

Join a Community or Start One?

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CANBRIDGE

a process collective

(Consensus And Network Building Resolving Impasse and
Developing Group Effectiveness)

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1. Pioneers vs. Settlers—Personality Profiles

The Pioneer Profile

- Likes the excitement of creating things
- Is energized by the potential of start-ups, and not dismayed by the chaos
- Likes *doing* things; making things happen
- Can track multiple threads
- Enjoys disparate work, and can shift from one task to another, very different one without loss of focus
- Good at improvising
- Finds periods of privation exhilarating
- Inspirational speaker

The Settler Profile

- Good at relationships
- Dependable worker; good at following through
- Understands good process
- Inspirational worker
- Good communicator
- Is careful to keep promises and apologize for mistakes
- Likes organizing things and completing tasks

2. Queen Bee Syndrome—Challenges of Leadership

If you start a cmty, you'll necessarily be faced with the challenges of leadership. Whereas, if you join one, you may be able to sidestep these challenges (or at least some of them).

—The group will blame you for failure of their dream.

—Are you the kind of leader who can tolerate (or better yet, embrace) other leaders—or will you fight until one of you leaves or is vanquished?

—There will be holes in what is needed, and the leaders will be expected to stick their thumb in the dike first.

—You'll eventually face all of the issues you were hoping to *avoid* by doing it "your" way—though not necessarily all at the same time.

—No vacation for three years. It's like starting a new restaurant.

—You'll need to inspire, and you'll need to give way.

3. Location, location, location

There is one compelling reason to start a community when you otherwise would rather not—it has to be in a certain place and there isn't anything acceptable there now.

Here is a partial list of considerations that may be location specific:

- Near to family or existing friends
- Psychic need to be near to specific geographic features (such as mountains, desert, forests, or large bodies of water)
- Need to be in a certain climate (not too hot in summer; not too cold in winter; not too cloudy, enough rain to grow your own food, etc.)
- Need to be near a precious employment or service opportunity
- Prohibitive cost of land and/or development

Communities are needed everywhere, so you can't pick a bad place from the perspective of societal need (though you could pick a bad place for the kind of community you have in mind).

4. Reinventing the Wheel vs. Wagging the Dog

Another way to look at this question is in the reverse: which course would be more onerous? With joining, you might be dismayed by the prospect of having to change the cmty's culture or existing agreements to something more to your liking. With starting a cmty, you may be overwhelmed by the prospect of all that you'd need to establish (even taking into account the excellent resources available today as models). Which is more daunting?

5. Summary of Pros & Cons

Starting a Cmty

- you get to do it *your* way
- there is no culture to build on
- do you feel compelled?
- no vacation at first
- can you make the leadership transition?
- you can start with people you know
- we need more cmties
- how will marketing get done?

Joining a Cmty

- you've got to do *everything*
- you've got to learn a new culture
- is the chemistry with members right?
- no say at first
- does the cmty handle power well?
- you can start with something that works
- we need more robust cmties
- how will marketing get done?

6. Test Driving Your Model

Regardless of whether you think you'd rather start a cmtty or join, I urge you to spend time *living* in a cmtty (not just visiting) that's as similar to your ideal as you can find. That experience will give you vital information about how you *feel* about your dream. It'll give you invaluable information about what you truly want.

There will likely be surprises in both directions: "crucial" things that turn out to be trivial, and things that you never considered might suddenly become deal-breakers. It'll be one of the best investments you ever made.