



Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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Week 3: Take three small steps

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What to expect this week

In Week 3, you'll make a simple adjustment to managing your time, add to your relationship list, and offer another kind of contribution. Some of you may well refine your goal or even change it. That's natural and a kind of "purposeful discovery." If the Circle process helps you clarify your goals or genuine interests, that's an excellent result. The key is to keep practicing by doing the exercises each week.

Suggested agenda

Thing to do	Approx. time
1. Check-in	10 mins
2. Exercise: Pay yourself first	10
3. Discuss how you manage your time to Work Out Loud	5
4. Exercise: Leveraging existing networks	15
5. Exercise: Another universal gift	15
6. Checkout for Week 3	5

1. Check-in (10 minutes)

What did you do since the last meeting? How are you feeling about your goal? If you didn't do much or are still uncertain about your goal, there's no judgment. It's helpful to admit it and talk about it so you can all discuss adjustments you might make the next time. It's a natural part of the learning process and part of developing a new habit.

Remember that "check-in questions can vary each be as simple as: How are you feeling? Or: What is going on for you that people in the room might need to know?"

2. Exercise: Pay yourself first (10 minutes)

One of the biggest barriers to developing yourself and your career – and one of the themes of modern life – is being busy. People simply don't have the time to do the things they know would be good for them. (The same could be said for exercising and eating right.)

One remedy is to “pay yourself first.” The phrase comes from advice on how to save and invest money, and it applies to your time as well. (For more, read the suggested blog post at the end of this guide, “The Most Successful Person in Babylon.”) The simple idea is to block out time on your calendar for things you know are good investments for your personal development, or to help you make progress towards a goal you care about.

Right now, “pay yourself first” by taking a look at your calendar and scheduling appointments over the next week for doing something related to your goal, such as the exercises in these Circle Guides or reaching out to people on your relationship list.

Write down the slots you picked.

3. The group discusses how you manage time (5 minutes)

Have a short, open discussion about how you each manage time related to working on your goals. Do you have a specific schedule? What challenges do you have? Discuss what works and doesn't work, and see if you can help each other.

4. Exercise: Leveraging existing networks (15 minutes)

One way to accelerate developing your own network is to leverage networks that already exist. When you make a contribution to a group instead of an individual, you can become visible to many people in that group, further extending your reach.

Play Internet or intranet detective and find at least five organizations, or online groups or communities, that are relevant to your goal.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Here are some additional suggestions for different kinds of networks that might improve your online sleuthing. Be sure to look both internally and externally. If you're stuck, ask for help from other members of your Circle.

Online communities at work or on the Internet: These are usually formed by people who are passionate about a particular topic and want to help others learn more about it. Joining such a group is an extremely efficient and effective way to find people related to something you care about. Whether the community is related to a skill, a role, an interest, or a hobby, you'll find a vast array of online groups that are eager to have new members and more contributions.

Groups that offer related products or services: Examples include product vendors and professional organizations. If you want to become a better project manager, for example, then look for organizations offering training or tools related to project management.

Conferences and meet-ups: This is where people related to your goal will congregate in person. Organizers are often eager for contributions - from help promoting the events to volunteering to original content.

Influential individuals: Look through your relationship list and identify people in your network who have much more influence than the average person in your list. If you don't find anyone, you might start by looking for people who are already reaching an online audience, including bloggers, authors of books and articles, and other content providers related to your goal. Their audience is a rich source of possible connections for your relationship list.

Contributing to one or more of these networks isn't a replacement for deepening individual relationships. It's just a way to amplify your contributions so you can come into contact with more people, knowledge, and possibilities.

5. Exercise: Another universal gift (15 minutes)

Last week, you offered the universal gifts of recognition and attention. Another universal gift is gratitude.

If you're like me, you're somewhat haunted by all the unsent thank you cards in your life. So here's a chance to make some amends. Pick someone on your list and offer a private thank you via email or even text message. Just one to three sentences that say you've been thinking of them and wanted to thank them for something they did or said. Everyone would love to get such a note. Send one now and update your relationship list with the date and your gift next to that person's name.

Now pick someone on your list and offer *public* appreciation for something they've done via Twitter, Facebook, an online community, your intranet, or any other channel you like. A genuine public "thank you" is a wonderful gift. Give one now and update your relationship list with the date and gift next to that person's name.

6. Checkout for Week 3 (5 minutes)

1. Confirm the time and place for the next meeting.
2. Ask: "What will you do this week?"

Write down what you will do this week, and you will be even more likely to do it. You'll increase the chances even further if you write down when and where you will do it.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I offered my contribution and they didn't respond. What did I do wrong?

You probably didn't do anything wrong, other than to expect a reply. Remember that real gifts don't have strings attached. Rather than invent a negative story about why someone didn't respond, it's better to just assume the best of the person and try again at a later date. Don't badger them – "Did you get my thank you?" Simply offer a different contribution in the future.

Q: I'm not sure I picked the right goal. Can I change it?

Yes, you can change it. Many people, after having spent a few weeks thinking about their goal and taking a few steps, discover something that inspires them to make an adjustment. Great! That learning and self-awareness - about what you like and don't like, for example - is all a natural part of the process.

For sure, it's better to change your goal and enjoy the process than to cling stubbornly to something that doesn't inspire you to do the exercises. Remember that, with practice, you'll develop new habits and a new mindset you can apply to any future goal.

If you need to do less...

Are you or other members of your Circle finding it difficult to do all the exercises? That's okay. People make progress at different rates, so don't worry if you can't do everything or if you fall behind. From now on, each weekly guide will have a section call "If you need to do less..." which includes one simple step labelled that takes just a few minutes and you can usually do right in your Circle meeting. Any progress is good, and better than no progress at all.

This week, here's a simple action that will make you feel good: Send a text or email to someone in your network, or even just someone in your family, to thank them for something they've done. If that's all you ever did - develop the habit of regularly showing appreciation to people in your network, you will distinguish yourself in a wonderful way.

If you want to do more...

Easy: Something you can do right now in less than 5 minutes

Pick someone on your list and @-mention them on a public platform. You might, for example, offer appreciation their work. If you're stuck or unsure, just post this on Twitter:

"I'm in a Working Out Loud Circle! Hello @johnstepper"

When you do that, I'll be notified and will respond with my own tweet, showing you how even a simple nine-word contribution can create a connection.

I've offered my appreciation to authors on Twitter as varied as Austin Kleon, Amanda Palmer, Gretchen Rubin, Amanda Ripley, and Sandra Boynton - and I got a response from each of them. I was just offering a sincere "thank you" and didn't expect a response, yet it did make me happy to interact with someone whose work is appreciated by so many people. Below, for example, I shared how much I enjoy the weekly newsletter of Austin Kleon, best-selling author of *Steal Like an Artist* and *Show Your Work*.

The point is this: If you like something, say something.



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

Google yourself. (It's called a "vanity search," and it's a perfectly reasonable thing to do.) Wherever you happen to be now, use your phone or favorite Internet device to find yourself. Are the results you're looking at what you would like others to see? How much of your best work is visible?

To read, listen to, or watch

On managing time

- "The most successful person in Babylon" - Link: workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon

When someone doesn't respond

- "When someone doesn't respond to you" - Link: workingoutloud.com/blog/when-someone-doesnt-respond-to-you