

What follows is an explanation of our proposal for new alternatives to our existing Institutional Membership offering. This is also intended to Increase Revenue while Generally Making Stuff Better... but this issue is trickier than the last 3, perhaps because the problems we're trying to solve with this change are more abstract.

**In fact, this proposal is much less about generating revenue, and much more about creating a culture of ownership and responsibility, and decreasing liability.**

The issue has already led to some heated discussion within our extended community, so I will try to be extremely clear as to what we are trying to address/accomplish here, in the hopes that it can drive productive discussion of the issues raised.

### **History: Corporate Fundraising Tool**

The Institutional Membership was originally introduced when we moved into Tyler Street, intended as a fundraising tool. Gui wanted a package he could take to big companies and local businesses and promote as a staff perk or a way for a local company to have access to a machine shop when they needed one. It was intended to be a one-at-a-time but transferable membership. We expected it to generate a chunk of revenue, and see only a small amount of actual use.

### **Actuality: Community and Start-Up Builder**

But we chose not to constrain the membership's interpretation. And over time, the Institutional Membership was adopted by a huge variety of different entities for vastly differing purposes:

- community groups who want to use Artisan's Asylum as their meeting place,
- small businesses operating out of our facility and looking to keep costs low,
- educational institutions looking to gain access for their students,
- and members just looking for an affordable way to convince their partners to come in and hang out at the Asylum with them.

### **What We've Learned: Group Access Needed!**

This evolution has had certain clear benefits to the Artisan's Asylum community. First of all, **word of mouth** is our most powerful advertising, and having more people affiliated means more people talking about us, which means more people hearing about us. Second of all, some of the groups and individuals that have been able to join our community only because of this offering have been **important contributors**, either as volunteers, as producers of awesome art, or as inspiring entrepreneurs.

If nothing else, the **growing popularity** of this offering has made it eminently

clear to us that there is a demand for groups, of all different kinds, to have access to gather in and use Artisan's Asylum facilities, for significantly less cost than if each individual had his/her own membership.

### **Concern: Unrestricted Access with Little to No Investment**

- Our primary concern with this arrangement is that not all, but the vast majority of users who have gained access through the Institutional Membership are not required to contribute anything or make any commitment of themselves in exchange for 24/7 access to the space.
- Our concern is not in reaction to any current evidence of misuse of the space by institutional members, but simply a question of reasonable expectations and fair allocation of resources.
- ***Reasonable expectations:***
  - We maintain an environment in which people share resources and leave their belongings out in their unlocked spaces.
  - They are comfortable doing that in part because they assume that other users of the space are similarly investing, in time, or money, or other resources, and therefore stand to lose as much as they do if any one user were to choose to treat the shared resources or other individuals' belongings with disrespect.
  - It is harder to presume that someone who is not volunteering, paying, or offering their equipment for the community to use will have the same respect for this environment or the other people using it.
- ***Fair allocation of resources:***
  - Although we are committed to trying to make the Artisan's Asylum resources available at an accessible rate to as many people as possible, they are not a community right. They are a privilege, and an extremely costly one to provide. We expect those who make use of them to contribute something back to the community in exchange, in some form or another.
  - We don't want those who are contributing a huge amount to the community, in time or money or shared resources or some other tangible offering, to feel resentful that other people are receiving the same benefits for little to no cost or effort.
  - For a sense of scale: **Institutional Memberships represent about 20% of our monthly revenue, and grant access to almost half of our registered users.**
  - To be fair, many of those registered Institutional members may not be actively using the space, or may not ever use the shared resources when they're here. But if so, it is unclear why it is important that they have 24/7 access to the building.

**What We'd Like to Accomplish:**

Offer more affordable membership access

- **Offer new, more affordable membership options** for individuals and groups (see below).
- **Better document and recognize the contributions of members** of our community, to help make it easier for users to offer contributions that are not monetary in exchange for membership access

Foster greater responsibility/ownership

- **Create individual relationships** with active users of our resources, to foster individual commitment and responsibility to the facility and community as a whole.
- **Foster a sense of equality of commitment/investment among all our members.**  
Make sure that all active members who are contributing to the community also get a vote.

Extend the community served

- **Incentivize sharing of spaces** among members, to make it possible for us to extend Artisan's Asylum resources to more people
- Continue to **offer limited access to our facilities as an occasional benefit/resource** to outside companies & groups, at relatively low impact to our facility, to provide an important community resource, generate some revenue, and spread word-of-mouth.

**Ideas Currently Under Discussion:** (i.e. none of the following details are final)

- SuperSpace Memberships
  - Designed to encourage individuals to share their spaces with other members, and provide low-cost membership + space access to groups of people.
  - Available only to studio space renters, to lower impact on community of heavy use of shared spaces.
  - \$200 for 24/7 access for primary user, comes with 5 half-cost memberships of any kind, associated with that space. Group as a whole restricted to one studio and one storage unit. Members invoiced (most likely) separately.
- Fridays Memberships
  - \$30-40/month membership that grants access only on Fridays, currently an under-utilized day, but also a day when events happen that are free and open to the public.
- Friends of the Asylum Membership
  - A \$25 per month membership that grants no access to tools, but allows you to give tours, subscribe to members-only lists, attend member events, get member

discounts with local partners (Zipcar, Brooklyn Boulders, Grainger (working on)), and host events in the multipurpose room.

- Company Cards
  - Designed to provide an employee benefit that companies can advertise, or to provide access to a company that needs infrequent access to particular tools for their work.
  - \$200-250/month for a single seat of transferable 24/7 access
  - Only allows one person in the building at a time (only restriction of the kind that's currently enforceable).
  - Need an additional card for every 10 (?) people granted access.
  - Still not sure best way to schedule/track/indicate if membership is already in use.
- Community Group Access?
  - We still don't have a proposal to satisfy the need case of a small local community group who wants to come in and use our facility as a team every once in a while. We're interested in hearing ideas.
- Comprehensive Volunteer Program
  - Jess and Brian are currently working on ways to better facilitate, document, and reward volunteer work done by members of the community, which effort will enable more people to choose to offer their time rather than their money in exchange for membership.

### **We Want to Hear from You:**

- Reactions -- how do you feel about this proposal, and its underlying logic/philosophy?
- Needs -- in what ways do you use the Institutional Membership now that might be threatened by a change?
- Alternative ideas -- what are other ways you can come up with to solve the problems we describe above?
- Please [use this form to communicate these and any other thoughts about the proposal](#) to us!

If you believe that this proposal fails in its stated goal to Generally Make Stuff Better, please don't hesitate to use the form linked above to let us know.

And if you have any concerns about underlying management goals and priorities, [please sign up for my office hours](#). These are things I want and need to hear.

Thank you all for considering these proposals!

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