

MEETUP AT A GLANCE



Meetup.com was founded in 2002 with the mission of revitalizing local community in America.

Over 2.5 million people have joined local Meetups for more than 4,500 interests. There are Meetups for everyone: Stay at Home Moms, Pug lovers, Italian speakers, Entrepreneurs, Scrapbookers and more. If you can name an interest, chances are high there's a local Meetup Group for it nearby.

Meetup Groups meet regularly in cafes, restaurants, living rooms or anywhere else, in 55 countries around the world.

Based in New York City, Meetup.com is non-partisan, privately held, and backed by such investors as VC Draper Fisher Jurvetson and eBay Founder Pierre Omidyar.

Awards:

- 2005 Jane Addams Award, National Conference on Citizenship
- 2004 Innovator of the Year, MIT & Technology Review
- 2004 Wired Magazine Rave Award: Political Force
- 2004 Pollie Award, Public Affairs Excellence for Technology Innovation of the Year as presented by the American Association of Political Consultants
- 2003 Webby Award, Best Community Site

Meetup Management:

- Scott Heiferman Co-Founder & CEO
- Peter Kamali, Co-Founder & CTO
- Matt Meeker, Co-Founder & VP, Operations
- Brendan McGovern, VP, Finance & Administration
- Myles Weissleder, VP, Public Affairs

Meetup Board of Directors:

- Senator Bill Bradley (Allen & Company)
- Esther Dyson
- Scott Heiferman (CEO, Meetup)
- Pierre Omidyar (Chairman/Founder, eBay)
- Andreas Stavropoulos (DFJ)

Meetup, Inc.
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New York, NY 10012

212-255-7327 Main | 41-5-332-3205 Media | 212-255-7310 Fax

www.meetup.com

MEETUP FAQ



What is Meetup.com?

It's how people Find The Others and organize a Meetup.

What's a Meetup?

A local interest group that's organized online and meets regularly offline.

Why do people Meetup?

For community. Sometimes for people-power.

What do people Meetup about?

Most anything. Today's top Meetups are Mom Meetups.

What do people do at Meetup.com?

They sign up for a Meetup or free alerts of others that want a Meetup. Then, as more people sign up, someone organizes a Meetup and uses Meetup.com to easily grow and manage it.

How much does it cost?

Alerts are free. Organizing a Meetup costs the Organizer \$19/month. Some Organizers share the fee with others, so it's maybe a buck a month per person.

Why use Meetup.com to organize a Meetup?

Because more people will find your Meetup. And to join forces with similar Meetups elsewhere.

Why will more people find my Meetup on Meetup.com?

Because Meetup.com is where people are signing up for free Meetup alerts.

Why use Meetup.com after our Meetup has come together?

Because your Meetup can be a great local resource for a long time and more people will find it on Meetup.com.

Should I use Evite, YahooGroups, Craigslist, or Meetup.com?

Use Evite for a birthday party.

Use YahooGroups for an online mailing list.

Use Craigslist to post an ad that stays up for a day or 2.

Use Meetup.com for Meetups -- to have a great, long-lasting, local offline interest group that keeps growing.

What's the goal?

Make the world friendlier and more people-powered, using revenue to help people Meetup. Imagine everyone having access to a Meetup about most anything everywhere.

Why would 100 million people care about going to Meetups?

Because most of us, at some points in our lives, want to Find The Others, feel more community, and maybe unite for power.

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MEETUP IN YOUR FAVORITE MAGAZINES. . .

"A convenient, non-threatening way to connect to other people who share similar interests and live nearby." -- **Time Magazine**

"Groundbreaking" -- **Newsweek Magazine**

"A new Internet service that made it possible for like-minded folk—hood-ornament collectors, ferret owners—to find each other and congregate in local communities." -- **The New Yorker Magazine**

"Meetup.com... helps you find existing clubs, or matches you with prospective members if you would rather start your own." -- **Money Magazine**

"Are you ready for the new Web? It's getting ready for you. It turns out that bidding on eBay, gathering with Meetup and Googling on, um, Google are only the opening scenes in a play whose running time will top "Mahabharata."" -- **Newsweek Magazine**

"Meetup is not like other social networking sites. Friendster, MySpace.com, Tribe.net, and Tickle, and those oriented towards business, like Ryze and LinkedIn, introduce people to each other in cyberspace. They don't create social groups where people can meet each other face-to-face. So far, Meetup doesn't have any real competitors. It's the kind of business, like eBay, which becomes harder by the day for competitors to dislodge. Meetup is rapidly reaching critical mass. And with supporters like multi-billionaire Omidyar, I predict it's here for the long haul." -- **David Kirkpatrick, Fortune**

"Meetup.com uses the web to get people off their computers and talking to one another. In the process, it's revolutionizing American politics." -- **Fortune Small Business Magazine**

"This spring there were 2,400 Meetup meetings a week, about 50% more than a year earlier. It is true that these are often meetings of the like-minded, of people with particular tastes in common, rather than universal gatherings of the old national federations that tied disparate groups together. It is also too early to say whether a single website will reverse decades of civic decline: meetup.com is only three years old and has just started charging, with unpredictable consequences. Still, the growth is impressive." -- **The Economist Magazine**

"The Internet isn't just about e-mail or the Web anymore. Increasingly, people online are taking the power of the Internet back into their own hands...It's the emergence of the Power of Us. Thanks to new technologies such as blog software, peer-to-peer networks, open-source software, and wikis (group-edited Web sites), people are getting together to take collective action on an unprecedented scale. And it's often with no overt corporate oversight...A few sites encourage people to get together in the real world, not just online. Meetup, for instance, has many thousands of groups that get together regularly, from English bulldog owners in New York City to scrapbookers in Singapore." -- **BusinessWeek Magazine**

"The Internet can also drive social interaction in the opposite direction. It can gather strangers from the far reaches of cyberspace and throw them together in the real world. Such is the mission of Meetup, a free Web service that brings together like-minded strangers, letting them organize face-to-face gatherings, or meetups, at local coffeehouses, bars, and bowling alleys." -- **PC Magazine**

"A Web tool for forming social groups." -- **Wired Magazine**



MEETUP IN PRINT . . .

“Like eBay, Meetup is turning out to be a bigger idea than it may have appeared at first.” -- **The New York Times**

“Meetup. com has quickly become something of a social phenomenon.”
-- **Boston Herald**

“The website Meetup.com might also be called 'when centuries collide,' for it marries the human impulse to gather in convivial groups -- which is as old as the quilting bee, the hoedown, and the Grange -- to the eye-blink speed and efficiency of technology.” -- **The Boston Globe**

“Nobody calls them meetings anymore -- they're Meetups, plain and simple.”
-- **Detroit Free Press**

"Tickle your fancy...You mean you haven't found a Meetup group yet?"
-- **The Denver Post**

“No matter your interest, there's a meetup for you” -- **Chicago Tribune**

“Like minds meet up: Find your kind and vent, commiserate, or just shoot the breeze.” -- **The Philadelphia Inquirer**

“Moms Meetup: They met through a Web site, Meetup.com, that links all kinds of people who have something in common” -- **Cincinnati Enquirer**

“[Meetup is] something of a phenomenon in the world of community organizing.”-- **Oakland Tribune**

“Smart: Meetup.com. Finding a crowd of like-minded people to take part in your favourite pastimes is a whole lot easier with a site such as this.”
-- **The Age, Australia**

“From Elvis fans to supporters of a presidential hopeful, Meetup.com is bringing together people with a common interest, taking the talk out of the chatroom and back into the real world.” -- **Associated Press**

“There's a Web site chock-full of like-minded loons, goobers, newts and zoomers. Just about any hobby, fixation or addiction you can imagine has a support group. The address is <http://www.meetup.com>. Check it out...”
-- **Salt Lake Tribune**

“If someone out there shares your interests, Meetup.com can connect you with them.” -- **The Des Moines Register**

“Meetups allow online lurkers to become offline organizers.”
-- **Charleston Daily Mail**

“Think of the meetup as an antidote to the inherent anonymity and social isolation of the Internet.” -- **Calgary Herald**

“Online networking groups like Meetup.com used new technology to breathe life into the oldest American tradition: the town hall meeting. They allowed Howard Dean's supporters - and others - 'to create 'alloys,' networks that are mixtures of silicon and real flesh,' said Robert Putnam, a professor of public policy at Harvard. ‘People are making the connection over the Internet, but what they really want is not just the cyberfriend but a real connection.’”
-- **The New York Times**

"Meet online and off line. That's the goal of Meetup.com. While someone could join any Meetup group, anywhere in the world, one thrust of the organization is to help people find a local group they might be interested in joining, rather than just talking with people in a chat room who they may never get to meet." -- **Poughkeepsie Journal**

“Meetup.com, a site where special interest groups can form in communities all over the world.” -- **South Bend Tribune**

“Meetup groups disprove the myth that the internet destroys community.”
-- **The Age, Australia**

“[A] gathering spot for people who share all kinds of interests”
-- **Associated Press**

. . . AND ON TV.

“New Way to Meet and Greet” -- **ABC News**

“The most amazing thing about Meetup is the way they get people involved.”
-- **CBS News Sunday Morning**

“If you find it hard to make friends as a busy mom, you may be surprised out how easy it is to find other women out there just like you...”
-- **News12 Arizona**

“Millions of Internet surfers are finding like-minded people online... then leaving their computers to get together in the real world.” -- **FOX News**

“On the rise.”-- **CNN**

Meetup and Cyber Rabble-rousing

CEO Scott Heiferman says websites like his that help people form social groups and organize events around common interests are becoming a "vital" part of the democratic process.

Thursday, April 7, 2005

By David Kirkpatrick

Few things give me more pleasure than to meet someone who is turning his idealism into a successful business. Earlier this week, I had the chance to meet one of them—Scott Heiferman, CEO and co-founder of Meetup (<http://www.meetup.com>.) His company, which lets people form groups online and then arrange to meet together offline, received a lot of press last year when Howard Dean's presidential campaign used it to build, albeit briefly, an army of volunteers. But if you think, as did some of my colleagues, that that was the company's heyday, you'd be wrong. Heiferman, 32, tells me that Meetup members are just beginning to realize the power that they can wield through the Internet.

Heiferman says that he and his colleagues have noticed that Meetups are becoming more political—and not just on a national level either. In New York City, a Meetup group for pug owners, for example, helped organize dog owners to protest plans to close dog runs in Washington Square Park. "It was a shock to us," he says, "that Meetups are not just warm and fuzzy events. Even the dog meetings turn into political gatherings." In several Meetup groups in Bangalore, India, of which there are now 100, he says that software programmers are working together to improve their working conditions—it's a nascent move toward collective bargaining. "When people get together, they see what they have in common and talk often turns to 'how do we make things better?'" Heiferman says. "These are like the new unions."

With people finding new ways to use Meetups, or member gatherings, the company is rapidly growing. In February and March, there were about 50% more Meetups than in the year-ago period, even though that was when the 2004 presidential primaries were in full swing. The company now has 1.7 million members who have organized Meetups in 50 countries around the world. There's the Philadelphia Yoga Meetup Group, with 142 members, the Knitting Meetup Group in Herndon, Va., with six members, and the four-member Montreal Blind and Deaf Dogs Meetup Group. (The last group is for dog owners, not dogs, but as a New Yorker cartoon once remarked: On the Internet nobody knows you're a dog.) Then there are the myriad political groups, along with groups for witches (146 members for one in Boston), groups in New York for speakers of 15 different foreign languages, and a two-member group for readers of the literary magazine *McSweeney's* in Champaign, Ill.

Heiferman formed Meetup with Matt Meeker and Peter Kamali after the 9/11 attacks. A serial entrepreneur who founded an Internet advertising agency called i-traffic (now part of Omnicom's Agency.com) and who more recently co-founded a photo sharing site called Fotolog, Heiferman was living in lower Manhattan, not far from the World Trade Center, in September 2001. "In those first few days after 9/11, New York was more like a city of neighbors than of strangers," he says. Interested in the idea of community, Heiferman read *Bowling Alone*, a book by Robert Putnam, a Harvard public policy professor, on the decline of neighborly group activity in America. Putnam's book gave Heiferman the idea for a web company that could help like-minded neighbors find each other online and then arrange to meet each other in social settings. "The question I started with was: How do people find each other locally when they share a cause or interest?" he says. What he realized was that the web could bring neighbors together in some places, like New York City, because a critical mass of them were online. Launched in June 2002, Meetup's early groups included ones for Chihuahua owners; bloggers; devotees of Slashdot.org, a techie website; and miscellaneous religious groups.

Heiferman says Meetup, a privately owned company with 30 employees, should go into the black by the end of this year. He hasn't lacked high-powered helpers in building a business around his idealism. Putnam, for instance, is on the company's advisory board. But Meetup's five-member board of directors is where you find the real firepower. It's a Meetup anyone would like to attend—and it's heavy with idealists. The directors are Heiferman, former Senator Bill Bradley (now with investment bank Allen & Co.), eBay founder Pierre Omidyar (on his only board seat aside from eBay), digital pundit and investor Esther Dyson, and Andreas Stavropoulos, a venture capitalist with Draper Fisher Jurvetson who invested in the company early on.

Though Meetup's pages display Google ads, the lion's share of its revenue comes from member fees. Heiferman says the company could easily have started making money earlier had it been willing to take certain kinds of corporate ads and sponsorships, but that's not his style. "In any business you have to kiss the ass of the people who pay you," he says with blunt eloquence. "So if we're going to kiss someone's ass, we want it to be the users." Everything in his business is deliberately oriented toward bottom-up notions of peer-to-peer user-empowerment. That's what drew Omidyar's interest. He called Heiferman up out of the blue in late 2003 to say he was a fan of the company and wanted to invest.

Meetup is not like other social networking sites. Friendster, MySpace.com, Tribe.net, and Tickle, and those oriented towards business, like Ryze and LinkedIn, introduce people to each other in cyberspace. They don't create social groups where people can meet each other face-to-face. So far, Meetup doesn't have any real competitors. It's the kind of business, like eBay, which becomes harder by the day for competitors to dislodge. Meetup is rapidly reaching critical mass. And with supporters like multi-billionaire Omidyar, I predict it's here for the long haul.

Heiferman says he's just doing his part to promote democracy. "The 300 Chihuahua groups around the world think of themselves as a chapter-based organization," he says. "Maybe they'll eventually go to Purina and say they want their dog food more Chihuahua-friendly." (The New York City Chihuahua Meetup Group has 405 members and meets this coming Saturday at noon.) Heiferman also speculates that the 700 Meetups for Moms—one of the company's fastest-growing categories—could eventually all become one national organization. "This is the vital plumbing for democracy," he says. "[Alexis] de Toqueville said that what was powerful about America was people forming coalitions and standing up for themselves and sharing power." Heiferman's musings may seem grandiose, but too many of us still don't realize how fundamentally the Internet—and its creations like Meetup—is changing the social equation and putting power in the hands of ordinary people.

SURVEY: AMERICA

The glue of society

Jul 14th 2005

Americans are joining clubs again

. . . Voluntary associations have been the secret ingredient of American social dynamism since the country's foundation. "Americans of all ages", wrote Alexis de Tocqueville, "are forever forming associations." By connecting people to their neighbours and to the wider world, argued de Tocqueville, civic associations made Americans better informed, safer, richer and better able to govern themselves and create a just and stable society. They developed to provide something for everyone: fraternal bodies such as the Kiwanis and Elks for men, cross-class federations such as the League of Women Voters for women, scouts and girl guides for boys and girls. There were farmers' groups, industrial unions and associations of Elvis impersonators. If the great sorting-out is pulling social bonds apart, then Americans' love of clubs seems the most likely glue to put them back together again.

But will it? In 2000, Robert Putnam, a professor at Harvard, wrote a celebrated book, "Bowling Alone", which claimed that America's civil society was in crisis. Mr Putnam pointed out that in the two decades to the mid-1990s, the number of Americans who said they had attended a public meeting on local or school affairs had fallen by a third. The proportion who said they attended club meetings fell from nearly two-thirds of the population in the mid-1970s to a little over one-third in the late 1990s.

It was not solely the decline in volunteerism that was the problem. The composition of civic associations was also changing. As many of Mr Putnam's critics pointed out, the absolute number of voluntary associations rocketed during that period, from around 8,000 in the 1950s to just over 20,000 in 2000. Optimists said this showed that, far from falling apart, civil society in America was actually flourishing. Americans were finding new ways of linking up and influencing public life.

However, it turned out that the new associations belonged to a different species. Whereas the old clubs had many functions, social, recreational and professional, most of the new organisations—bodies such as the Sierra Club or NARAL, a reproductive-rights group—were professionally led advocacy groups. Whereas the old clubs had networks of local chapters that met frequently, the new bodies often had no such networks, or their chapters met only rarely. And whereas the old clubs depended on annual membership dues, the advocacy groups got their money from foundation grants or direct-mail appeals.

The result, argues Theda Skocpol of Harvard University, was that mass participatory civic life in America declined, despite the proliferation of new bodies. The old associations reinforced ideals of good citizenship. Local and national leaders had to take some note of their members' views. And surprisingly large numbers learned the workings of democracy at first hand. National federations could have thousands of local chapters, each with a number of officers elected each year. Mrs Skocpol calculates that in 1955, the 20 largest voluntary associations alone had 5% of the adult population serving in some capacity or other. All these local officers had to run meetings, handle membership dues, keep records and so on. . .

. . . At first, it seemed as though Mr Putnam's scepticism was justified. The anonymity of virtual communities appeared to be fatal to the creation of trust and of real civic bonds. When half the members of a teenage girls' online chatroom turned out to be middle-aged men, it was hardly a Tocquevillean moment. But over the past few years, online groups have started to use "convening technology" to create face-to-face social bonds. For example, if you go to meetup.com, you can type in where you live and what your interests are—say Young Republicans, Chihuahuas or Brazilian reggae—and the site will tell you where and when Young Republicans, Chihuahua fanciers or Brazilian reggae enthusiasts are meeting up within 15 miles of your home over the next two weeks.

One of the founders of Meetup, in New York in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, was Scott Heiferman, who had been reading "Bowling Alone". "In those first few days after 9/11", he says, "New York felt more like a city of neighbours than of strangers. The question I started with was: how do you start an association today? Do you need a building in Washington? No, you go online."

Since 2002, Meetup has been the forum for over 100,000 clubs with 2m members. This spring there were 2,400 Meetup meetings a week, about 50% more than a year earlier. It is true that these are often meetings of the like-minded, of people with particular tastes in common, rather than universal gatherings of the old national federations that tied disparate groups together. It is also too early to say whether a single website will reverse decades of civic decline: meetup.com is only three years old and has just started charging, with unpredictable consequences.

Still, the growth is impressive. . . these internet-generated meetings are the traditional face-to-face kind that Mr Heiferman calls "the old Tocquevillean stuff". To cite one small example, the New York Chihuahua club organised a protest by city dog owners against attempts to close dog parks. "The 300 Chihuahua groups around the world think of themselves as a chapter-based organisation," says Mr Heiferman. In the past, when you moved house, you could lose touch with your local chapter. Now you go online and plug into a network. . .