



# Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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## Week 9: Explore more original contributions

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### What to expect this week

The last 4 weeks of your circle are designed to help you consider other possibilities. This week you'll further expand your range of contributions to include making your original ideas, work in progress, and finished work visible. This may be new to some of you or make you uncomfortable, so think of it as simply an option instead of a responsibility.

### Related reading from *Working Out Loud*

*Chapter 19 - The Start of Something Big and Wonderful*

Video: Ira Glass on Storytelling - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2wLP0izeJE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2wLP0izeJE)

### Suggested agenda

Thing to do	Approx. time
Check-in	10 mins
Exercise: Find and discuss self-published content you like	15
Exercise: Lists & Profiles	15
Discuss ideas for original content	15
Checkout for Week 9	5

### Check-in (10 minutes)

Each person should speak for a few minutes about what they did since the last meeting. If someone didn't make any progress, other circle members should try and help him make adjustments so he can invest in himself.

### **Exercise: Find & discussed self-published content you like (15 minutes)**

Some people are put off by the idea of a blog or, more generally, publishing their own content. In the most important sense, though, it's no different than Ben Franklin printing his ideas as pamphlets in the 1700s. What's changed is that it's easier than ever to publish, and to reach and interact with an audience.

For this exercise, search the Internet for blogs, YouTube channels, Facebook pages, or other self-published sites that are relevant to your goal or are otherwise interesting to you. Then talk about what you picked and why.

If you need help getting started, two blogs I subscribe to are Seth Godin's at [sethgodin.typepad.com](http://sethgodin.typepad.com) and Fred Wilson's at [avc.com](http://avc.com). I also like [A Mighty Girl](#) on Facebook, and you can find my weekly posts at [workingoutloud.com](http://workingoutloud.com) at [johnstepper.com](http://johnstepper.com). Discuss what you like and don't like about each one.

### **Exercise: Lists & Profiles (15 minutes)**

Whether or not you already have a blog or other site, most people struggle with what to say and how to frame it as a contribution. Here are ten examples of contributions you might publish:

1. Share your research.
2. Share your ideas.
3. Share your projects.
4. Share your process.
5. Share your motivations, why you did what you did.
6. Share your challenges.
7. Share something you've learned.
8. Share the work of others you admire.
9. Share your connections.
10. Share content from your network.

One of the simplest ways to start is by crediting the work of other people. For this Lists & Profiles exercise, create a list of ten people or ten pieces of work you truly admire and are relevant to your goal, and write down a few sentences about why you admire them. That list is a contribution to each person on it, and it's also a gift to anyone interested in those people or in the topic.

There's no need to publish it yet. The key to this exercise is the thinking and reading you'll do and the act of writing up your thoughts as a contribution.

## **Discuss ideas for original content (15 minutes)**

Do each of you see the value in making your work visible? Are you comfortable with it? Discuss the results of your Lists & Profiles exercise and help each other improve them. Share your ideas for other kinds of original contributions.

## **Checkout for Week 9 (5 minutes)**

1. Schedule the next meeting.
2. Remind people to read the Week 10 circle guide and suggested reading.
3. Ask: "What will you do this week?"

Before the next meeting, keep working on your relationship list and on the contributions you would make for each person on it. Think about the ten examples of contributions you could publish.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Q: I'm not comfortable with the idea of making my work visible.*

You may not be comfortable at first in making your work visible, and that's natural. Yet although you can still expand your network without doing so, it's a lot harder.

When you make your work visible, you amplify who you are and what you do, you extend your reach, you expand your set of possible contributions and how to offer them, and the feedback on your work helps you get better faster. The more you practice, the more comfortable you'll become.

*Q: But I don't like writing.*

Writing well, like presenting or making videos or doing pretty much anything, is a learnable skill. It just takes practice and feedback. Writing in particular is still the dominant medium on the Internet. Here's a quote that summarizes how important it is:

*As soon as you move one step up from the bottom, your effectiveness depends on your ability to reach others through the written or spoken word. And the further away your job is from manual work, the larger the organization of which you are an employee, the more important it will be that you know how to convey your thoughts in writing or speaking. In the very large organization, whether it is the government, the large business corporation, or the army, this ability to express oneself is perhaps the most important of all the skills a man or woman can possess.*

That's a quote from the management expert Peter Drucker from 1952. More recently, Tom Peters, another management expert, described writing as "a timeless and powerful skill." Even if you don't think you're good at it now, getting better at communicating in any medium is one of the best things you can do for your career. As Fred Wilson, the venture capitalist who developed a habit of blogging every day, noted, "The investment I've made in my communication skills over the past eight years is paying huge dividends for me now."

*Q: What should I actually do? Start a blog? A Facebook page? Make videos?*

The answer depends on you, your content, the people you want in your network, and even the tools themselves. A good way to start is to look at people who are relevant to your goal and see what they're doing. Read blogs, like Facebook pages, and watch videos related to your purpose. That will help you discover what you think is good as well as what you don't like. Then emulate the work of people you admire. Over time, you'll gradually develop your own style.

If you're just beginning to consider original content, focus on reading and writing drafts for yourself instead of publishing mechanics. When you feel you're ready, here are a few simple guides to help you set up a blog or Facebook page.

<https://en.support.wordpress.com/five-step-blog-setup/>

<https://en.support.wordpress.com/five-step-website-setup/>

<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/set-up-facebook-page>

## **Bonus exercises**

### **Easy: Something you can do in less than a minute**

Something many creative people do is keep a list of ideas handy. This way, whenever inspiration strikes, you can capture the idea and have it available for when you're ready to sit down and create. Whether it's in a small notebook or on an app on your phone, start a list of topics for things you would like to create.

### **More challenging: Something you can do in less than 10 minutes**

Watch [the video of Ira Glass](#) talking about his experience becoming an award-winning journalist. Pay attention to his humble start and how long it took. Listen to his self-criticisms. "I took longer to figure out how to do this than anybody I ever met."

Then listen to his advice at the end. How might it apply to you? How might you begin?