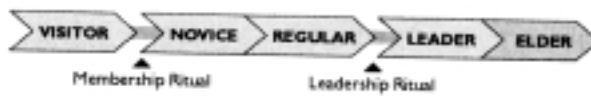


**FIGURE 4.1**  
**THE MEMBERSHIP LIFE CYCLE**  
 The five essential stages of community membership



## Community Building on the Web

*This is the guidebook I hand out to anyone serious about building online communities. Not just merchants, but citizen groups, hobbyists, ethnic supporters—anyone nurturing an embryonic tribe. Most of what we know so far about how to build real communities on the Web is contained herein.*

—KK

### Community Building on the Web Secret Strategies for Successful Online Communities

Amy Jo Kim  
 2000, 360 pages  
 \$29.99  
 Peachpit Press  
[www.peachpit.com](http://www.peachpit.com)



Any community with a rating system can have “champions” by highlighting the top performers—for example, eBay acknowledges and rewards members with the highest feedback scores. And Motley Fool uses their message board rating system to showcase members whose posts are consistently highly rated. Again, drawing attention to good performance will show all your members what success looks like and will motivate some of your most valuable members to stay involved.

If you are running a small, not-for-profit community like a bookclub or mutual support group, you'll naturally turn to volunteers. But if you've got a growing Web community that has strategic goals and quarterly budget reports, deciding who gets paid and who doesn't becomes more complicated. Some communities, like the Motley Fool, avoid the issue altogether by having all their official community leaders on staff. With paid leaders, you'll retain more control over your brand and be able to run a more professional organization because staff and contractors are legally bound to fulfill their duties. On the other hand, a struggling Web community can incur a serious financial burden if it relies solely on paid leaders.

Most large-scale Web communities—like Talk City, Ultima Online, GeoCities, Simutronics, CNN, and AOL—walk this line by developing a tiered leadership structure that includes full-time staff, part-time contractors, and shifting ranks of volunteers. If you expect to have such a mix, you should launch your leadership program with paid, experienced leaders if you can afford it. This will let you attract people who know what they're doing, avoid the ambiguities of dealing with volunteers, and get your program off on the right foot. These experienced leaders can then help you set up the infrastructure and policies for your volunteer leadership program.

## Guerrilla Wireless

*By combining some off-the-shelf gear, you can build a robust and very fast wireless network that takes you completely out of the normal telecom model of hooking people to the Net. The new 802.11 wireless Ethernet standard has spawned the creation of dozens of 2.4 Ghz wireless networking products. The beauty of this emerging system is that you can quickly (no wires!) connect thousands of people together at speeds up to 11Mbit (fast enough to send video). Plug this guerrilla wireless network into someone's ordinary \$50/month DSL connection, or a T1 line, or Satellite uplink, and now everyone in the network is on the Internet!*



*With this technology you can build a pervasive wireless network that reaches out between one and 15 miles (depending on terrain). You could then set up a relay radio every one–15 miles and stretch that network out infinitely. You could wire up a county or even small state this way. At the Burning Man festival this year, I helped build a satellite uplinked version of this network, with capacity and range for 30,000 people, and it was up and running in only a few days. Instant Internet for a city.*

*To accomplish this you'll need something like the AeroNet/Cisco 340 series server, which costs about \$800–\$1400. You hook that up to a just-under-the-legal-limit amplifier and antenna by WaveLAN (kit price about \$800). And you'll need something to give out IP addresses, like one of the Netopia DHCP router boxes. Computers participating in the network need a wireless modem card; these range from about \$100–\$300.*

—Alexander Rose

Wireless Internet Models/Explanations:  
[www.aironet.com/wireless/](http://www.aironet.com/wireless/)  
[www.aironet.com/markets/isp\\_cyber.asp](http://www.aironet.com/markets/isp_cyber.asp)

[www.beyond.com](http://www.beyond.com)  
 Netopia R-Series Frac T1/T1 Router Module, \$554.99

[www.cdw.com](http://www.cdw.com)  
 Cisco Aironet 340 11Mbps DSSS Access Point with 40-bit WEP, \$968  
 11Mbps DSSS wireless bridge for building-to-building, \$1,409.63  
 Cisco Aironet Low Loss Antenna 75' Cable 5.0 dBi antenna, \$115.26  
 11Mbps DSSS PCI adapter for Aironet 340 series, \$277.12  
 Cisco Aironet 340 11 Mbps DSSS PC Card Adapter, \$187.22

[www.wavelan.net/2400SX.htm](http://www.wavelan.net/2400SX.htm)  
 HyperAmp HA2400SX, \$545.00  
 Amplified 8dB Omnidirectional Antenna Kit for WaveLAN IEEE/Turbo, \$785.00

## Webconferencing

Ever try to carry on group conversations about sixteen subjects at once via mailing list? Worse, have you ever tried to find that one post in those sixteen subjects that you needed? An e-mail list is often not enough. Much better is Webconferencing software which structures a group's correspondence by subject into neat hierarchies (conference, topic, post), and then enables easy navigation of discussions that may continue for weeks or even years. These structured posts serve as a group memory that can create a knowledge repository. Webconferencing therefore combines the capabilities of good peer-to-peer communications with the capabilities of the Web. Several moderately priced Webconferencing products now make it possible for your group, community, company, or social network to mix informal and serious discourse in the same social cyberspace. The better products enable multimedia posts and the ability to add URLs within posts, as well as diagrams, illustrations, or other graphics in the context of a discussion.

Two of the very best and most affordable Webconferencing products are WebCrossing and Motet. I have used both systems as a participant in many conferences, and more importantly, as a person setting up and hosting many conferences on the Web. Both of these packages have the essential features of a desirable Webconferencing system—subscription lists so you can tailor your participation to follow only those discussions that interest you, discussions structured as streams of comments (and not as collections of documents, the way Lotus Notes and other stupid pre-Web groupware does).

The two programs have slightly different interface styles. WebCrossing includes fully integrated read-and-post-via-e-mail and chat features, and a more detailed administrative control panel. If you have a larger number of users or you run an educational institution, Motet offers a better deal financially. WebCrossing comes in three versions: free with ads,



paid without ads, or free without ads below a certain level of activity. If you are willing to put up with their banner advertisements, WebCrossing will host your community for free on their servers. If you want them to host without the ads, WebCrossing costs start at \$1.50 per thousand pageviews. You can license and install their software on your own server without charge if you have less than 1,000 page views daily—a great way to see how you like the product. A half-dozen people, and a half-dozen conferences, with a half-dozen topics, probably won't go over a thousand page views per day. Beyond that and you'll need the paid or advertising version.



Motet has a straight one-time license fee of \$1,995 per site, with no subsequent annual charges. A license for fifty or fewer registered users is \$995. Accredited educational institutions and nonprofits can license it for \$500.

Both programs will run on most Webservers. The ultimate information source for Webconferencing products and services is <http://thinkofit.com/webconf/>.

—Howard Rheingold

[www.webcrossing.com](http://www.webcrossing.com)  
[www.motet.com](http://www.motet.com)