

SPOTLIGHT ON



## [Spotlight On: Meetup.com

By Doug Kirkpatrick

Meetup.com believes in the power of self-organization. Its stated mission is: “to revitalize local community and help people around the world self-organize. Meetup believes that people can change their personal world, or the whole world, by organizing themselves into groups that are powerful enough to make a difference.”

The company is the world’s largest network of local affinity groups, enabling people throughout the world to either organize a new group or join an existing one in their own community (45,000 cities and counting).

CEO and Co-Founder Scott Heiferman is a passionate believer in organizational self-management. When the fast-growing company found itself suffocating with bureaucracy in 2007, its leadership decided to make a radical change—to a system of self-organization. Meetup’s conundrum: if it wanted the world to self-organize, how could the company not do the same? By stripping away stifling bureaucracy, and giving its people the freedom to propose, innovate and collaborate, it unleashed its latent creativity in a brilliant sunburst of human energy.

While some managers with a stake in the previous structure left the company, it was hard to argue with the results that followed. Meetup doubled its monthly signups in early 2009 from a year earlier, and now boasts over six million members and facilitates over 180,000 monthly meetups around the planet.

Its leaders take their work very, very seriously—but not themselves. Relishing their roles as guides and mentors rather than command-and-control enforcers, Heiferman and Chief Technology Officer Greg Whalin now have time to think about how to make their technology best serve the needs of human beings and their communities. •