"The irony of the modern market is that it can get a spare part from across the world, but a neighbor might not know that there's a mechanic next door that can fix their car." – Donnie Maclurcan

What's an Offers and Needs Market (OANM)?

An Offers and Needs Market is a way to discover what kinds of support you can provide to others and what help you might get within a specific community. Each exchange builds a connection, more connections create meaningful relationships, and the collective relationships strengthen existing communities – and maybe even create new ones.

The in-person version

Offer or Need	Category	Sub-Category	Offer or Need Description	First Name	Last Name	Physical Location (If Relevant)	Expiration Date	Preferred Contact Method for This Specific Offer or Need	Contact Details for This Specific Offer or Need	Offers Only: How Often Can People Contact You about Your Offer?	Offers Only: Free or Normally Charge to Provide Offer?	Needs Only: Urgency
Offer	Technology	Social Media	Twitter tutorial	Rachel	Cunningham			Physical Mail	123 Fake Street, Edina, MN 55435	Monthly		
Offer	Resources	Minimalism	A free copy of my awesome resource. [Awesome]	Rachel	Cunningham		12/31/2016	Phone	651-555-1234	Anytime		
Offer	Personal Finance	General	Budget construction or assistance in Mint, Quicken, or Excel	Mohamed	Halli			Text	612-555-4321	Weekly		
Offer	Health	Nutrition	Info or advice about being or going gluten-free and other nutritional advice	Mohamed	Halli			Email	joeyjoejoe@gmail.com	Anytime		
Offer	Technology	Microsoft Office	Basic Excel, Word, or PowerPoint training	John	Johnson			Phone	651-555-1234	Weekly		
Offer	Connecting	General	Coffee and conversation in MSP (or via Skype)	Buddy	MacIntrye	Minneapolis, MN		Email	buddy.mac@yahoo.com	Anytime		
Offer	Design	Graphic	Help you with layouts and formatting of documents to enhance visual balance and pleasure	Buddy	MacIntrye		5/6/2017	Twitter	@janesmith	Anytime		
Offer	Accountability	Exercise	Workout buddy (walking, running, yoga, group fitness)	Joey	Shabadoux	Minneapolis, MN		Email	joeyjoejoe@gmail.com	Anytime		
Offer	Writing	Editing	Resume proofing, constructing, formatting, tweaking	Jane	Smith			Twitter	@janesmith	Weekly		
Offer	Coaching	Public Speaking	Public speaking or speech prep training and support	Amirah	Tellah			Skype	amirah.tellah	Weekly		
Need	Technology	Podcasting	How to podcast (and building a studio in a closet of my home)	Rachel	Cunningham		11/15/2016	Phone	651-555-1234			Semi-Urgent
Need	Events	Venue	Need a recommendation for hosting 30-50 people in Durham or Raleigh, NC for an evening meet-up.	Rachel	Cunningham	Raleigh-Durham, NC		Email	buddy.mac@yahoo.com			Semi-Urgent
Need	Health	Mental	Meditation techniques	Mohamed	Halli			Email	joeyjoejoe@gmail.com			Not Urgent
Need	Accountability	Partner	Accountability partner or Mastermind group	Mohamed	Halli			Skype	amirah.tellah			Semi-Urgent
Need	Coaching	Professional Organizer	I would love to talk about what it's like to be a Professional Organizer	John	Johnson			Email	buddy.mac@yahoo.com			Semi-Urgent
Need	Marketing	Social Media	Assist me in developing a social media marketing plan	Buddy	MacIntrye			Twitter	@janesmith			Semi-Urgent
Need	Accountability	Sleep	Tips to prioritize and stick to an early bedtime (to be able to get up and have time for a morning routine)	Buddy	MacIntrye			Text	612-555-4321			Semi-Urgent
Need	Travel	Europe	Someone who has traveled Europe extensively and wants to share details on their favorite places to stay and visit	Buddy	MacIntrye			Physical Mail	123 Fake Street, Edina, MN 55435			Not Urgent
Need	Making	Knitting	Teach me how to knit! I'll bring the wine (coffee or tea) :)	Joey	Shabadoux			Skype	amirah.tellah			Not Urgent
Need	Physical	Handyman	Honest handyman or construction guru to help fix a couple doors or locks on my house in MSP	Jane	Smith	Minneapolis, MN		Text	612-555-4321			Urgent
Need	Connections	General	Oregon connections (jobs, friends, etc.)	Amirah	Tellah	Oregon		Physical Mail	123 Fake Street, Edina, MN 55435			Urgent

The virtual version

More Context

The Offers and Needs Market (OANM), like [asset-mapping](), is a way to bootstrap communities by focusing on what passions, skills, resources, and connections the group already has. It highlights what people can already do and provides a positive way to short-circuit the "But … we don't have any resources!" narrative. The emphasis is on creating and sustaining a mindset of what you can do to help – and get helped – right now.

Examples:

- A new business owner is offering free social media strategy coaching sessions and people in the community need to learn how to intentionally use Facebook, Twitter, etc. Match!
- A person knows how to teach juggling via Skype and you have five kids in your neighborhood who are desperate to learn how to juggle. Match!
- A spreadsheet enthusiast loves coaching people about simple ways to use Microsoft Excel and another person needs to learn how to use Excel for work. Match!

[Click here to see anonymized examples]() from OANMs Joel Zaslofsky has run at various events and gatherings.

How an OANM Creates and Helps Communities

- **It reduces consumption.** By making the most of existing assets, people don't need to buy something that they can access when they need it.
- **It reduces waste.** When someone else's surplus or gift can become another's resource, fewer precious commodities like time go to waste.
- **It builds and enhances** personal connections and community. Knowing who's doing what, who has access to what, and who knows who are vital for getting things done.
- **It creates new possibilities** for co-created action that none of us can do alone.
- **It increases community ownership and commitment** since it requires active participation and shifts the group narrative from what's scarce to what's abundant.
- **It's a simple, fast, and inexpensive way to resource a movement** because it focuses on what already exists – people's hidden or intentionally public gifts – and is positive in nature.
- **It's mostly (or completely) non-commercial.** OANMs don't typically involve financial transactions.

Participant Prep and Prerequisites

Digital Supplies and Knowledge Needed

1. An Internet-connected device with a 7 inch (18 cm) screen or larger. Your best experience – and the most efficient, productive one as well – is on a laptop or desktop computer.
2. An active Google account so you can access the shared Google document spreadsheet.
3. A basic understanding of and prior experience with spreadsheets. (We use this specific tool because almost everyone knows the basics of spreadsheets, they're free and can be accessed anywhere, and allow us to easily sort and filter a lot of information.)

The Ideal Environment

- A quiet space that's light on distractions.
- Disabled digital notifications on your mobile devices so you can stay fully present with us.

Housekeeping Notes

Understanding and acting on these housekeeping notes makes for a better and more valuable experience for everyone:

- You only need to share what you're comfortable with.
- The OANM is both a community-building and trust-building activity. We operate on the assumption that everyone has the best of intentions and that nobody's offering is available in unlimited quantities. In other words, *what we offer each other shouldn't and won't be exploited*.
- Go beyond what you think people might expect you to say are your gifts. The more random the gift, the more likely it will be unique … and potentially of even greater value.
- The contents of our shared spreadsheet will be available indefinitely to all OANM participants. In other words, typing an offer or need comes with implicit permission for participants to contact you about it. *Don't add an item if you don't want someone asking about it.*
- Once we get beyond one hundred rows in the spreadsheet, sorting and filtering – especially by category or sub-category – is essential to efficient giving and getting. And since only one person at a time can sort or filter a shared Google doc spreadsheet – which will typically be just the OANM facilitator – we recommend you download the spreadsheet to Excel format so you can browse without stepping on each other's toes. You'll then have a local version to open with Excel, a mobile app like [Kingsoft Office](), upload as a personal copy to your Google Drive account, or something else.
- Here's how to best [sort]() and [filter]() columns in Excel or [sort and filter]() columns in a Google doc spreadsheet.
- If you're primarily communicating via email with the facilitator and other participants, make sure the facilitator has your primary email address.

The OANM Process

Creating Offers

We always begin with Offers because they're almost always easier for people to think off and symbolic that we've come together to be generous with our gifts (a.k.a. give first, receive second).

1. Take up to ten minutes to write up to ten offers for your fellow participants. These are typically things that come from your heart (caring about children or the environment), head (knowing how to do creative writing), hands (cooking or carpentry), or connections (the groups or associations you and your family belong to).

- **Heart examples:** "I am passionate about animal rescue centers and willing to volunteer to help animals in distress" or "I love raising chickens and giving away my surplus eggs."
- **Head examples:** "I know a lot about tiny houses and will chat with people who want to know more" or "I can show you how to create an efficient podcasting workflow."
- **Hands examples:** "I know how to do major plumbing jobs and often help people in my city with their smaller plumbing tasks" or "I can teach you how to properly carve a pineapple without the mess."
- **Connections examples:** "I can introduce you to people in my permaculture club who live near you" or "I'll sponsor your membership in [insert desirable organization]."

Pro tip: Think as broadly as possible about you might offer others – personal, professional, on behalf of an organization, or otherwise. From services (assisting with grocery shopping) to passions (tennis buddy) to knowledge (how to use Twitter) to physical resources (a used printer) to introductions or leads (connections with graphic designers) – just about anything is fair game.

2. Type these elements for each of your offers:

Required Columns

- **Offer or Need Description**. Use abbreviations if you have to and keep the description short.
- **First Name**. Nicknames can be in quotes (e.g., "Jenn" for Jennifer) or parenthesis like "Jennifer (Jenn)".
- **Last Name**.
- **Preferred Contact Method for This Specific Offer or Need**. This tells participants how you prefer to be contacted about the offer (e.g., email, Twitter handle, phone number, or Skype ID).
- **Contact Details for This Specific Offer or Need.** Add your email address, Twitter handle, phone number, Skype ID, or any other contact details based on the medium you prefer (e.g., joeyjoejoeshabadoux@gmail.com or @JoeyJoeJoe).
- **Offers Only: How Often Can People Contact You about Your Offer?** Give participants an idea of how many times an offer can be used. For example, "First Person to Ask," "Three Times Total," or "Five Times per Week."

Optional Columns

- **Physical Location (If Relevant).** Add some combination of town/city, state/province, and country if your offer is only relevant to people in a specific geographic area (e.g., Minneapolis, MN, USA).

- **Expiration Date**. Write nothing if your offer is good indefinitely. If you'd like your offer to expire after a certain amount of time, add a specific date in ISO 8601 International Standard format: YYYY-MM-DD [Year-Month-Day of the Month]. Example: 2016-12-30.
- **Offers Only: Free or Normally Charge to Provide Offer?** Write a currency sign (e.g., "$") if you normally charge money for your offer. You can also include a flat fee or an hourly rate if you like.

Notes
- The OANM facilitator should be the only one categorizing or sub-categorizing each offer.

Creating Needs

1. Take up to ten minutes to write up to ten needs that your fellow participants might help you with. For example, what are you working on, seeking, or what kind of support do you require *right now* that someone else might be able to provide?

- **Heart example:** "I need a coach who can help me understand which passion to pursue first between meditation, business workflows, and slow travel."
- **Head example:** "I want to self-publish my first book, but I have no idea where to start."
- **Hands examples:** "I'd like to make classy, hand-made thank you cards, but I don't have access to the right tools" or "I want to build a shed in my backyard using just tinder and rope."
- **Connection example:** "I play guitar and want to meet a local drummer and cellist to form a band."

2. Write these things on each Need Post-it Note:

Required Columns

- **Offer or Need Description**. Use abbreviations if you have to and keep the description short.
- **First Name**. Nicknames can be in quotes (e.g., "Jenn" for Jennifer) or parenthesis like "Jennifer (Jenn)".
- **Last Name**.
- **Preferred Contact Method for This Specific Offer or Need**. This tells participants how you prefer to be contacted about the need (e.g., email, Twitter handle, phone number, or Skype ID).
- **Contact Details for This Specific Offer or Need.** Add your email address, Twitter handle, phone number, Skype ID, or any other contact details based on the medium you prefer (e.g., joeyjoejoeshabadoux@gmail.com or @JoeyJoeJoe).
- **Needs Only: Urgency.** Use short-hand to tell others if your need is urgent (U), semi-urgent (SU), or not urgent (NU).

Optional Columns

- **Expiration Date**. Write nothing if your need is good indefinitely. If you'd like your offer to expire after a certain amount of time, add a specific date in ISO 8601 International Standard format: YYYY-MM-DD [Year-Month-Day of the Month]. Example: 2016-12-30.
- **Needs Only: Are You Willing to Pay to Meet Your Need?** Write a currency sign (e.g., "$") if you're willing to pay to have your need met. *Note:* Each person is responsible for their own negotiation if it occurs.

Notes
- The OANM facilitator should be the only one categorizing or sub-categorizing each offer.

The Market Opens: Matching Offers with Needs

1. (Time allowing) Each participant can verbally pitch *one* of their Offers or Needs in 1-2 sentences. For example, "I'm Joel and I'm willing to teach basic mindfulness principles to you." We don't allow discussion or clarification during this step because it slows things down or allows extroverts to dominate the conversation.
2. (Time allowing) Approach your fellow participants about the verbal offer or need they highlighted.
3. Start browsing the Offers and Needs spreadsheet and striking up conversations when you see a potential match for one of your items or a match between two other participants. The facilitator will be actively connecting people during this time as well.
4. Add any offers or needs you just thought of or think of later (e.g., based on conversations with fellow participants).
5. Give your primary email address to the facilitator so he/she can follow-up with you easily or connect you with fellow participants.

The Follow-Up

The facilitator will share a link to an edited version of the spreadsheet in whatever medium your community primarily uses to communicate (e.g., email or a Facebook group). He/she will also give you information about adding new spreadsheet rows, editing your existing information, how and when the contents can be shared, and details on any known upcoming OANM action.

Visual Examples of an OANM

Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail	Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail	Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail
Show you how to authentically connect with people in-person.	Teach you how to podcast (complete with a ridiculous workflow document).	Give you one heck of a good, big hug!
M Doesn't Expire	M Doesn't Expire	Any Doesn't Expire
Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail	Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail	Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail
Someone to do one-off graphic design or document layout tasks.	Advise me on how to use the Elegent Themes Divi 2.4 WordPress Theme for a new website.	Teach me how to fall asleep fast.
Any $ SU	W 09/15/2015 SU	Any NU

What Now?

Did you enjoy your OANM experience and want to have one happen for another community you belong to? Contact your facilitator for details or [send a note to Joel Zaslofsky](#) so he can provide you with the resources you'll need.

And if you want to go even deeper, consider and answer some modified questions from Peter Block's book, *Community: A Structure of Belonging.*

- What gift have you received from another in our OANM? (Get specific)
- What has someone in your community done today that has moved you or been valuable to you?
- How did someone in your community engage you in a way that had meaning?
- What gift do you have that nobody knows about?
- What are you grateful for that has gone unspoken?
- What is the positive feedback you receive that still surprises you?
- What is the gift you have that you don't fully acknowledge?