Cooperative Development

Think Outside the Boss

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About Us

My name is Michele Metts, people call me Micky and I am known as FreeScholar in the Drupal Community.

I am a member of Agaric, a tech cooperative and LibreBoston an activist outreach group.

I speak to groups about the realities of using FREE software, and I facilitate discussion on building cooperatives and collectives. I am a Drupal Hacker.

I joined the Drupal community in 2006.

Cooperation

WHAT IS A SHARED - OWNERSHIP MODEL?

Why choose cooperation over competition?

Choices

1) Freelance: You do everything yourself. You make all the decisions.

2) Employment: You share work and skills with other people. Someone else is ultimately in charge of things.

3) Cooperative: Work and decision-making are shared with your co-workers.

WORKING AT A TRADITIONAL COMPANY IS NOT ALL BAD...

Clear entry path and selection criteria

Defined career paths

Administrative support

Processes for nearly everything

Salaried or hourly pay

Benefits, savings and retirement plans

...BUT THERE ARE ASPECTS OF A TRADITIONAL COMPANY THAT WE WISH WERE DIFFERENT

Bureaucratic and hierarchical

Limited autonomy and creative license

Limited flexibility in work schedules

Lack of alignment with personal values

Career path is one-dimensional

Colleagues and boss are rarely a choice

Difficult to find meaning in daily work or the end product

Difficult to find organization with the right cultural fit

Limited visibility into profits or growth priorities

Limited if any accountability to community

SHARED-OWNERSHIP MODELS IN THE UNITED STATES

> 300* workplaces

> 3500* people

> $400 m annual revenue

*Strictly defined, there are 30,000 cooperatives, employing 856,000 workers in the United States. Most of these cooperatives are consumer cooperatives, owned by consumers, rather than workers (http://www.newrepublic.com/article/118933/economic-benefits-coop)

Any business can be a worker – owned and – controlled business.

58 percent of cooperatives are in the retail and service sectors (Worker Coops: Pathways to Scale, Hillary Abell, The Democracy Collective)

Service - housecleaning, day labor, restaurants, taxis, childcare

Retail - grocery stores, bakeries, bookstores, bike shops

Healthcare - nursing, home health care, clinics, bodywork

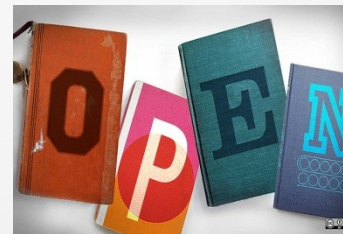Skilled trades - printing, plumbing, woodworking, contracting

Manufacturing / engineering - machine parts, fabricating

Technology - web hosting, networking, voice and data systems

Education charter schools, teacher/student/parent-run schools

Media / Arts - designers, galleries, performers, publishers

Source: usworker.coop, Images: CC license

WHAT ARE THE REAL BENEFITS OF THE SHARED - OWNERSHIP MODEL?

The 7 cooperative principles*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Voluntary and open membership	Democratic control (1 member, 1 vote)	Member economic participation	Autonomy and independence	Education, training, and information	Cooperation among cooperatives	Concern for community

Long-term sustainable jobs

Sustainable business practices that benefit community

Connected, involved, and accountable to community

Money is not sole indicator of success – "multiple bottom line"

Autonomous and democratic standards of work = happy, productive**, committed workers

Members receive profits in the form of patronage dividends on the basis of what they do instead of what they own

Supplementing economic development programs in cities suffering under the weight of de-industrialization

Source: Partially sourced from article on Richmoncooploans.net
* Worker Coops: Pathways to Scale
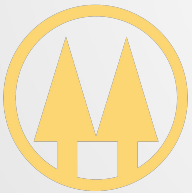**http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/ialrr49&div=8&
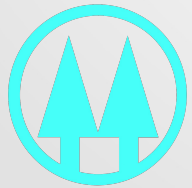
Types of cooperatives

Worker

Housing

Producer

Services

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVES?

Mondragon is one of the leading Spanish business groups, integrated by autonomous and independent cooperatives with production subsidiaries and corporate offices in 41 countries and sales in more than 150 countries. mondragon-corporation.com

- Worker-owned: Nobody gets a wage; instead each is paid a monthly advance on his or her share of the year's projected profit
- Worker-controlled: Each worker-owner has one vote, and decisions are made by democratic vote of all owners

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-obHJfTaQvw

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL LOCAL COOPERATIVES?

Some local successes!

- A Yard and a Half - Landscaping and garden services

- Boston TechCollective is a worker-owned cooperative offering tech support and computer services to the Greater Boston area.

- Red Sun – Printing

- Cero - cooperative energy, recycling & organics

- Equal Exchange – Manufacturing

- Gaia Host Collective – Information Technology – web hosting

Coops in Massachusetts:
https://usworker.coop/find-a-worker-coop?display_name=&state_province=1020

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVES USING DRUPAL?

Agaric - A technology cooperative of developers.

Quilted.coop - A worker-owned, cooperatively-managed company stitching together technology and social change.

Colab.coop - Builds products that are disrupting the real estate industry and ushering in bold ideas for a greener economy.

Koumbit.org - Providing web services, including designing, developing, and hosting websites.

Palantetech.coop - A worker cooperative that provides tech consulting services to progressive nonprofit, social justice, activist and community organizations.

What are the challenges?

Jobs are no longer the goal.

Ownership is the future.

Defining a path

Get familiar with people speaking from experience:

http://east.usworker.coop/2015-conference/resources
http://commonbound.org/speakers
http://conference.coop/speakers/

Get familiar with what they are speaking about:

http://commonbound.org/sessions

0. Define the Parameters

0. Define the parameters of your cooperative environment.

It could be in Articles of Organization, ByLaws or a simple contractual agreement between members...

or just a handshake.

A cooperative or collective is defined by the members.

1. Find co-workers

1. You need to find co-workers in your industry that value one worker one vote.

Talk to people in your personal network about your goal.

Let former co-workers know you are forming or seeking to work with a cooperative.

2. Go to Events

2. Go to events where you will meet members of cooperatives and ask them how they are structured internally.

There are meetups (meetup.com) or you could start one in your area.

Reach out to mailing lists you are on and ask if people are interested in working collectively.

3. Search and Research

3. Search for cooperatives that are listed in several online directories and research their strategies.

Open Directory search for all types of coops:

http://find.coop/

http://ica.coop/en

Food coops:

http://www.coopdirectory.org/

Worker coops:

http://www.usworker.coop/member-directory

and of course **Twitter** -   https://twitter.com/hashtag/cooperatives

4. Options to Buy

4. Discuss options of the workers buying the company

If you are in a great working situation and the company is structured in a hierarchy - talk to the owner about the possibility of selling it to the workers.

The converted cooperative will continue its business operations, albeit with a new board, new governance structure, and new system of distributing profits.

http://www.co-oplaw.org/conversion

5. Join a Network

5. Join a cooperative network or 2 or 3…

a) http://usfwc.org
b) http://techworker.coop
c) http://bostoncoop.net

6. Invest in Others

6. Invest in other cooperatives.

Encourage pooled funds from successful cooperatives to help bootstrap new proposed cooperatives.

Seek out people and organizations that are providing services that your cooperative may need and introduce them to information that will help them get started.

Social Justice

Social justice is a big part of cooperative culture.

Working to benefit your community and the world is what cooperation is all about. Building foundations, platforms and tools for people to take control of their economic situation is a part of the cooperative movement.

How can you join the efforts to make opportunities for people to grow and learn?

7. Join the Free Software movement

7. Use Free Software

Free Software = Free Society

http://fsf.org

Richard Stallman on TEDx
Free Software, Free Society

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ag1AKIl_2GM

Cory Doctorow sheds some light
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbYXBJOFgeI

Why Free Software?

What does it mean to be dependent on the proprietary tools of a competitive society vs. the FREE tools of a cooperative society?

We are already the owners of high end, professional, FREE software, yet many of us are unaware while others refuse to take possession.

We Own Free Software

Some of the FREE software we collectively own, is the very same software that most of the Internet runs on.

and…
Drupal is FREE software

Drupal and Coops

The Drupal community is an excellent model of cooperation in action.

What are some examples of cooperation within the Drupal community?

Monthly Boston/Cambridge Coop Meetup:

http://agaric.com/coop

News and Resources

Articles about cooperatives

http://www.thenews.coop/
The Guardian - http://bit.ly/1s83iyE
The ecologist - http://bit.ly/1oaxYyt
http://shareable.net/blog/how-to-start-a-worker-co-op

Worth a listen: "Tech Cooperatives: A Better Way to Make a Living"
http://schedule.sxsw.com/2012/events/event_IAP9313 with Jack Aponte of http://palantetech.com

Starting a cooperative

http://banyanproject.coop/starting-a-news-co-op
tech-coop@npogroups.org -the best tech-worker-coop-related mailing list that i know of
http://npogroups.org/lists/info/tech-coop
http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/workercoop/info
http://www.techworker.coop/

My Projects and Interests:
LibreBoston.org
Agaric.com
PowerToConnect.org
VoipDrupal.org

Other Links of Interest

Some related links below that are not specific to cooperatives, but are very relevant to change in a society where coops can flourish.

http://satifice.com/octofice/2013/07/02/tyranny-of-open - Tyranny of Open - critique of free software's worsening of many inequalities (particularly gender and race)

http://www.ashedryden.com/blog/the-ethics-of-unpaid-labor-and-the-oss-community - The Ethics of Unpaid Labor and the OSS Community - by Ashe Dryden.

http://open.bufferapp.com/introducing-open-salaries-at-buffer-including-our-transparent-formula-and-all-individual-salaries