

Main Doc

Project Discussion: Community Finder

Note to all collaborators: This is a living document!

Vote on each idea listed below or add your own. The execution scope is **3-month horizon**, keep that in mind when voting. We have one comment per idea to track votes

The Idea

The demographic shift at Burning Man is real (the under-30 cohort has fallen from 30% to 12%). Community feedback overwhelmingly points to theme camps as the primary engine for acculturation, mentorship, and lowering logistical barriers. However, the "discovery" process for finding a camp is high-friction, opaque, and relies almost entirely on existing social networks. This creates a "cold start" problem for newcomers and a "pipeline" problem for established camps.

The idea is to do things that reduce friction. This is not a "recruitment" tool; it is a "discovery" tool that empowers self-motivated individuals to find their community and helps camps find new energy that aligns with their culture.

The Problems We're Solving

Based on community feedback, we're trying to solve a two-sided problem:

For Birgins:

- The "How?" Problem: "I want to go to Burning Man, but I don't know how"
- The "Right Fit" Problem: "How do I find a camp? How do I find people who share my vibe, contribution style, and values?"
- The "Logistics" Problem: "I can't afford an RV. I need to find a camp with shared infrastructure (shade, water, kitchen) to make the Burn possible."

For Camps and Art Projects:

- The "Pipeline" Problem: "Our camp needs new energy to survive, but our personal networks are tapped out."
- The "Vibe Match" Problem: "We need contributors, not tourists. How do we find new people who 'get it' and are ready to participate?"

What we're **not** solving: 1st year attrition/retention in theme camps. We're not certain of the scope or if a community-based solution is the right approach; almost feels like a "you" problem not an "us" problem.

The Challenge

How might we make it radically easier for a (self-motivated?) individual to discover and connect with a theme camp that matches their values, contribution style, and desired community?

Guiding Principles

Any "product" we build must adhere to the community's core values. The feedback on the "Camp Health Report" idea was a clear warning against top-down, "corporate" solutions.

1. **Low Tech / Fast to Pilot.** No new platform required to test; leverage Discord, Reddit, Hive, or Airtable.
2. **Complement Existing Tools.** Build on, not against, Burner Profiles, Placement, and Hive.
3. **Reduce Friction, Don't Replace Humanity:** The tool's only job is to make the first handshake easier. It does not replace the human-to-human conversations required to build community.

What Short Term (3-month) "Product" Could Help?

Open brainstorming section. High-level "product" concepts. Please critique, combine, or add your own.

Regional-Focused Subreddit/Discord Server Focused on Matchmaking

- New Subreddit(s), [r/BRC_CampFinder](#), [r/<Regional>_CampFinder](#), etc
- Focused, moderated Discord server with channels for one or two high-density Burner areas (like the Bay Area, NYC, or SoCal).
- It's *not* a free-for-all. It has a clear structure.
 - [#introductions-seekers](#): A structured template for seekers to post: (My Vibe/Skills | What I'm Looking For | My Contribution).
 - [#camp-showcase](#): A structured template for TCOs: (Our Camp Vibe/Mission | Who We're Looking For | Our Dues/Infra).
 - [#ask-a-vet](#): A channel for "salty" advice, separate from camp "recruitment."
- **What it Tests:** Does a local, high-trust community model work? Can we solve the "decline of local scenes" problem with a simple, free tool?
- **Risk:**
 - Comms are super fragmented across Whatsapp, Reddit, Signal, etc
 - Already exists in Facebook - numerous groups; what are we really doing differently?

Cross Platform Inbox & Mentorship Bot

- **Concept:** We build a bot to manage and index the "camp finding" chaos that already happens in digital spaces.
 1. There are already tons of "I'm seeking a camp" or "We have open spots for builders" posts on tons of digital spaces
 2. Key is this is **cross-platform** - it works across Reddit and Facebook and telegram etc.
 3. It's **passive**, doesn't require participants to take action
- **How it Could Work:**
 1. Partner with mods
 2. The bot's main job: looks across multiple communities and auto-generates a **sticky "master post"** with links that indexes all active [SEEKING] and [CAMP OPENING] threads, so they're all in one place.
 3. Bot enforces **structured post titles** (e.g., [SEEKING] Birgin / Builder / Sober-Curious or [CAMP OPENING] Art Support / 30 members / Needs Cooks).
- **Example:** A user posts on Reddit seeking a camp with a certain vibe, a camp posts on Facebook looking for campers. We align.
- **What it Tests:** Can we add value by simply *organizing* the existing, high-traffic conversation?
- Open Scoping Q
 1. How good are APIs?
 2. Data quality? My initial thinking was keyword extraction + LLM for info extraction
 3. Ethan's idea - link to form to capture data instead of scraping
 4. How do we avoid scraping everything?
 5. What info do we really need? Why not do a form?

FB/Reddit Infrastructure / Equipment Bitch n Swap Bot

Helping new camps plan and obtain what they need. Basically the same idea as above but for infrastructure rather than people.

Theme Camp Speed Dating

Regional event (e.g. Camp Mixer Weekend) where camps set up booths or socials to meet new burners - IRL. Small grant support from Rising Sparks.

- Pros: NYC theme camps did this last year, worked decently well.
- Cons: ?? TBD
- Question:
 - Doesn't feel great - How can RS uniquely support this aside from grant funding?

- How do we measure ROI of grant making?

What Longer Term Solutions Could Help?

BMP Integration: Burner Profile & Theme Camp PCQ Add-On

Add fields to **Burner Profiles**

- Indicate that they're seeking a camp
- Tag skills/interests

Add fields to **PCQ**:

- Camps seeking members
- Seeking skills in...(tags)

BMP Integration: Volunteer Pipeline Enhancements

- Concept: Expand the existing volunteer page to include camps and large art projects
- How it works:
 - Expand the existing [volunteer page](#) to include established camps in good standing and large art projects, instead of just BMP teams.
 - Increase pipeline flow by embedding volunteer/Participation into almost every interaction with links to the volunteer page. Ticket purchases, emails, social posts, burning man home page, etc. Acculturate concept of participation at every opportunity with a clear next step.
 - Limit participation to established camps and create some hurdles (eg: Proof of a functional pipeline)
 - Camps/projects can submit a link and a short description of what they're looking for. Link will route volunteers to camp pipeline (A web page, google form, etc).
 - Create a mechanism for volunteers to provide feedback on camp pipelines (broken links, lack of responsiveness, etc). And regularly groom the list of camps to ensure a positive experience for candidates. Ideally this is a follow up text/email for each camp pipeline that happens 2 weeks after redirection.
- Pros:
 - Increases volunteer pipeline for everyone, including BMP
 - Volunteers seeking opportunities are the DNA we're looking for.
 - Minimal up front work & technical risk. 1-2 hours of maintenance per week.
- Cons:
 - Some risk to BMP pipeline if not done well.
 - Administator required that can hold camps accountable for candidate experience.

BMP Integration: Camp Ticket Allocation System

- Concept: Camp managed ticket allocation.
- How it works:
 - Similar to a Steward's sale but not requiring immediate purchase, camp leads can reserve a ticket for a specific individual for a special upcoming sale. Ticket onsale could be in May, giving the BOrg time to allocate unused tickets to traditional sales. Maybe allocate tickets currently reserved for OMG, to this effort. (last minute ticket sale is risky for the BOrg and of minimal value to the community). Maybe integrate it with the pipeline enhancements suggested above.
- Pros:
 - Reduces uncertainty. If they know they have a ticket, and a camp they can plan.
- Cons:
 - Some thinking required about how to avoid exploiting/scalping
 - Some development work required.

BMP Integration: Low Income Ticket Timing

- Concept:
 - Allocate Low income tickets starting in February, earlier if possible.
- How it works: By allocating low income tickets early we give them more time to figure out how to get to the burn. If they know they have a ticket they can find a camp, a ride, an art project etc instead of scrambling to do so over the summer.
- Pros:
 - It lowers costs by reducing uncertainty.
 - Camps currently purchase extra tickets during stewards sale and carry significant risk to do so. This shifts risk away from camps and allows them to allocate resources to their camps instead of tickets. (cash flow)
- Cons:
 - Administration occurs over much longer period requiring more resources.

BMP Integration: Burn Timing

- Concept:
 - Schedule the burn earlier in summer, before schools start.
- Pros:
 - Allows for undergrads,PHD candidates and teachers/professors to attend.
 - Young parents can attend as well, and bring their children, or find child care with family (Grandparents would love to take care of kids during the summer, but its logistically impossible during the first weeks of school)

- Helps reduce the “parent sabbaticals” where parents skip burns when their kids are young and never return.
- Cons:
 - We might see the re-emergence of the fraternity crews we saw during the early burn years.
 - Sacrifices the solstice timing.
 - Shifting everything 2 weeks earlier is a massive ask.

Other (Dumb?) Ideas

The "Culture Matchmaker" (The 'AI Woo' Model)

- Concept: A "dating app" style questionnaire for both camps and seekers.
- How it Works: Seekers and Camps both fill out a detailed profile ("What's your ideal Burn?", "Describe your contribution style," "Rate the importance of..."). An algorithm suggests a "Top 5" list of high-compatibility matches for both sides.
- Pros: Focuses on "vibe" and "culture fit" first. Higher signal-to-noise.
- Cons:
 - More complex to build; "AI" can be a turn-off; relies on good profile data.
 - Kinda exists, ppl disliked it:
https://www.reddit.com/r/BurningMan/comments/181tv8p/i_created_a_burning_man_theme_camp_sherpa_gpt/

"Sponsorship Portal" (The Community-Managed Model)

- Concept: A tool that formalizes the existing "friend-of-a-friend" sponsorship model.
- How it Works: This is a decentralized CRM for camps. A TCO gets a private link to their camp's "application portal." When they meet someone (or a friend recommends someone), they send them this link. The portal manages the intake, vetting, and onboarding process for their pipeline, replacing messy email chains and spreadsheets. Potentially shared with other camps too if opt-in permits. Buzzword potential abounds - blockchain, federated knowledge, etc.
- Pros:
 - Aligns with how recruitment actually happens
 - high value for TCOs - I've seen lots of interest from TCOs in theme camp focused CRMs
- Cons:
 - **Already failed.** <https://www.g8road.com/>
 - But b/c it wasn't integrated deeply?
 - Doesn't solve the "cold start" discovery problem for newcomers who have no connections.

Meeting Notes

Feb 13

Travis, Joe, Tay, Peter

Agenda

- Context setting - near & long term goals
- Info sharing - Research & resources; what we can bring
- Our availability / commitment
- Discuss near & long term

Operational themes -

1. Research & diagnosis - what do camps need to engage next gen burners?
2. Recruitment & matchmaking
3. Retention, mentorship & leadership capacity
4. New camp formation / best practices
5. Builder-focus - the nexus of art + community - helping folks learn how to be builders

Specific Items:

- Real, scaled survey of theme camps
- Develop builder mentorship model
- Meet again in 2 weeks

Joe:

Every camp has its own issues and problems; a lot of them don't know what their problems are they don't have space or energy to think that far ahead; what's our five year plan?

Is it Slack group of camp leads?

Is it courses, content, essays (ie a substack)?

More data is needed on what camps need. Surveys of camp leads/former camp leads/experienced burners could be one way to get this data

Joe is observing a trend: phone / internet access is exhausting / Taylor: "Disconnect to connect."

Joe had an idea to develop a how to get to burning man - a playbook of how to start from day 1

Tay:

what resources are needed to support these?

mentorship about how to become a "builder"

Travis:

We don't know yet what we need, need to get more precise.

Burning man's crisis isn't because of aging; it's about builders: creating more support for the builders - the art projects.

E.g. could we create 10 off season art projects located throughout the world that integrate younger / next gen folks. If i'm trying to build large scale art, how do I get folks involved? "Help us build by providing a feed of energetic people who happen to be young"

Do we want to convince people who aren't motivated? Let's prioritize ppl who want to belong
Idea: borg help feed volunteers - something about the website - e.g. list of ways you can DIY
volunteer - educate folks about porta potty etiquette

Travis can commit to hosting consistent events; he can't do the promo/audience development
but he can bring in camp leads

Peter:

Teaching the builder mindset - Builder Baby steps

Recruit mentors from camps - instead of pushing our solutions to camps, pull most engaged
experienced camp leads to act as 1-1 mentors.

Camp mentorship program is about supporting camps, this is different; this would be more
personalized - could be artists or virgin campers

Survey

This has moved to [☰ Theme Camp Survey](#)

Builder Mentorship Program

Builder Mentorship Program - Concept Framework

Goal: Increase the number of capable, supported builders entering and sustaining Burning Man culture.

Two Segments

Aspiring Builders (Virgin → Contributor)

- Wants to belong
- Doesn't know where to start
- Needs scaffolding

Emerging Leaders (Camp members → Camp organizers)

- Already contributing
- Burning out or plateauing
- Need mentorship on scaling & sustainability

Program Architecture

Workstream	Key Initiatives
Research & Diagnosis	Scaled survey of art and camp leads to identify "Succession Crisis" markers and hidden needs.
Mentorship & Capacity	"The Builder Playbook" : A guide for day-one virgins on how to find their project. 1-1 Mentoring : Recruiting veteran leads to coach emerging artists/leads.

<p>In-Person Connection</p>	<p>Off-Season Art Builds: Creating 10 global projects to integrate next-gen folks into the "Build" culture before they even hit the playa.</p>
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Example structured pathway:

Level 1 Builder Pathway (Clarity)

- Builder Playbook e.g. "How to Get to Burning Man as a Builder" guide
- Builder Baby Steps
 - DIY volunteering list - a list of little ways *you can be a builder* without building a big project or investing a lot of time/money
 - e.g. decorate a Porta potty, mist people riding by on a bike
 - For each, a simple articulation of what contribution looks like, example equipment lists
- Visible progression from Curious → Apprentice → Contributor

Level 2 Builder Apprenticeship (Action)

- 4 Off-Season Build Labs - a weekender build intensive
- 4-week structured mentor pairing
- Skill-based learning (build, logistics, art support, operations)

Level 3 Builder Cohort (Sustainability)

- Small mentor cohort (10 mentors / 15 mentees)
- 3-month cycles
- Each commits to:
 - 2 hours/month
 - 3-month cycle
 - 1-2 mentees
- Structured conversation (burnout, delegation, scope, succession)
- Host 1 in-person Builder Salon

Questions

1. Where do we source mentees from?
2. How is this different from CAMP?
3. How do we engage regionals?