

Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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Week 11: Imagine the possibilities

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For more information, including a customizable version of the Circle Guides for your organization, contact john.stepper@workingoutloud.com.

What to expect this week

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

Suggested Agenda for Week 11	
1. Check-in	10 mins
2. Group exercise: Finding tribes you care about	15
3. Exercise: Who's leading tribes?	15
4. Group exercise: What's your lemonade stand?	15
5. Voice your intention	5

1. Check-in (10 minutes)

Think about a change you'd like to see in the world, then think of yourself leading a group of people to make that change. Does that make you feel empowered and inspired or anxious and afraid? Why do you think you feel that way?

Share your thoughts and feelings about these questions with your Circle. It can be liberating and illuminating, and can help you prepare for the exercises this week.

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

The exercises today are all related to thinking of your network as a whole, a group related to a common purpose and potentially accomplishing something together. Seth Godin called such groups "tribes" - "a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea" – and he gave a great TED talk about them.¹ He highlighted that now, more than any time in history, it's easier to lead tribes you care about.

In Week 3, you looked for existing networks related to your goal and added them to your relationship list. In this exercise, you'll search the Internet or intranet for any online group or community related to *anything* you care about - e.g., a social justice cause, a hobby, what you do for a living, an affliction that has affected you or someone you know, etc.

¹ "On the tribes we lead" by Seth Godin - ted.com/talks/seth_godin_on_the_tribes_we_lead.html



To make it simpler, try this exercise as a group. Each of you should search for tribes you care about, and you'll combine what you come up with into one single list that has at least ten tribes on it. As you search, talk to each other within your Circle, sharing interesting groups you've identified. Be sure to look inside your company as well. There, you'll almost certainly find online groups related to specific work topics as well as more general things like diversity and innovation. You'll use this list in the next exercise.

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 the list you just made and each of you should 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 you picked. Look for an "About" page to learn more about who started the group and why they did it. Notice the ways the people in these groups interact, and the different contributions they make. Look for things you like and don't like. Write down whatever you find to be interesting.

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

As you've seen, tribes can be related to all sorts of topics. But how do they begin? A particularly inspiring example is a movement started by a little girl, Alex Scott.

ALEX'S LEMONADE STAND FOUNDATION

Before Alex's first birthday, she was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare form of childhood cancer. At four years old, she told her parents 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. Each of you should think of what your own tribe might care about and do. It could be related to the group you picked in the last exercise, or one related to your goal, or you might pick something else you hadn't imagined before.




What would be the equivalent of a lemonade stand for you and your tribe? Try brainstorming as a group. The reason for this doing this together is to increase the set of ideas for all of you. 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 write a blog post on "Your Top Ten" related to your tribe's purpose. There's no need for a big event or anything that costs much money. Just try a small experiment - a simple way to make your idea visible and connect people to that idea and to each other. Write down some ideas now.

5. Voice your intention (5 minutes)

1. Schedule your final Circle meeting. Consider holding it over lunch or dinner. It's a nice way to celebrate your time together, and provides a good environment for reflecting on your progress and discussing possible next steps. (If you're meeting via video, you might each pick a particularly comfortable spot and your favorite beverage, or find another creative way to make the last meeting special.²)
2. Ask yourself: "What will I do this week?"

Think of something to do this week that would make you feel good about your progress in your Circle. Reaching out to someone you've been meaning to connect with? Making another contribution? Re-reading your Letter From Your Future Self? Whatever you choose, write it down now.

 *Before the next meeting, I will:*

FINAL THOUGHT

"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.'"

- *Working Out Loud: For a Better Career and Life*

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.

² One virtual Circle brought musical instruments and jammed together.! Choose whatever works for you and your Circle.

If you want to do more...

Easy: Something you can do in less than 10 minutes

Look at alexslimonade.org/about/meet-alex to learn how Alex Scott's movement started. See how far a movement can go from such a simple start. Notice how building a tribe 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. After reading about Alex's first step, try again to come up with ideas for your own lemonade stand.

More challenging: Something you can do in 20 minutes

The post below includes a story of a woman who wanted to explore coaching but didn't know where to begin. Notice how this is an example of "job crafting" - making small changes to your tasks, relationships, and perceptions - and how the workplace can be an excellent place for experiments and learning.

"The bridge from where you are to where you want to be"

workingoutloud.com/blog//the-bridge-between-where-you-are-and-where-you-want-to-be

"She was working inside one of the world's largest corporations and, though she liked her job, what she really enjoyed doing was coaching other people. When she told me how she had looked into professional certifications and coaching jobs, her eyes were shining. Then she paused. "But there are already 200,000 life coaches in Germany," she said, "and I have a child." She knew it would be tough to make a living, and was aware the odds were against her. Yet if she didn't try, she might always wonder "what might have been."

Now more than ever, career planning is an oxymoron. Instead, a much better approach is to start with only a general direction in mind, and then conduct small experiments that help you learn what a good next step might be.

For the woman who wanted to be a life coach, she might start by offering her services for free to colleagues at work, thereby helping people and gaining valuable experience while still getting a paycheck. She could meet with professional life coaches to better understand what being a coach is truly like. She might even try to find all the other life coaches in her company and connect them online so they could all share their experiences.

These kinds of free experiments would help her refine her sense of what she likes and doesn't like, and expose her to other possibilities she hadn't considered. Maybe over time she discovers her dream job is not to be independent after all, but to act as an internal coach in her company, or lead a community there, or offer a coaching framework that lets other companies tap into their own internal expertise. Only with experimentation, feedback, and connection will she discover that."

What would be your own version of this example? How might you take something you're interested in and "build a lemonade stand" where you work?

To read, listen to, or watch

alexslimonade.org/about/meet-alex

"My role model for a better career and life"³

workingoutloud.com/blog/my-role-model-for-a-better-career-and-life

³ Humans of New York is now a global phenomenon that shares beautiful stories of people around the world through photos, movies, books, and more. It began when Brandon Stanton, an unemployed bond trader who liked photography, started sharing photos on Facebook. You can learn more at humansofnewyork.com.

Working Out Loud: For a Better Career and Life
Chapter 20 - Engaging Your Network
Chapter 21 - Creating a Movement
Chapter 22 - A 25-Year-Old Linchpin

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, it's likely 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 goals. As you aim higher, your purpose is no longer about you and what you alone might accomplish but *what your tribe will accomplish together*.

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

Think small. I started the Working Out Loud movement with blog posts at work about the topic. Then I formed a group on my company's intranet. Later on, I offered to talk about WOL at events, and I started to blog about it publicly. These were all simple experiments that helped me learn with little (or no) cost or risk. You 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.

You can find WOL tribes on Facebook and LinkedIn, and also by simply searching for the #WOL tag on any social media platform.

WOL Community on Facebook: facebook.com/groups/workingoutloud/
WOL Community on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/groups/4937010