed attempts to better the community's common good can become weary enough to slip into the “wait and watch” method of participating in new ventures. While purporting to back the efforts of those who come after them, they speak skeptically that real progress can emerge from the ongoing struggle, letting their sense of loss override their gut instinct to keep going.

It is decidedly easier to follow a path that has already been paved. But it takes committed individuals, with or without a map, to take that unfamiliar back road, overcome the sense of loss, and chart a new course to their destination.

My friends in Morton County are doing just that. Though I arrived a little late, I'm glad they persevered, fed me well, and are staying the course. **KCL**

**LIZ SOSA, a Colleague of Public Square Communities, manages a small business in Garden City and serves on the Western Kansas Community Foundation board.**