

# THE 'I' IN COMMUNITY

Enabling the individual enables the community.

Sounds counterintuitive, right? In reality, powerful individualism is often what leads to strong communities. Many of the most successful communities are created when people are empowered to take ownership and have a voice.

As we strive to move away from cookie-cutter sameness, individuals' opinions, points of view, or unique thoughts can spark connection. We see it across all types of communities, whether grassroots

or corporate-sponsored, virtual or rooted in physical space. The more eclectic and interesting, the more it thrives. Funny how an emphasis on "I" leads to a more coherent sense of we.

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TAKE ACTION – *designing for Life's Changes*

1.

### *Make your customers co-owners*

Let your customers own the experience with you. Push past the comfort zone of control and see how far your experience grows.

2.

### *Attract personality with personality*

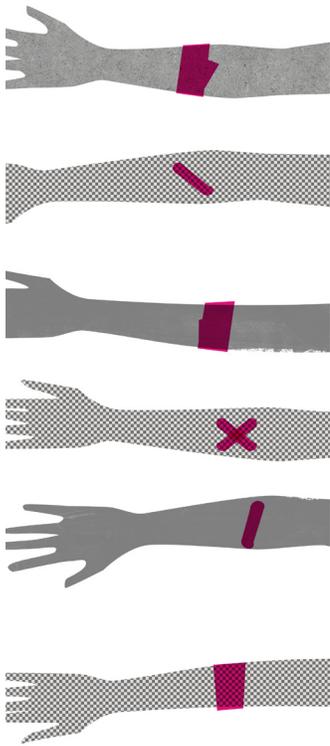
Want to attract passion? Be passionate. Dare to show your personality in order to encourage others to put just as much or more into the experience.

3.

### *Practice stealth facilitation*

Edit in the background. Authenticity and spontaneity should appear in the forefront, not control.

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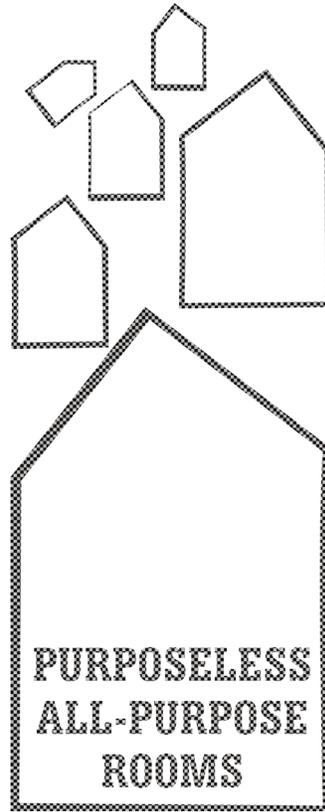


## Personality fuels philanthropy

Every two months, devoted blood donor, Jon gathers up eight of his coworkers for an afternoon of giving. First they fuel up at his favorite pizza place before heading to the blood bank where they race each other to see who will be first to fill up their bags. The group participates religiously every 56 days (the legal minimum time between donations), with people even going out of their way to stay on schedule by making up missed sessions on their own. As important as this ritual has become, everyone in the group freely admits they would have never donate without Jon.

## Sponsored my way

Is sponsorship community? When athletes feel valued, it is. That's why TYR allows swimmers to advertise personal swim clubs right along with its own company's logo. TYR understands that the more athletes are allowed to express their individuality, the more connected they feel to the sponsorship. And it's working. James, a professional swimmer, admits he was drawn to TYR over other sponsors because they respected and even encouraged his club affiliation.



When BRIDGE Housing found that the common areas built in their affordable housing complexes had turned into anonymous, unused spaces, they knew they had to come up with a plan. Fortunately, the socially minded developers caught wind of a few bright spots of activity: afterschool programs hanging artwork in public spaces, common areas turned into children's play spaces, and residents decorating their front porches in ways that entertained others passing by. Following these leads BRIDGE now seeks to extend a sense of ownership to the residents. BRIDGE wants to invite residents to use the public space for personal activities. They hope to turn formerly lifeless urban gardens into thriving shared environments. They've seen that giving a little permission for personal expression creates a lot of community pride.

## Yelp Elite Members

A true Yelper Yelps often and well. In return, they become members of the Yelp elite. Status is based on the number, quality, relevance and quirkiness of reviews posted and final selection is made by the "National Elite Committee." Elite status translates into exclusive invitations and incentives to keep Yelping. As a spokesperson for the site says, "We are looking for Yelpers that have personality. Yelp's not just a city guide, it's a community. The more people can relate to you, the more your reviews and opinions start to matter."



## SF Scooter Girls

This homegrown club, whose motto is "Any Girl, Any Scooter," was founded on the belief that women have their own place in riding culture that's very different from the traditional biker scene. The SF Scooter Girls website features photos of each member showing off her highly personalized ride. Disco bikes. Flower-covered bikes. There's even one member whose skull-covered 1980 Vespa 100 is nicknamed "The Tick." And although these women can choose to ride any manufacturer's scooter, their passion for Vespa, even though they have no affiliation with the company, creates a strong brand statement on its own.



## Pixar

Avoiding the "every man for himself" sensibility of Hollywood, Pixar has turned movie-making on its ear. Part of their secret to success is allowing individual expression to fuel their tight-knit culture. The most visible example of this is empowering every staff member to design their own workspace. The results—far from your typical cubicle farm—are one of the most inspiring and interesting places to work. Walking down the halls, you see everything from piñatas to jungle themes to a neighborhood of cottages. All very different, yet all very Pixar.

PATTERNS are a collection of shared thoughts, insights, and observations gathered through our work and the world around us. We invite you to join the conversation, so we can raise the bar and develop richer design thinking experiences collectively.

**Be a pattern spotter:** Now that you've been exposed to a few different examples, don't be surprised if you start seeing *Life's Changes* patterns all around. Keep your eyes open and let us know what you find, especially if it's the next new pattern.

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