
Identity, Purpose and Values

Disclaimer

This briefing is a summary of various resources (listed below). You should not take the information provided here as a given: the concepts and theories we found useful may or may not apply to your network. We also acknowledge that similar theories and concepts appear in systems change, community organising and social change literature.

If you find yourself disagreeing with or questioning some of the points in this briefing, please make a note of it, as there will be an opportunity to discuss during our online session.

How to use this resource

Reading this document front-to-back may be a bit of an information overload. It might be easier to dip in and out of it according to your interests and current network issues. If you would rather read the whole thing one go - that's also great!

This resource aims to:

- Provide background for your first face-to-face session on 18th January
- Support you in learning about identity, purpose and values in networks and accessing further reading and resources

Below is a table of contents that will help you navigate this briefing. Each section gives an overview of the topic and then poses some questions that you may want to think about in relation to your own network.

We hope you find this useful, happy reading!

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1. Introduction

When designing, implementing and evaluating a network, it is important to understand its purpose, the motivations for members joining it, and the values it embodies. In this briefing, we have summarised different ways people have looked at network purposes, motivations and value propositions.

- **Purpose:** What is the network's reason for being?
- **Motivations:** what motivates people to join a network, and to keep participating?
- **Values:** what kind of values contribute to a network's culture?

This briefing heavily draws on the following sources:

- Patti Anklam (2007) Net Work
- Peter Plastrik, Madeleine Taylor and John Cleveland (2014) Connecting to Change the World. Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact
- Paul Vandeventer and Myrna Mandell (2007) Networks that Work. A Practitioner's Guide to Managing Networked Action
- June Holley (2012) The Network Weaver Handbook. A Guide to Transformational Networks

And additionally these blogs by Michael Wu:

- [What Drives Us - Are you Intrinsically Motivated?](#)
- [Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Rewards \(and Their Differences from Motivations\)](#)

2. Identity and Purpose

What is a network's purpose?

"A network's purpose is that which animates it and causes its members to care about it"

Patti Anklam, Net Work (2007)

A network's purpose is a shared vision that network members can subscribe to. The purpose is not aimed at creating universal agreement among members' viewpoints, but rather to state, clearly and unambiguously what the network's reason for existence is. When

the network's purpose is clear, it can then be easier to determine people's or organisations' motivations for joining and engaging in the network.

Here are a few examples of network purposes¹:

The Water Forum

- Provide a reliable and safe water supply for the Sacramento region's economic health and planned development to the year 2030; and,
- Preserve the fishery, wildlife, recreational and aesthetic values of the Lower American river

Urban Sustainability Directors Network

USDN's purpose is to be an active and engaged network of North American city sustainability directors who exchange information, collaborate to enhance our practice, and work together to advance the field of urban sustainability.

Lawrence CommunityWorks

To transform and revitalise the physical, economic and social landscape of Lawrence.

Writing a network statement of purpose

Given the importance of having a good network purpose, we'll now focus on formulating the network purpose. It can be challenging to translate network builders' personal passion for creating a network into a clear statement of purpose that members will also find compelling. One way of tackling this is to explain what the network will be about, in a way that helps others see themselves taking part in it.

Here are some key questions to keep in mind while drafting a network purpose²:

- **Who is the network for?**
- **What problem is it working on?**
- **What type of collaborative activities will the network undertake?**

It's also useful to keep in mind that in some cases, when formulating a purpose, some networks may find it helpful to agree on measurable goals they will seek to achieve:

RE-AMP³

¹ Quoted from *Networks that Work* p.34 and *Connecting to Change the World* pp. 44-45

² From *Connecting to Change the World*, p. 43

³ Quoted in *Connecting to Change the World*, p. 45

RE-AMP brings environmental, labour, faith, youth, energy, conservation and other groups together to share one audacious goal: to reduce regional global warming emissions 80 percent (from 2005 levels) by 2050

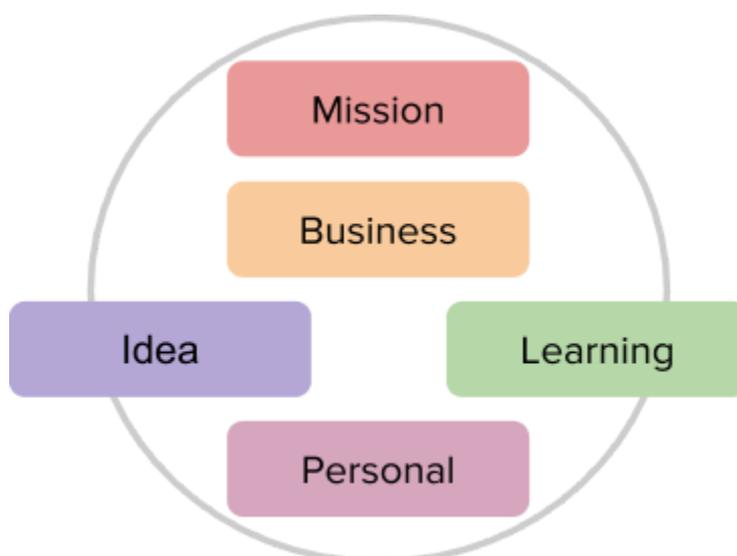
Who decides what the network purpose is?

Most 'network experts' agree that the network's purpose should not be imposed from above, either by a network builder or funder. Partners and network members should have a voice in co-creating the network's purpose. Plastrik et al warn that, if the purpose is imposed from above, the network will not generate "highly energised, productive, and sustained member engagement".⁴

Where in your network is the core purpose generated? Is it decided by members, funders, co-ordinators...?

Different types of network purpose

The purpose of a network can be anything from improving a local neighbourhood, to increasing innovation in a particular business sector. Patti Anklam, author of *Net Work*, has categorised purposes according to type:



Adapted from *Net Work*, p. 31

- **Mission:** Social good or environmental improvement at the local, national regional or global level

⁴ In *Connecting to Change the World*, page 25

- **Business:** Creation of tangible value - business development, production of goods and services, financial wealth or any project or any operationally output-focused endeavour
- **Idea:** Generative thinking for innovation, problem-solving or advocacy
- **Learning:** Continuous improvement and enhancement of personal or collective knowledge
- **Personal:** Individual support, growth and knowledge

Of course, categorising a network’s purpose is not as clear cut as this diagram would suggest. A network purpose may have several aspects and belong to different ‘categories’ at once.

Motivations & network values

Why do people join networks?

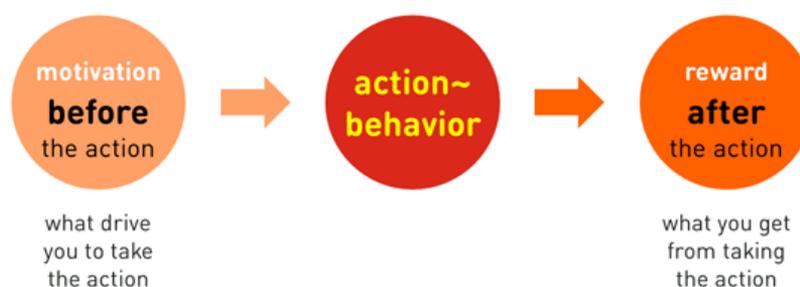
“The stated purpose of a network provides an attractor; members and potential partners are drawn to it based on how it articulates that purpose and who and what it serves”

Patti Anklam in Net Work, p. 119

Once a network’s purpose is clear, it is useful to think about why people might want to join, or their motivations for engaging in the network.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations

Identifying the different between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is a useful way of understanding the reasons why people join networks. It’s helpful, at this point, to clearly draw a line between motivations and rewards. Generally, motivations come before performing an action (in this case, joining your network), and rewards come after performing the action.



From [What Drives Us - Are you Intrinsically Motivated?](#)

Motivations can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivations do not depend on rewards and are inherent to the action. If we take singing as an example, the four types of intrinsic motivators include:

1. **Autonomy** (a.k.a. control)—the fact that you have full control over when, where, what, and how you sing, as well as how much you sing
2. **Mastery** (a.k.a. competence or progress)—the fact that you can get better at singing
3. **Relatedness** (a.k.a. uniqueness)—the fact that you can develop a unique way of singing relative to other singers
4. **Purpose** (a.k.a. meaning)—because singing has purpose and special meaning to you

Usually it is much harder to articulate intrinsic motivation - it may simply be expressed as: “I just love doing it!” Extrinsic motivation on the other hand is reward-dependent - it is not ‘intrinsic’ to the act of, for example, singing.

Here are some examples of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for joining a network:

Intrinsic	Extrinsic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Passion for network purpose● Sense of fulfilment when engaging with the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Access to funding● Knowledge acquisition● Discounts

Intrinsic motivation is not ‘better’ or more valuable than extrinsic motivation. It is useful to be aware which type of motivations may be behind your members’ actions and engagement, however, to better design and plan your network.

For a more in-depth (and enjoyable!) analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and rewards, visit [Michael Wu’s blog on Lithium](#).

Network culture: why join a network and not something else?

June Holley, author of *The Network Weaver Handbook*, believes one of the main appeals of joining a network is the values it embodies compared to everyday personal or organisational values.

Traditionally, people's values and identity have been linked to a group such as church, clubs, social class, race, ethnicity... Whilst within these groups people tend to treat each other according to values like trust, sharing and cooperation, those in other groups tend to be treated with mistrust, suspicion and uncooperativeness.

A network approach advocates acceptance, appreciation, giving and sharing, and can help us move on from this limiting scenario to one where we are embedded in open networks of collaboration and opportunity. We can find out about people's skills and interests and find ways to work together.

Holley suggests a three-step approach to creating this kind of 'network culture':

1. Learning and modelling network values
2. Developing the skills, behaviour and microprocesses that embody these values
3. Helping others learn these behaviours

Some behaviours typical of network culture include:

- Awareness and mindfulness
- Opportunity-seeking
- Appreciation
- Accurate assessment
- Openness and transparency
- Complex reciprocity
- Deep listening & good questions

These are explained more in detail in the Handbook's Chapter 6, including exercises to begin exploring these practices. We will upload these onto DropBox for your perusal!

Conclusion

We hope this has been an interesting read and that it has raised some useful questions. We looked at different ways of talking about:

- Identity and purpose of networks
- Motivations behind joining a network

We will explore these topics more in-depth at the face-to-face meeting on 18th January, and you will be able to access this and other resources afterwards.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

