



# Working Out Loud Circle Guide

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## Week 3: Take three small steps

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For more information, including a customizable version of the Circle Guides for your organization, contact [john.stepper@workingoutloud.com](mailto:john.stepper@workingoutloud.com).

### What to expect this week

In Week 3, you'll make a simple adjustment to managing your time, you'll add to your relationship list, and you'll offer another kind of contribution. These small steps will help reinforce and expand your practice.

Suggested Agenda for Week 3	
1. Check-in	10 mins
2. Group exercise: Pay yourself first	15
3. Exercise: Leveraging existing networks	15
4. Exercise: Another universal gift	15
5. Voice your intention	5

### 1. Check-in (10 minutes)

This week, a good check-in question might be: "How do you feel about your goal?" Do you still care about it? Is it sparking your curiosity?

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

### 2. Group exercise: Pay yourself first (15 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, or the attention to keep doing them until it becomes a new habit. (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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> The advice came in the form of a 71-page, poorly typeset pamphlet published in 1926 called "The Richest Man in Babylon." You can read more about it and how it applies to managing time in [workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon](http://workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon).

Right now, “pay yourself first” by taking a look at your calendar and scheduling appointments over the next month for doing something related to your goal, such as the exercises in these Circle Guides or reaching out to people on your relationship list. You might block out one hour a week, or a few shorter appointments. Even one regular 15-minutes slot while you have coffee can make a meaningful difference.

 Make at least 4 appointments with yourself over the next 4 weeks. Update your calendar now, or write down the appointments you made with yourself.

Appointment #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment #4: \_\_\_\_\_

 Now discuss how you each manage time related to working on your goals. One simple and perhaps uncomfortable question you might ask each other is: “Do you spend *any time at all* on your goal?” If you do, do you have a specific schedule? What works and doesn’t work for each of you?

### 3. 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.

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. Here are some additional suggestions for different kinds of networks that might improve your online sleuthing.

*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 - whether it’s online or in-person - 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 presenting stories and projects.

*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.<sup>2</sup> 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.



Play Internet or intranet detective and find at least five organizations, or online groups or communities, that are relevant to your goal. Be sure to look both internally and externally. Although there may be some topics for which there aren't many existing networks, the problem for most people is they're not sure how or where to look. Be sure to ask your Circle for suggestions. I'm amazed at how often other people in a Circle will have good suggestions, either on specific groups or on different ways to search.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



If you're stuck, join one of the WOL communities. Your contribution of attention there - even a simple "Hello, I'm in a Working Out Loud Circle." - will evoke responses from around the world.

WOL Community on Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/workingoutloud/](https://facebook.com/groups/workingoutloud/)  
WOL Community on LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/groups/4937010](https://linkedin.com/groups/4937010)

#### 4. Exercise: Another universal gift (15 minutes)

With each contribution you make, you deepen the sense of relatedness with someone and, over time, gradually build trust. That's what increases the chances of you exchanging information, what earns you access to knowledge, people, and opportunities.

Last week, you offered the universal gift of attention. Another universal gift is *gratitude* or *appreciation*.

Think of 2 people you would like to thank for something they did or said. It could be something recent or it could be recalling an event in the past that comes to mind. Then you're going to take the next 15 minutes to offer gratitude to those people.

One will be private, a short text or email that says something like "I was thinking of you and what you did for me, and I wanted to say how much I appreciated it." Everyone would love to get such a note. The other thank-you will be public, mentioning them on a platform like LinkedIn or Twitter, in an online community, or on your social intranet at work. (If this is difficult for you, pick someone in your Circle and offer them a private or public thank-you.)

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<sup>2</sup> An obvious example of an "influential individual" could be the CEO of your organization. She could certainly help most people at work with a goal, yet only a small minority of people tend to follow their CEO online, and a much tinier fraction ever hit a Like button or post a comment. One of the more popular CEOs I know regularly posts content on LinkedIn, yet has 10 times as many employees as he does followers there. Another, on Twitter, has less than 1%, and his posts often receive only a few dozen comments. This makes for an excellent opportunity to contribute and deepen the relationship.

 Take the next 15 minutes to reflect on what you would like to offer and how you'll offer it. Then send both messages now.

Name	Message
Private	
Public	

If you're struggling to offer public appreciation, try posting this on Twitter or LinkedIn:

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

When you do that, I'll be notified and will respond with my own personal message. I want to help you experience how even a simple nine-word contribution can create a connection.

## 5. Voice your intention (5 minutes)

1. Schedule the next meeting.
2. Ask yourself: "What will I do before the next meeting?"

Take a few minutes now to reflect on what you intend to do before the next Circle meeting. If you didn't finish all the exercises today, try doing them before your next Circle meeting, or take a look at the section below titled, "If you need to do less..." If you want to do more, try the additional exercises will help you further reinforce and expand your practice. *At a minimum, look at your relationship list and try to make at least one more contribution before the next meeting.*

 Before the next meeting, I will:

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### FINAL THOUGHT

"The richest man in Babylon's first and most important lesson was to set aside 10% of your money before spending anything. 'A part of all you earn is yours to keep. It should not be less than a tenth no matter how little you earn...Pay yourself first.' And so with time. Before you schedule your first meeting or take on another responsibility, put aside 10% of your time for investing in yourself..."

Every one of us has the chance to be the most successful person in Babylon. But to do so, you must 'cure your lean purse' and get out of the busy trap. Only then will you have the time to invest in yourself and create the life you want."

- [workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon](http://workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon)

## 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 that takes just a few minutes. Any progress is good, and better than no progress at all.

Here's a simple action this week that will make you feel good: Send a text or email to someone in your network to thank them for something they've done. It could take less than 30 seconds. It may seem like a small thing, and yet if all you ever did was develop the habit of regularly showing appreciation to people in your network, you would distinguish yourself in a wonderful way.

## If you want to do more...

### Easy: Something you can do in less than 5 minutes

I've gotten in the habit of offering my appreciation to authors whose work I find useful and interesting. I don't expect a response, and yet sometimes I'm pleasantly surprised. In this example, I simply shared how much I enjoy the weekly newsletter of Austin Kleon, best-selling author of *Steal Like an Artist* and *Show Your Work*.



**John Stepper**  
@johnstepper

Here's a newsletter I love. It's a weekly dose of serendipity with goldilocks portions of creativity, wit & wisdom

[austinkleon.com/newsletter/](http://austinkleon.com/newsletter/)



Pick a person on your list whose work you admire, and offer public appreciation by @-mentioning them on a public platform. Pay attention to how you feel as you post the message. Share what you did with your Circle members.

### 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? Search for your other Circle members, too. What are their results like?

You should also try this exercise on your intranet, and ask yourself the same questions. 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

"The most successful person in Babylon"

[workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon](http://workingoutloud.com/blog/the-most-successful-person-in-babylon)

“The best office design for collaboration is also the cheapest”<sup>3</sup>

[linkedin.com/pulse/best-office-design-collaboration-also-cheapest-john-stepper/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/best-office-design-collaboration-also-cheapest-john-stepper/)

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

Chapter 12 - Working Your Lists

Chapter 16 - Expanding Your Network

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: I'm still 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.

*Q: I offered gratitude to someone and they didn't say anything. What did I do wrong?*

The only thing you may have done wrong is to expect a reply. Remember the Generosity Test? Real gifts don't have strings attached.

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<sup>3</sup> This post about collaboration in the office was one of the first that got me thinking about why and how people relate to each other, and what we could do to improve things.