What is a Swarm?

A swarm is a decentralized, collaborative social group of volunteers. It looks like a traditional hierarchical organization from the outside and it's built by a small core of people that make up a scaffolding of go-to people, enabling numbers of volunteers to cooperate on a common goal on a scale not possible before the net. A swarm will form if you present a compelling enough idea that people can feel they're part of.

The idea needs to be tangible, credible, inclusive, and epic.

- Tangible: You need to post an outline of the goals you intend to meet, when, and how.

- Credible: After having presented your daring goal, you need to present it as totally doable. Bonus points if nobody has done it before.

- Inclusive: There must be room for participation by every spectator who finds it interesting, and they need to realize this on hearing about the project.

- Epic: Finally, you must set out to change the entire world for the better — or at least make a major improvement for a lot of people.

Swarms only work well when you strive for the greater good.

Before you swarm ask yourself these questions:

- How many people are affected by this idea?

- Will enough people to be energized to contribute so as to pass the critical threshold? Discover the threshold by identifying the group of people affected in a positive direction by your provocative idea, estimate the size of that group, and then make an educated guess how many of this group may engage in the swarm at the lowest level of activation.

- How many people must get on board for your idea to succeed?

- What event constitutes success, and what does it take to get there?

- What are the swarm's values?

How do you gather a swarm around the idea?

The swarm excels at self-organization and this is its first task . But you must first set up the structure and assign the swarm this task.

Analyze your geography

Look at the area your swarm covers and divide it into no more than thirty geographical areas since you will only be able to coordinate thirty groups at most. Create a discussion forum with that number of subgroups.

Recruit the scaffolding.

A swarm consists mainly of loosely organized activists but needs a scaffolding of organizers to provide support - janitors not administrators.

Know about "magic" numbers.

- Seven people in a work group
- Thirty people in an extended group.
- One hundred and fifty in a subswarm
- When any group hits these limits, split it into two groups

These numbers aren't magic but based on how people form social groups and communicate. By sticking to these limits you will avoid bottlenecks.

Each geographical area should have four function officers, one for PR/media, one for activism, one for swarmcare and one for web, information,and infrastructure. In addition the area leader should have one or two deputies - making a group of at most seven in total. No area leader should have more than six people working directly with them. Each area leader is both at the bottom of one pyramid and the top of another. No subgroup should have more than thirty members – when it hits thirty it should divide into two subgroups.

The activism leader doesn't lead activism as such, but rather supports it (like all of these roles). Whenever activists decide swarmwise that they want to stage a rally, hand out flyers, put up posters, or do some other form of visible activism, this is the person responsible for the practical details, such as PA equipment, permits, and other details on the ground to make things happen.

The person responsible for PR/media would be responsible for interactions with oldmedia (newspapers, television, radio, etc.) at his or her particular geography. That includes sending press releases, making sure press kits with information are available, and other things related to serving oldmedia with information about the swarm and its activities.

The person responsible for swarmcare welcomes new activists into the swarm and continually measures the overall health of it. A typical task would be to call new activists just to make them feel

welcome, and tell them when the next events — social as well as operational — take place. This is more than enough for one person to chew.

Finally, the information-and-web guy is the person who maintains the infrastructure of a blog or other web page that summarizes the relevant information of the swarm in this particular geography. (This person also communicates internally when events, such as rallies, happen. The swarm decides when and if they happen; it is the job of this person to communicate the consensus.)

One person should have one role in the scaffolding, Don't have multi-role people this creates bottlenecks.

Direct everyone to go to the subgroup for their area and meet with the other members of that subgroup. Tell people to introduce themselves to one another, and to select a leader. Then set up a subforum where these subgroup leaders can discuss things between themselves and with you. As the swarm organizes into these subgroups by geography, it needs to be given a task that allows it to jell properly over the first four weeks or so of its existence.

Use the Three Activist Rule

The three-activist rule: If three activists agree that something is good for the swarm, they have a green light to act in the sawrm's name. It's not that they don't need to ask permission — it goes deeper than that. Rather, they should never ask permission if three activists agree that something is good. And beyond that: they are specifically banned from asking permission. Their own judgment is the best available in the organization for their own social context, and they have to use that judgment rather than hiding behind somebody else's greenlighting.

Update the overall progress of the tasks at least daily.

The swarm consists only of relationships between people.

Getting people to know other people should be the main goal of your activities.

Make sure that newcomers feel welcome - for every new relationship that is created, the organization grows.

When the swarm hits 150 people, you must start breaking it up into smaller groups. Make sure that there are social subswarms everywhere that can attract and retain new people, and not just one centrally located chat channel. Subswarms will have the social maximum size of 150.

Communicate very clearly what you want to see happen and why. If people agree with you, they will make that happen, without you telling a single person anything else. Your role is to set goals and ambitions, ambitions that don't stop short of changing the entire world for the better.

Don't talk about abstract concepts, your prospective volunteers will just yawn. To grow the swarm to critical mass we'll need a large recruitment surface with concepts that are easy to relate to people's everyday lives.

Divide the people of the swarm into three groups by activity level: officers, activists, and passive supporters.

- Officers are the people in the scaffolding, people who have taken on the formal responsibility of upholding the swarm.
- Activists are the actual swarm, the people that make things happen on a huge scale.
- Passive supporters are people who agree with the goals as such, but haven't taken any action

Control the Vision, but Never the Message.

As you build a swarm, it is imperative that everybody is empowered to act in the swarm on the basis of what they believe will further its goals — but no one is allowed to empower themselves to restrict others. People are allowed, encouraged, and expected to assume speaking and acting power for themselves in the swarm's name, but never the kind of power that limits others' right to do the same thing.

Swarms need a leader

Leaderless swarms are not capable of delivering a tangible change in the world at the end of the day. The scaffolding, the culture, and the goals of the swarm need to emanate from a founder.

You do the vision, the swarm does the talking

Communicate your vision to everybody, and let the thousands of activists translate your vision into words that fit their specific social context. Don't make a one-size-fits-all message. activists not only are encouraged to translate your vision, but also to interpret and apply it to specific scenarios

Enforce the principle of "If you see something you don't like, contribute with something you do like."

When people in the swarm get criticized by the public and by influential people, that is a sign you're on the right track. This is not something to fear, this is something to celebrate, and everybody in the swarm must know this.

After the Swarm forms

First, allow the swarm's scaffolding to keep growing organically. Train your closest officers in swarm methodology and techniques and set subgoals that are spaced about eight weeks apart. This may seem like a contradiction to self-organization, but it's not: you're telling the swarm the things that need to happen to get from point A to point B. You're not saying who should be doing what and when.

Each subgoal needs to be credible, relevant, achievable, and clearly contributing to the end success. leave 10 percent of the time of every subgoal unallocated for unforeseen events.

Using a visible mechanism with a competitive element and measuring things in internal competitions gets them done quickly and adds fun. Measuring the right thing is crucial - make sure you measure the right thing. Anything that you measure in public, people will strive and self-organize to improve. Also, routine activities that are the same from day to day require motivation that internal competitions

provide.

Provide work areas where the activists can share work files with one another: posters, flyers, blog layouts, catchy slogans, campaign themes, anything related to spreading your ideas and vision. Also, they must have the ability to comment on and discuss these work files between them.

Have regular meetings over the phone or over a chat line These meetings should be limited to seven people if on the phone, or thirty people if in a chat channel. Timing and locations of physical meetings can serve to lock out activists from engaging in the swarm — often inadvertently.

Meetings are a necessary evil, because people who are eager to be part of the swarm can easily see meetings as the purpose of the swarm — they will tend to see meetings as work itself, rather than the short time frame where you report and synchronize the actual work

Focus in the swarm is always on what everybody can do, and never what people cannot or must do.

Communicate three values:

- We can do this.
- We are going to change the world for the better.
- This is going to be hard work for us, but totally worth it.

Shoot for the moon!

Once you've run the numbers and communicated to the swarm that your insane idea is actually achievable, blue sparks of energy will jolt across the swarm with loud, crackling noises. People will look high from the excitement of being a part of this. Feel high, too.

Managing the Swarm

Making Decisions

No one has the right to limit what another can do. This would be the typical swarmthink, at least as far as plentiful resources are involved. (When it comes to money, in case the swarm has any, decisions need to be made.)

Ways of making decisions

- 51 percent of the swarm has the right to exercise power over 49 percent of the swarm – this is meeting-and-voting scenario. This is not only counter to swarmthink, but it also creates a culture of fear of losing rather than a culture of empowerment and action.

- Someone has the final decision. Ruling over others by decree is not only completely counter to swarmthink, but it doesn't work in the first place, as people are volunteers and, quite frankly, do whatever they want.

- Everybody has the power of veto for decisions. This creates significant problems with who constitutes "everybody," but it is one of the most inclusive ways to get volunteers on board once that problem has been solved. However, it only works well for smaller subgroups (30 or less people).

Ruling by decree is right out. Voting creates losers, losers are unhappy and fuck things up. Don't assume that the collective makes better decisions than the individual activists - swarms rely on the exact opposite. The values we desire in a swarm are inclusion, diversity, and empowerment. But if we are voting on something, we are limiting the minority — not empowering them. A swarm is legitimate only because it lets every individual include themselves on their own terms in order to further the swarm's goals. Use a consensus circle to make decisions and if your swarm can't reach a consensus then:

Use "the law of two feet":

 It is every activist's right and responsibility to go where they feel they can contribute the most and, at the same time, get the most in return as an individual. If there is no such place within a particular swarm, an activist can leave the swarm and go elsewhere.

Activists can float in and out of organizations, networks, and swarms that best match the change they want to see in the world. One swarm fighting for a goal does not preclude more swarms doing the same, but perhaps with a slightly different set of parameters from a different founder. This is fundamentally good for the end cause.

The swarm's rules are by and large that there are no rules. Some people will seek to impose them.You need to make absolutely clear that the swarm works by its own consensus, that decisions are made

organically by individual activists flowing to and from initiatives of their own accord, and that this swarm is your initiative; if wannabe fixers don't want to play by the swarm's rules, they need to use the law of two feet and go somewhere else.

Allocating resources

The swarm has a structure that can handle budgets and money, and that is the supporting scaffolding. It's the duty of the officers of the swarm to distribute resources in the most effective way to support the end goals through the initiatives of the activists. In this particular aspect, the swarm will resemble a traditional top-down organization in terms of allocating its resources in a decentralized manner. You, in control of the swarm's formal name and resources, allocate budgets to officers, who subdivide their budget in turn. Once the swarm has any money to speak of, most of it should be devoted to supporting individual activists' initiatives where they can reclaim expenses. The swarm lives and dies with the creativity and initiatives of its activists.

Innovation and Activism

The advantages of the swarm are cost-efficiency and execution speed. In order to increase the advantage in execution speed you need to minimize the try-fail-learn-try again cycle — the time from a failure to the next attempt at succeeding. Make it possible to learn and try again, learn again and try again and say that this is not only allowed, but expected. Increase the number of experiments by using the Three Activist Rule.

Managing Behaviour

Everything that we focus on, no matter how or why, will grow in the swarm. if there are behaviors we don't want to see growing, we should ideally pretend they aren't even there — block them out from our conscious radar, and spend time rewarding other kinds of behavior.

Trolls will create a group of followers determined to wreak havoc until they get their way. This can be very disruptive and goes counter to swarmthink, where the best ideas and the best arguments win, rather than the loudest mouths. Still, it is a significant disturbance.

The way to deal with this is not to agree to demands — if you do cave in to get rid of the disturbance, you will teach the entire organization that creating loud disturbances is a very effective way of getting influence in the swarm, and you will start going down a very bumpy road as other people start imitating that behavior. You will never be able to convince trolls that they have bad ideas (and especially so if all they want is attention for themselves, rather than recognition for ideas). You will never be able to win that person.

Rather, you need to identify the reward mechanisms within the subgroup that has formed around the troll. Odds are that they're forming a group identity around not being recognized as individual activists. You can shatter this identity by recognizing good contributors in the troll support group; odds are that there are several good contributors in that group who are just temporarily wooed by the trolls charisma.

If you pick away a couple of key people in this group and recognize them for good earlier work —
unrelated to the troll's yelling — you will isolate the trolls, and the disturbance will lose critical mass.

An organization is people, and attention is reward.

This works for most people but for those who troll as a way of life you\ll need to look at Troll Control
in Swarms for further advice.

What behavior do we want to encourage?

- Initiatives. Even initiatives that fail.
- Supporting others. Actually, this one is quite important. Helping others excel is just as valuable
  as excelling on your own.
- Creativity and sharing ideas.
- Helping people get along.

Adjusting Goals

At some point, you may want to adjust the goals of the swarm. For a political party, this is almost
inevitable. For a single-issue swarm, it is more avoidable. Nevertheless, it creates very difficult
problems in the face of the swarm's disorganization and it may be easier to start an overlapping swarm.

Avoid Excluding People

Always work to include. It's easy to inadvertently exclude people from participation and every
exclusion is a failure. Just because you don't see any people being formally excluded, that doesn't
mean people don't feel excluded.

One way of getting around this, which the German Pirate Party has used very successfully, is to allow
everybody with formal voting rights to select somebody to vote in his or her place. This voting right
can be assigned differently for different issues, and also be assigned in turn, creating a chain of trustto
make an informed vote. This taps into the heart of the swarm's social mechanisms of trusting people
and friends, rather than fearing to lose. "Trust over fear." We like that. That's swarmthink. The German
Pirate Party calls this liquid democracy.

Dealing with surges

Getting 20,000 new colleagues and activists in a week isn't a pipe dream. It happens. Quite rarely, but
it does happen. You need to be prepared for it.

Communicating values

In a swarm organization, the organizational culture cannot be communicated from person to person as the organization grows — it must be actively communicated centrally, and repeatedly communicated as new people keep joining. You need to make a values document based on the swarm values you thought of at the beginning.

Here's an example, used by the Swedish Pirate Party

VALUES DOCUMENT

Our organization is built on three different pillars: swarm work, traditional NGO structures, and a hierarchical top-down structure that distributes resources to support the swarm. These are roughly equally important, but fill completely different needs: the traditional NGO structure only resides at the General Assembly and the party board level, for the party's legal foundation as an nonprofit organization; the hierarchic work distribute resources and associated mandates from the board into the organization, making decisions for effective opinion building and other operative work; and the spontaneous swarm work is the backbone of our activism.

We work under the following principles:

We make decisions.

We aren't afraid to try out new things, new ways to shape opinion and drive the public debate. We make decisions without asking anybody's permission, and we stand for them. Sometimes, things go wrong. It's always okay to make a mistake in the Pirate Party, as long as one is capable of learning from that mistake. Here's where the famous "three-pirate rule" comes into play: if three self-identified pirates are in agreement that some kind of activism is beneficial to the party, they have authority to act in the party's name. They can even be reimbursed for expenses related to such activism, as long as it is reasonable (wood sticks, glue, and paint are reasonable; computer equipment and jumbotrons are not).

We are courageous.

 If something goes horribly wrong, we deal with it then, and only then. We are never nervous in advance. Everything can go wrong, and everything can go right. We are allowed to do the wrong thing, because otherwise, we can never do the right thing either.
We advance one another. We depend on our cohesion. It is just as much an achievement to show solitary brilliance in results as it is to advance other activists or officers.
We trust one another. We know that each and every one of us wants the best for the Pirate Party.We take initiatives and respect those of others. The person who takes an initiative gets it most of the time. We avoid criticizing the initiatives of others, for they who take initiatives do something for the party. If we think the initiative is pulling the party in the wrong direction, we compensate by taking an initiative of our own more in line with our own ideals. If we see something we dislike, we respond by making and spreading something we like, instead of pointing out what we dislike. We need diversity in our activism and strive for it.

We respect knowledge.

In discussing a subject, any subject, hard measured data is preferable. Second preference goes to a person with experience in the subject. Knowing and having experience take precedence before thinking and feeling, and hard data takes precedence before knowing.

We respect the time of others and the focus of the organization.

If we dislike some activity or some decision, we discuss, we argue, we disagree, and/or we start an initiative of our own that we prefer. On the other hand, starting or supporting an emotional conflict with a negative focus, and seeking quantity for such a line of conflict, harms the organization as a whole and drains focus, energy, and enthusiasm from the external, opinion-shaping activities. Instead, we respect the time and focus of our co-activists, and the focus of the organization. When we see the embryo of an internal conflict, we dampen it by encouraging positive communication. When we see something we dislike, we produce and distribute something we like. We work actively to spread love and respect, and to dampen aggression and distrust.

We communicate positively.

If we see a decision we dislike, we make our point about why we dislike it without provoking feelings, or, better yet, we explain why an alternative would be better. We campaign outward and cohesively, not inward and divisively. Again, we communicate positively. We act with dignity. We're always showing respect in our shaping of public opinion: respect toward each other, toward newcomers, and toward our adversaries. We act with courtesy, calm, and factuality, both on and off the record. In particular, we're never disrespectful against our co-activists (one of the few things that officers in the Pirate Party will have zero tolerance with).

We're in parliament.

We behave like the parliamentary party that we are. Related to the point above. We are long term. We depend on making the 2010 and 2014 elections, so our work is long term. As in "on a time span of several years." The time span between elections, four years, is practically a geological era for many of us net activists.

We represent ourselves.

The Pirate Party depends on a diversity of voices. None of us represents the Pirate Party on blogs and social media: we're a multitude of individuals that are self-identified pirates. The diversity gives us our base for activism, and multiple role models build a broader recruitment and inspiration base for activism. Internally, we're also just ourselves, and never claim to speak for a larger group: if our ideas get traction, that's enough; if they don't get traction, the number of people agreeing with those ideas is irrelevant.

You should keep reminding the entire swarm about the organization values regularly, as part of your heartbeat messages both to reinforce the values to old activists and to introduce them to new activists. Describe one value in every or every other heartbeat message. Needless to say, you also need to practice what you preach.

However, having this document and continuously reminding people that it exists, in words and in action, is not enough. You also need leadership guidance and tons of empty positions in the organization that new activists can fill. As part of a surge like the ones described, you may discover that your organization has recruited an assistant local media manager in Backabeyond, Backwater, Ohio. If you don't have an empty box for that position in advance, it can't be filled. If the officers of the swarm's scaffolding don't know how to uphold and communicate the swarm values, it won't happen.

So in addition to the values that go for the organization as a whole, you also need to communicate values for the leaders that take on formal responsibility in the scaffolding. Just like the overall values that apply to all activists, these need to be communicated over and over, and, of course, reinforced through action.

Here's a sample set of leadership values for a working swarm.

Leadership document

Leading in the Pirate Party is a hard but rewarding challenge. It's considerably harder than being a middle manager in a random corporation. On the other hand, it's somewhat easier than sending letters by carrier mackerel across the Sahara. Above all, it is stimulating, exciting, and simply quite fun. The challenges lie in the constant demands for transparency and influence from your area of responsibility, combined with the demands for results and accountability from those you report to. Basically, this means that leadership in the Pirate Party is a social skill, rather than a management or technical skill. It is about making people feel secure in their roles.

Above all, we need to defend two things in all our actions:

- The organization's focus. We're going to make the parliamentary threshold. Everything we do must be aimed at that.

- The organization's energy. It is incredibly easy to get drained of energy if you start feeling negative vibes. There is a need for a constantly reinforced we-can-do-this sentiment.

In order to sustain these two values, we who have taken on officers' and leaders' responsibility use the following means:

Monkey see, monkey do.
We are role models. We act just the way we want other people in the organization to act. One part of this is to always try to be positive.

We make decisions.
We have had decision-making authority delegated to us in some area of the organization, and we use it.

We lead by inspiring and suggesting, never by commanding.

We advance role models.
We reward our colleagues as often as we can, both in public and private, when they display a behavior we want to reinforce.

We reward with attention.
Every behavior that gets attention in an organization is reinforced. Therefore, we focus and give attention to good behavior, and, as far as possible, we completely ignore bad behavior. We praise the good and ignore the bad (with one exception below).

We assume good faith.
We assume that everybody wants the organization to succeed, even when they do things we don't understand.

We react immediately against disrespect.
Even if we have great tolerance for mistakes and bad judgment, we do not show tolerance when somebody shows disrespect toward their colleagues, toward other activists.

We speak from our own position.
When we perceive somebody as being in the wrong, we never say "you're stupid" or similar, but start from our own thoughts, feelings, and reactions.

Administration is a support and never a purpose.
We try to keep administrative weight and actions to a minimum, and instead prioritize activism.

We build social connections.
We meet, and we make others meet.

We develop our colleagues.
We help everybody develop and improve, both as activists and leaders.

Success in a swarm

Success doesn't happen smoothly and fluidly. It happens in hard-to-predict enormous bursts. You have to grind along, sometimes for years. While grinding along without seeing any returns can feel disheartening at times, it's important to understand that people are listening and do take notice to what you're saying. Then one day, all of a sudden, the government announces new horrible legislation that confirms everything you've been saying for the past two years, and you find yourself with twenty thousand new followers and five thousand new activists overnight, as you've gone from a doomsday prophet to being a rallying point for well-needed change. That's the way it works.

Don't confuse persistent day-to-day grinding with a refusal to see roadblocks for the uptake of the swarm's ideas. If people tell you that your website is confusing, that the officers of the swarm are inaccessible, or that new people who come to gatherings aren't feeling welcome, those are real issues and should absolutely not be taken as a sign to just keep doing what you're already doing. Everybody needs to listen for real blocks to adoption of the swarm's ideas, all the time.

Above all maintain one value set, one value base - don't subdivide and fight internally.

Keys to a successful swarm:

- Be better at understanding and using mass-scale social dynamics than your competitors.

- Use both online and offline social friendships. Offline friendships are much, much stronger than online friendships and connections and offline discussions much stronger in terms of emotional attachment and intensity between people.

- Understand that the swarm can only grow at its edges, where people who have joined the swarm know people who have not yet joined. There, and only there, are there social links that can be used to communicate the values, mission, and enthusiasm of the swarm to gain new recruits the people who are most active can't recruit any new activists to the swarm themselves by talking to their friends. The people leading a swarm cannot influence a single individual directly to join the swarm.

- Communicate heartbeat messages to the entire swarm, typically once a week. Overcommunicate the context of the news, the external news in particular

- Sample rhetoric. supply direct quotes that can initiate a conversation, or sample responses to typical questions.

- Confidence. enable them to use stickers or pins with the swarm's symbols that in turn lead to conversations. If they're not confident enough to initiate conversations, identifying with the swarm gets part of the way there.

- Sense of urgency. A swarm grows by people talking to one another, one conversation at a time. These conversations are the key to the long-term success of the swarm.

- Understand the activation ladder. The swarm can grow only on its edges. The activation ladder is equally important to understanding recruitment: the edges of the swarm are not sharp, but quite fuzzy, and it's hard to define the moment when people decide to activate themselves in the swarm for the first time. Is it when they hear about the swarm? When they visit its web pages? When they first contact a human being in the swarm? I would argue that all three of these are different steps on the activation ladder.

- Identify as many steps as possible on the activation ladder, and make each of these steps as easy and accessible as possible. Asking activists to describe each step that led them to join and activate would be a good start to discovering the activation ladder for a particular swarm.

- Mobilize activists. Success for any swarm is its ability to mobilize activists; to activate its followers you shouldn't do anything except contact the local leaders of the swarm and ask them to make something happen. The next thing to realize is that these local leaders must have the tools to make that something happen. When a message is sent to thousands of phones, hundreds of people show up. That is more than sufficient to look like a significant group of people, especially if you make sure that placards are available from a nearby stash so that the group looks like, well, a group.

- Don't compete on resources, swarms don't have enough — swarms are unbeatable on speed, reaction time, and cost efficiency.

- Setup a Call to arms: Remember - Perception is Reality. Most people will match their actions and opinions to be at least compatible with their perception of the public opinion. Control the public perception of who's the winning team, and you become the winning team. Therefore, you need some kind of call-to-arms mechanism to quickly relocate your swarm's activity to where people are looking at that exact moment. Control perception of who's the winning team, and you become the winning team. It's not just that perception is reality. If you can shape perception, you can also shape reality. A swarm excels at this.

- Respect anonymity! The more information you require about your activists, the fewer activists you'll have. If your opponents are rich in resources, they control a large enough part of society to be able to cause trouble in society for their opponents — their named opponents. You don't need to know who your activists are. You just need them to talk about the swarm's issues with their friends, show up at rallies, etc. Many will prefer to be anonymous, and honoring that will make the swarm immensely stronger.

Rewarding the long tail

The important thing is to get your swarm discussed and mentioned. Imagine you had one of these blogs, your traffic was in the low twenties of visitors a day, and all of a sudden you had a traffic spike of some five hundred visitors when you mentioned the Pirate Party in a blog post.

When you give up the illusory control of your brand — which you never had anyway — and reward people for discussing you, unconditional of the context, they will keep discussing you and your topics, services, or products. That is exactly what you want to happen. So reward the long tail with attention — that can tip an entire blogosphere toward discussing you, with the exception of the star bloggers, but they're the few and the long tail are the many.

Using attention to build a community

When I led the Swedish Pirate Party, as soon as somebody mentioned the party by name on a blog, I would see if I could contribute anything to the discussion (did they ask a question out in the air or wonder aloud about anything?). When somebody mentioned on Twitter or their blog that they had joined the party, I would write a short "Welcome aboard!" signed by me personally.
This was easily accomplished with a folder of bookmarks containing search pages across blogs, Twitter, etc.: it was a one-click operation to see if anything had appeared that mentioned the party's name. Still, this blew people's minds.

Reward people for their interest in your swarm, and show them attention. It works wonders. Attention is reward. Unexpected attention is great reward. Engage with people who read what you write

In many ways, success can be harder to handle than failure, because it sets expectations most people have never felt.

The danger lies in not realizing that people will regard everything you say as having much more weight

than you place on it yourself at the time you say it. If your swarm is political, anything you do — or don't do — will be interpreted as a political statement, be nice to all people, even to your adversaries. Doing so will not just benefit the culture of the swarm, where you lead by example and show people that being excellent to each other is the way to behave, but it will also catch your adversaries completely off guard. This is a good thing: "If you can't convince them, confuse them." You don't have to agree with them — you just have to disagree nicely and politely.

The day after success

No time is as tough as the year after that year when you were the hottest thing in town.
This applies to every swarm as well. When we've been on a slowly upward trajectory for a couple of years, we tend to believe that any dings — any level-ups — are permanent ascensions to a new base level of popularity, acceptance, and visibility.
keep the swarm on track, and do remind them of that saying in the entertainment business: no time is as tough as the year after the year you're hot — and that year will come around, as certainly as the calendar tells you it will.

Have fun!

Having fun in the swarm is crucial to growing the activist base.

Don't shoot for the moon. Shoot for Mars!