



Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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Week 11: Imagine the possibilities

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What to expect this week

So far, the focus has been on contributions and connections. In Week 11, you'll expand your sense of what's possible by thinking more broadly about your network and your role in it.

Suggested agenda

Thing to do	Approx. time
1. Check-in	10 mins
2. Group exercise: Finding tribes you care about	15
3. Exercise: Who's leading your tribe?	15
4. Group exercise: What's your lemonade stand?	15
5. Checkout for Week 11	5

1. Check-in (10 minutes)

Are you open to considering something bigger, even just as an exercise? If not, why not? Sometimes, voicing your reasons for feeling constrained can be liberating.

2. Group exercise: Finding tribes you care about (15 minutes)

In Week 3, you looked for existing groups (online communities, etc) related to your goal and added them to your relationship list. In this exercise, you'll meander on the Internet or intranet for *any* online group related to something you care about or that's otherwise interesting. Seth Godin called certain kinds of online groups "tribes" - "a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea." (Links to his book and wonderful

TED talk on the subject are at the end of this guide.) He highlighted that now, more than any time in history, it's easier to join or lead tribes you care about.

You might look for online groups related to your hobby or other interest, to what you do for a living, to an affliction that has affected you or someone you know, to a social justice cause you care about, etc. If you work in a large organization, there are almost certainly online groups related to specific work topics as well as more general workplace issues like diversity.

As you search, talk to each other within your Circle, sharing interesting groups you've identified. Allow yourself to explore. The reason for doing this is to expose you to the amazing diversity of certain kinds of networks. Make the list as long as you can. (Try to find at least ten.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

3. Exercise: Who's leading tribes? (15 minutes)

Now here's a challenging question: Are any of these groups related to your goal?

If the answer is yes, pick the one you're most interested in now. If the answer is no, it might be a sign that you're not as interested in your goal as you are in other things. That's not necessarily bad. It's just something to reflect on as you think about future goals (and future Working Out Loud Circles). It might also be the case that your particular goal doesn't have many active online groups. That's an opportunity to contribute.

Whatever your answer, look at your list above and pick one group you're particularly interested in learning more about. For this exercise, the most important thing is that it sparks your curiosity. Write down what you picked.

Now explore what's happening in the group. Notice the different ways the people in these groups interact. Look for things you like and don't like. Look for an "About" page to learn more about who started the group and why they did it. Write down whatever you find to be interesting.

4. Group exercise: What's your lemonade stand? (15 minutes)

How do tribes begin? Two of my favorite stories about how successful tribes started on the Internet are Humans of New York and Stemettes.

- humansofnewyork.com - inspiring photos & stories of people around the world
- stemettes.org - "showing the next generation that girls do Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) too"

Humans of New York began when Brandon Stanton, an unemployed bond trader who liked photography, started sharing photos on Facebook. Anne-Marie Imafidon, who co-founded stemettes.org and is the subject of chapter 22 in *Working Out Loud*, started the group with a blog post about her New Year's resolutions. Now, much to the surprise of Brandon and Anne-Marie, their early contributions have become international movements.

Another particularly inspiring tribe, Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, was started by a young girl named Alex Scott. Before Alex's first birthday, she was diagnosed with

neuroblastoma, a rare form of childhood cancer. At four years old, she wanted to raise money for her doctors so they “could help other kids, like they helped me.” Alex decided to open up a lemonade stand.

Together with her older brother, she raised two thousand dollars with her first stand. So she decided to do it again. Then friends and family opened up lemonade stands, and the word spread. By the time Alex was eight years old and terminally ill, they were starting to count stands in the hundreds. That led to news coverage and yet more people participating and contributing. Fourteen years after Alex had the idea to open a lemonade stand, her foundation has raised over eighty million dollars for cancer research, education, and family support. One of the many things that fascinated me about Alex’s story is that, although there were already many organizations related to cancer and cancer patients, she and her family found their own way to contribute - and a way for others to contribute too.

Now it’s your turn. What would be the equivalent of a lemonade stand for you and your tribe?

Perhaps you create an online group on your intranet related to your topic, or organize a “lunch & learn” in your company where an internal expert gives a talk, or even write a blog post inviting others to contribute. There’s no need for big events or anything that costs much money. Just try a small experiment - a way to start, make your idea visible, and connect people to it.

Write down some ideas now.

Share your ideas with your Circle, and help each other imagine how you might “lead by contribution.” There’s no pressure to create a movement in your first Working Out Loud circle, or ever for that matter. But all of the ideas and exercises up to this point have prepared you so that you could if you wanted to. As Seth Godin says, it’s a new kind of work, and you’ve been training yourself to do it.

5. Checkout for Week 11 (5 minutes)

1. Schedule the final meeting. Consider holding it over dinner.
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 will increase the chances even further if you write down when and where you will do it.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why do I want a tribe?

The point isn't that you need to lead a group, but *that you could if you wanted to*. You're simply trying to connect people around an idea for positive change that you care about - and then leading via your contributions. If you care about something, odds are that there are others who care about it too. Focus on finding them, making an emotional connection to the cause, and enabling them to contribute in some way.

Whatever your version of a lemonade stand is, the steps to building a movement aren't new techniques but instead a shift in your purpose. As you aim higher, your purpose is no longer about you and what you alone might accomplish but *what your tribe will accomplish together*. For more examples and inspiration, watch Seth Godin's TED talk, "On the tribes we lead." There 's a link at the end of this guide.

Q: I couldn't think of a lemonade stand for my movement.

Think small. Just like Brandon Stanton started by sharing photos on Facebook and Anne-Marie Imafidon started with a blog post, you could form your own group on Facebook or on your company's enterprise social network. Start small with a simple, cheap experiment that you can learn from with little (or no) cost or risk. Then keep trying new things, refining your ideas until you find other people who are members of the same tribe. As you connect with more people, they will help you shape the idea, spread it, and connect yet more people as you keep learning.

If you need to do less...

Sometimes, the success of other movements, even those with humble beginnings, can be so daunting that you don't even want to think about making your own attempt. So here's a simple thought experiment.

Set a timer for ten minutes. Think again of the group you selected that you thought was particularly interesting. Now simply imagine you're having lunch with other members of that group, brainstorming ideas. What are you talking about? What would be something fun to try together? How does it feel? Try to suspend all fear and doubt. Use the full ten minutes.

If you want to do more...

Easy: Something you can do in less than 5 minutes

Look at alexslemonade.org/about/meet-alex to learn how Alex Scott's movement started. See how far a movement can go from such a simple start.

More challenging: Something you can do in 20 minutes

Learn more about the evolution of Humans of New York and Stemettes and Alex's Lemonade Stand by reading some of the articles at the end of this guide and poring through some of the stories on their websites. In particular, read the post about Brandon titled, "My role model for a better career and life." Notice how the success of Humans of New York wasn't simple, or the brilliant execution of a plan, but rather was a series of discoveries based on contributions over time - and on the feedback on those contributions.

To read, listen to, or watch

On tribes

- *Tribes*, by Seth Godin
- *Video - "On the tribes we lead" by Seth Godin - Link: ted.com/talks/seth_godin_on_the_tribes_we_lead.html*

Humans of New York

- humansofnewyork.com
- humansofnewyork.com/about
- [facebook.com/humansofnewyork/](https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork/)
- "My role model for a better career and life" - Link: workingoutloud.com/blog/my-role-model-for-a-better-career-and-life

- “At first, we kept saying we’re going to beat it” - Link: workingoutloud.com/blog/at-first-we-kept-saying-were-going-to-beat-it
- “Before all of this happened, I was about to give up” - workingoutloud.com/blog/before-all-of-this-happened-i-was-about-to-give-up

Stemettes

- stemettes.org
- stemettes.org/about-us
- “The Case for Women Leadership in Technology and Beyond—My Month on the East Coast,” by Anne-Marie Imafidon - Link: aimafidon.com/2012/10/31/the-case-for-women-leadership-in-technology-and-beyond-my-month-on-the-east-coast
- “For 2013: 3 New Years Resolutions I Won’t Have and 1 New Years Objective I Do Have,” by Anne-Marie Imafidon - Link: aimafidon.com/2012/12/31/for-2013-3-new-years-resolutions-i-wont-have-and-1-new-years-objective-i-do-have/
- “After weighing up 2016, 2017 is the year to scale” by Anne-Marie Imafidon - Link: linkedin.com/pulse/after-weighing-up-2016-2017-year-scale-a-marie-imafidon
- “This is how you lead a STEM revolution,” by Holly Royce for metro.co.uk - Link: metro.co.uk/2017/03/07/this-is-how-you-lead-a-stem-revolution-6492970/

Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation

- alexslemonade.org/about/meet-alex
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex's_Lemonade_Stand_Foundation
- <http://www.today.com/health/how-one-girls-lemonade-stand-has-raised-80-million-changed-2D79767939>