

McDonald: Best that money can buy

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Modern man has always valued social capital because of the personal benefits it can buy. Its pursuit can be a good thing for any organization provided it is based on merit, truth and the Golden Rule. But, increasingly, it is being used nationally by office managers of government, corporations and nonprofits as a manipulating vehicle to enable profit enterprise for self benefit.

A manager's methods to accomplish this may border on Pavlovian conditioning and can include yes-men peer pressure, rewards/punishment, public humiliation, bribes and gaslighting. The stepping stone result can be a slow transition to devising, then aiding and abetting illegal or immoral activities.

It's a mixed blessing for anyone living in Aspen today due to its wealth disparities and duality. Aspen is recognized as one of America's wealthiest and most prestigious destination resorts, but, unfortunately, Aspen is also often viewed as one of the most provincial, pretentious, superficially materialistic cities in the United States.

Banked social capital hits the stratosphere in Aspen, and the town enjoys feeding on it. The Aspen Institute, Cato Institute and literally 100 more high-profile nonprofit organizations are milling around town, mutually impressing each other's egos with their charitable lead trusts and their family's nonprofit leadership privileges.

The purported 100 billionaires and thousands of millionaires who own free-market properties in Aspen adds money to Aspen's vault of banked social capital, making Aspen the ideal environment for nonprofits. Backdoor networked to big money are Aspen's entrenched county and municipal governments. This is where local development deals are schemed, while the social elites are plotting and planning national policies and proposing future ventures and mergers / acquisitions.

Aspen seems all about who you know and what they can do for you. I bet you could get damn near anything you want in Aspen with just the reach of its high-powered social capital and some mutual back scratching.

It does seem no matter where you go in town, you can't escape some obsequious, toe-sucking, ankle-grabbing sycophant sidling up to someone they think they can con with flattering platitudes. The community doesn't seem to fret, though, because they know they have the best government money can buy.