

On occasion it can be helpful to look at issues in the classroom from some lens other than the theological or the explicitly educational. Engaging a different language, using different frameworks, can lead to new insights that can then be developed in theological and/or educational frames.

Amy Jo Kim, in her recent book *Community Building on the Web*, argues in support of three underlying principles, and nine design strategies for community building. (See attached sheet for elaboration.) While these are framed as being useful for online communities, the strategies she outlines are important in building learning communities of many kinds -- some in typical classrooms, some not. We'd like you to take her list and work on it in your small group. Try to come up with concrete and specific examples of ways in which these strategies occurred in your own teaching and learning (whether on-line, or not). We particularly welcome examples that use theological or educational lenses to get at the same issues. After the small groups have had a chance to work with these, we'll gather again in a large group to share any insights. Please keep notes!

Define and articulate your purpose

Build flexible, extensible gathering places

Create meaningful and evolving member profiles

Design for a range of roles

Develop a strong leadership program

Encourage appropriate etiquette

Promote cyclic events

Integrate the rituals of community life

Facilitate member-run subgroups

The following is a quotation from *Community Building on the Web* by Amy Jo Kim, Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press, 2000.

### **THREE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES**

**Design for growth and change**

**Create and maintain feedback loops**

**Empower your members over time**

### **NINE DESIGN STRATEGIES**

**Define and articulate your purpose**

Communities come to life when they fulfill an ongoing need in people's lives. To create a successful community, you'll need to first understand why you're building it and who you're building it for; and then express your vision in the design, technology and policies of your community.

**Build flexible, extensible gathering places**

A community can begin to take root wherever people gather for a shared purpose and start talking among themselves. Once you've defined your purpose, you'll want to build a flexible, small-scale infrastructure of gathering places, which you and your members will work together to evolve.

**Create meaningful and evolving member profiles**

You can get to know your members -- and help them get to know each other -- by developing robust, evolving and up-to-date member profiles. If handled with integrity, these profiles can help you build trust, foster relationships, and deliver personalized services, while infusing your community with a sense of history and context.

**Design for a range of roles**

Addressing the needs of newcomers without alienating the regulars is an ongoing balancing act. As your community grows, it will become increasingly important to provide guidance to newcomers while offering leadership, ownership and commerce opportunities to more experienced members.

**Develop a strong leadership program**

Community leaders are the fuel in your engine: they greet visitors, encourage newbies, teach classes, answer questions, and deal with trouble makers who might destroy the fun for everyone else. An effective leadership program requires careful planning and ongoing management, but the results can be well worth the investment.

### **Encourage appropriate etiquette**

Every community has its share of internal squabbling; if handled well, conflict can be invigorating. But disagreements often spin out of control and tear a community apart. To avoid this, it's crucial to develop some groundrules for participation, and set up systems that allow you to enforce and evolve your community standards.

### **Promote cyclic events**

Communities come together around regular events: sitting down to dinner, going to church on Sunday, attending a monthly meeting or an annual offsite. To develop a loyal following and foster deeper relationships among your members, you'll want to establish regular online events, and help your members develop and run their own events.

### **Integrate the rituals of community life**

All communities use rituals to acknowledge their members and celebrate important social transitions. By celebrating holidays, marking seasonal changes, and acknowledging personal transitions and rites of passage, you'll be laying the foundation for a true online culture.

### **Facilitate member-run subgroups**

If your goal is to grow a large-scale community, you'll want to provide technologies to help your members create and run sub-groups. It's a substantial undertaking, but this powerful feature can drive lasting member loyalty, and help to distinguish your community from its competition.