



**Teneo  
Community  
Vision**



2019

# ***DEDICATION***

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## **To Teneo's Leaders**

*You serve others every day.  
You show up when no one else does.  
You celebrate the wins, and you soften the losses.*

*Above all, your desire to see others and our country  
flourish surpasses your own interests.  
You inspire us—not to think less of ourselves—but to think  
of ourselves less.*

*Thank you for your servant leadership.*

## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER & CEO

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Dear Teneo Members and Friends,

As Teneo enters its second decade, we are asking a critical question: what will it take to build a generation of leaders in America who dramatically accelerate human flourishing?

We set out with early hunches about how to promote human flourishing, and we've seen some fruit after many experiments and course corrections. With the help of their fellow members, Teneans have been elected to Congress, founded critical ventures, authored books together, shaped policy at the highest levels, argued before the Supreme Court, and even married one another. And through these wins, we have grown—both as individuals and as a community—presenting the opportunity to adapt our original organizational design principles to new challenges.

So we have set out to craft a new vision for how we live life together in Teneo. To date, we have spent months and hundreds of hours in interviews, research, and reflection in pursuit of a set of design principles that might guide our future as an organization. With this document, we invite you to join our collective exercise in crafting a new vision for the Teneo community for the next decade and beyond.

We believe that history is not primarily shaped by isolated “great men” or impersonal historical forces. Instead, we believe the heroes of history are networks of well-positioned people working together toward the same goal. We believe that if you want to change the world, you need to build a group of friends with trust, influence, and shared goals.

That's what we've been working on for the last 11 years within Teneo. We have built a network with over 800

fellows and hundreds more friends and allies. Together, we form a network based on conservative values that seeks to accelerate human flourishing for the common good. By selecting future leaders under the age of 40, Teneo has made a long-term bet that investing in the next generation is more important than the next election.

Together, we've seen our strategy begin to bear fruit, but we know we have more work to do—both as an organization and as a broader movement of ideas.

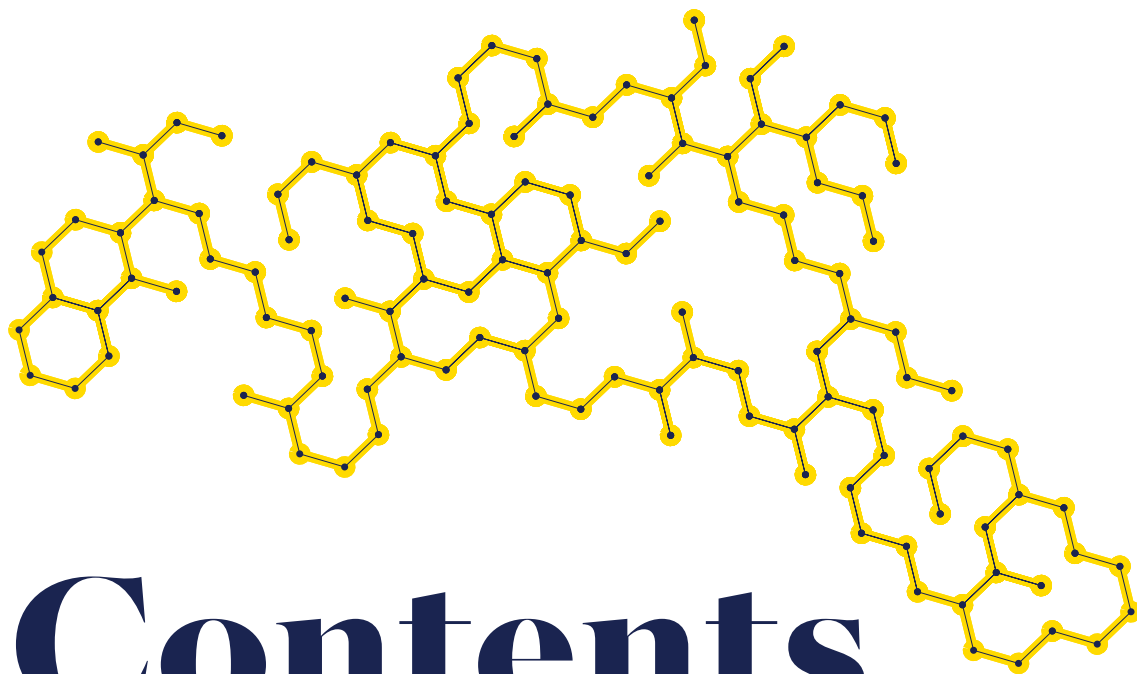
It is for that reason that we created this document—an anthology of ideas about how to advance a worldview and thereby change a culture. Our hope is that it animates our internal work as well as serves as a helpful guide to our friends who lead aligned organizations, from whom we still have much to learn.

We look forward to partnering with you—our members and allies—for years to come as we find actionable ways to promote human flourishing in our families, neighborhoods, and nation.



*Evan Baehr*

**Evan Baehr**  
Founder & CEO, Teneo



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## ABOUT TENEO

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Teneo is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization on a mission to recruit, connect, and accelerate America's most promising leaders under 40. Rooted in conservative values, the Teneo Network seeks to accelerate human flourishing. Teneo has over 800 fellows and hundreds of allies, assisted and amplified by a team of eight in Austin, Texas. Together these energetic minds generate positive, innovative solutions to society's most pressing problems.

We convene young influencers and wise mentors across society. In all we do, we seek to forge lasting interdisciplinary relationships that advance timeless ideas through fresh, innovative approaches that produce generational wins for our movement.

More than just a single organization, Teneo is the Silicon Valley of Conservatism—a powerful network of communities where the most influential young leaders, the biggest ideas, and the most leveraged resources come together to launch key projects that advance our shared belief that the conservative worldview drives human flourishing.

### OUR BELIEFS

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1. We believe in a **limited, constitutional government**.
2. We support **individual liberty** and **free enterprise**.
3. We advocate a **robust civil society** and a **strong national defense**.
4. We acknowledge a **transcendent order**, whether founded in **tradition, philosophy, or theology**.

## IDEAS THAT ANIMATE US

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1. We are **conservative in ideology** but **innovative and entrepreneurial in our methods**.
2. We are **agile and iterative**, allowing us to **empower** projects and initiatives.
3. We **span** and **strategically overlap** decentralized networks, industries, geographies and generations.
4. We **move fast, break things** and **expect failure**. We learn what to do, and to not do, precisely by doing.
5. We **push abundance** over scarcity. When we help others succeed, we do as well.
6. We **play**. We hold our ideas firmly, but our methods flexibly so we can **test, experiment** and **explore**.
7. We **face outward**. Our organization and members exist to serve and accelerate other projects.
8. We support the **entire person**: faith, finance, family, fitness and friendship.
9. We are a membership of **values-aligned** leaders. We are welcoming, but elite.
10. We **embrace open innovation**. The best ideas often come from outside our own walls.

## INTRODUCTION

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Alongside dozens of important organizations in the conservative movement, Teneo is on a mission to advance a set of shared convictions. Our challenge and opportunity is how best to accomplish that goal.

While many other organizations were created to change policy or get certain people elected, Teneo's strategy is less structural and more sociological. Teneo is now and has always been focused on actively deploying a sociological strategy for societal change to advance conservative ideas. That's why over the last few months, we set out to explore Teneo's history as well as the most compelling writing about community formation. We developed a set of design principles aimed at building communities to advance ideas and renew culture.

Through this exercise, we realized our design principles are actually controversial, radical, and often anomalous in the conservative movement, yet prolific among many leftist groups. The methods in this document would not surprise leaders and activists on the left—not only is the left already using them, they are one reason it has been so successful.

The modern conservative movement—including leading think tanks, cable news, foundations, print media outlets, and the Republican Party—generally pursues five strategies:

*Focus on content.* The movement has a robust bench of thinkers, writers, and pundits that produces excellent content, but rarely pays attention to the networks that carry that content forward.

*Distribute that content virtually through mail and the Internet.* The movement shares that content widely without face-to-face gatherings where people can connect.

*Communicate with a posture of certainty.* At times, the conservative movement can verge on the didactic instead of maintaining a posture of engagement.

*Engage a mass, grassroots audience.* The focus is not on influencing the influential, but on energizing the grassroots.

*Drive policy solutions.* Instead of cultivating cultural solutions, conservatives focus on the next legislative or judicial fight. Conservatives love to say that culture is upstream of politics, but investments in culture have been scarce on the ground.

The theory and history of cultural change suggest that these strategies are fundamentally flawed. In fact, in many cases we think organizations in the movement are pursuing the exact opposite of what we know drives renewal. In the following chapters, we will examine these strategies, illustrate alternative approaches, and invite you to explore how we can build a more effective movement together.



# WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD? USE NETWORKS.

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## OUR CONTROVERSIAL CLAIM

Teneo is founded on a controversial claim: networks of values-aligned leaders are a crucial tool to change society. If you want to change the world, you need to build a group of friends who share a mutual goal.

## WHY WE CARE ABOUT NETWORKS

The English-speaking world has two models for ending slavery. The first is war. The second is networks.

The American experience—the “mighty scourge of war,” in Lincoln’s phrase—needs no elaboration and throws the British experience into sharp relief. The British abolished the slave trade in their territories not by war or at the hands of a great man, but because a network of influential individuals worked together across society. The primary catalyst of change was not William Wilberforce. Rather, it was the Clapham Circle: a dense network of like-minded friends—men and women, black and white, poets and politicians, clergy and laity—who came together to serve the common good. The group was knit together by a common cause, a common faith, multiple marriages among members, and a shared geography in Clapham, London. Together, they fought a decades-long battle against the slave trade in the court of public opinion and in Parliament. Bestselling author Eric Metaxas concludes, “It’s no exaggeration to say that over the course of a few decades [the Clapham Circle network] . . . changed the world forever.”

## TWO THEORIES OF CULTURAL CHANGE

Americans like to tell themselves a story about how cultures change: the “bottom up” method. This view holds that culture is the accumulation of values held by the majority of people. In this view, a culture is only as good or bad as the choices of normal people going about their lives. It draws on the image of a free market; ideas and behaviors win in the marketplace of an infinite number of distributed decisions, all adding up to what we call “culture.”

“In a very strong sense, networks are the actors on the intellectual stage.”

—Randall Collins,  
Harvard Sociologist

According to this view, if you want to change culture, you need to change the hearts and minds of the majority of people, and the culture will shift as a result. Although this view is comfortingly democratic, it is flawed.

This view does not take into account the fact that powerful minorities have the power to shift the views of the majority. If culture were truly democratic, then you would expect the power of any minority—whoever it might be—to be minute. It is not.

Political scientist Byron Shafer says, “No issue, not even a grand issue ‘whose time has come’ can triumph without the support of some organized group or groups to serve as carrier(s). An individual or a small set of individuals can argue the attractiveness of an issue. But a larger network of elite actors must press it forward.” This view—we call it the “network theory of change”—assigns roles not only to ideas, but also to the networks that carry them.

We’ll touch on three examples of networks affecting social change that span social activism, academia, and politics: The Gay Rights movement in the 1990s, the evolution of



academic philosophy, and the success of Henry Kissinger. For each, we cite a seminal work that elaborates on the importance of networks in each instance that goes beyond the scope of this document.

Long before the Supreme Court's 2015 decision on same-sex marriage, a select group of 175 elite LGBT activists met for a "war conference" to establish a four-point agenda for the gay movement in February 1988. According to Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, authors

"Often the biggest changes in history are the achievements of thinly documented, informally organized groups."

—Niall Ferguson  
Historian and bestselling author

of *After the Ball*, a study of how this elite network changed American views on gay rights, the highest priority of the conference was to establish "a nation-wide media campaign to promote a positive image of gays and lesbians." The goal was to make the gay experience a nonthreatening reality within American society. This objective was achieved through television, film, and advertising, long before same-sex marriage was considered by the Supreme Court. In this manner, a

small minority of the American population changed the narrative around the gay experience and marriage. By the time the issue appeared on the steps of the Supreme Court, the cultural battle had largely already been won. A network of like-minded elites succeeded in changing American society.

The power of networks can also be seen in academia. In his masterful *The Sociology of Philosophies*, Harvard sociologist Randall Collins argues: "In a very strong sense, networks are the actors on the intellectual stage." Collins contends that to understand how ideas change, you have to look at how generations of academics learn from and

compete with each other. He traces chains of academic apprenticeships, acerbic rivalries, and correspondence relationships and their role in shaping the landscape of ideas. Collins is not using academic abstraction when he talks about networks: he means "groups of friends, discussion partners, close-knit circles." In other words, even in the cloistered world of philosophy, the key driver is not the truthfulness of ideas, but *networks of friends*.

We can also see the importance of networks as tools of political change in Teneo ally Niall Ferguson's study of Henry Kissinger in *The Square and the Tower*. It was not simply Kissinger's close relationship to President Richard Nixon or his flair for bureaucratic infighting that made him one of the most influential foreign policymakers in American history. Ferguson highlights the "most distinctive feature" of Kissinger's style:

*Kissinger from the outset devoted considerable energy to building a network that extended horizontally in all directions beyond the Washington Beltway: to the press and even the entertainment industry inside the United States and, perhaps more importantly, to key foreign governments through a variety of 'back channels'.*

Just one of these connections—to Antonin Snejdarek, a former Czech intelligence official—yielded the idea for one of the greatest coups in American diplomacy: the opening to China. Ferguson concludes: "Often the biggest changes in history are the achievements of thinly documented, informally organized groups."

## CONSERVATISM NEEDS A NETWORK

When elite liberals have a goal, they often summon an incredible network to help accomplish it. The billionaire hedge funder calls his friend at The New York Times, who calls her friend, a Hollywood producer, who calls his friend, a celebrity actor. Within hours, they can summon vast amounts of different kinds of capital—social, financial, and cultural, and marshal this capital to accomplish their goal.

Conservatives often do not have access to these networks. Simply put, most conservatives never had access to them: they are less likely to have been born in cosmopolitan neighborhoods and to have gone to elite boarding schools and universities. And now as adults they are much more likely to live outside of Charles Murray’s “super zips,” and less likely to be part of elite networks such as the Council on Foreign Relations.

Many conservatives accumulate great wealth, often by running operating companies. However, wealth need not translate into access to networks. For example, a conservative centi-millionaire who runs a family business in Cincinnati has great wealth, but probably knows no one in Hollywood.

If networks are key to driving any idea or movement forward, then the structural network deficit of conservatism should be seen as a strategic threat to the movement—and we must design strategies to overcome it.

Indeed, such a strategy is one way to understand Teneo’s organizational design: a generational play to build a network of leaders committed to advancing shared ideas.



## The Federalist Society

*Teneo is honored to work alongside and learn from other organizations. These brief case studies highlight the important models and ideas of our partners that animate our own work.*

The Federalist Society (or “FedSoc” as it is known) is a legal membership group that promotes originalist interpretations of the Constitution. Of the nine Supreme Court justices, five are current or former members of The Federalist Society.

FedSoc currently has more than 60,000 members and hosts more than 350 events a year, making it the premier network of conservative lawyers in the country. By casting a wide net, FedSoc leadership is able to identify and develop a much smaller group of the very best conservative legal talent.

This smaller group of legal superstars is actively cultivated and connected by FedSoc leadership. This identification and cultivation of superstars has made FedSoc the definitive pipeline for conservative legal talent.

Frequent, highly personalized communications from FedSoc’s senior leadership team ensures that this network of legal superstars and their supporters know each other and can coordinate on shared projects. This community of lawyers, investors, and executives work together on projects that seem well beyond the scope of FedSoc. In fact, many of the allies working on these projects would (correctly) say that the projects are not “FedSoc projects” at all. However, were it

## Case Study

not for FedSoc, these relationships would not exist. FedSoc created a community that organically initiates projects outside of FedSoc's formal organization.

The Federalist Society has changed the face of American jurisprudence. Its robust slate of events and vibrant chapter life promote the organization's ideology, but the most powerful outcome is the network of legal superstars that has grown up around FedSoc. FedSoc leaders are superb at cultivating this network and activating it to pursue innovative projects and to place its top members on the bench.

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### Key Takeaways

The Federalist Society has used its chapters to recruit and build a remarkable pipeline of judicial talent. Events matter not only because they promote ideas, but because they serve to source the key top 5 percent leaders that form the inner network of doers and partners on key projects.

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## TENEO'S COMMUNITY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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Because networks are such a crucial tool to shape society for good, we want to provide a playbook for building highly effective networks. This section lays out seven “design principles” that inform Teneo's work. Some we learned from leading thinkers, and others we stumbled on by accident and only later learned had theories backing them up.

In the following sections, we'll make some controversial and counterintuitive claims:

1. The best organizations are not the ones that make it easy to be a member, but the ones that demand the most from their members.
2. Virtual touchpoints are useful, but if you want to forge a vital network, you have to privilege incarnated community.
3. Vulnerability is something to run toward, not away from.
4. New friends who live across the country and work in different industries can be more strategically helpful than longtime allies.
5. Conservatives spend too much time and treasure on politics and not enough on culture.
6. Organizations should lean into, not avoid, hard conversations in the context of real relationships.
7. Networks should tend to the whole person, including areas like faith and fitness.

# Teneo Community Design Principles vs. Traditional Models

## 1. Participation Over Content

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### EXPLANATION

The goal of Teneo events is participation rather than information transfer or entertainment. People would rather be in the arena than in the audience.

### HOW TENE0 APPLIES THESE IDEAS

Teneo requires members and their spouses to actively lead something at the annual retreat.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like making policy events as easy and entertaining as possible. Follows the “guy talks to ballroom full of young people” model. Think of a standard DC policy event.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like asking for and rewarding participation by all. Follows the un-conference model. Think of Renaissance Weekend.

## 2. Incarnate Over Virtual

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### EXPLANATION

In a world of screens, Teneo still believes in the magic of shared spaces, adventures, and meals. No substitute exists for face-to-face interactions in creating social capital and missional alignment. Teneo avoids technological shortcuts and has a bias toward human connection.

### HOW TENE0 APPLIES THESE IDEAS

In-person events like salon dinners and treks are designed to build relationships that make digital tools effective.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like maximizing members over human connections. It’s the social network model, like Facebook and LinkedIn.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like being physically present with others and sharing an activity, like a retreat that features a ropes course. Think of the Inklings.

## 3. Vulnerability Over Strength

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### EXPLANATION

Teneo encourages vulnerability because effective relationships—and therefore networks—are defined by trust, and vulnerability is one of the fastest paths to trust. Vulnerability is the real, the human. It’s how real connections and trust are built.

### HOW TENE0 APPLIES THESE IDEAS

Teneo events frequently include everyone saying one thing they could use help on.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like leading with a sparkling resume and a well-honed elevator pitch. Picture a podium.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like a church small group: vulnerability and connection in the context of shared values and an ongoing relationship. Picture a front porch.

## 4. The Strength Of Weak Ties

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### EXPLANATION

Teneo recognizes the strength of weak ties: the idea that often acquaintances rather than friends are best positioned to share valuable information and opportunities.

We actively seek to connect otherwise disconnected people to strengthen the conservative movement to further the flourishing of all.

### HOW TENEO APPLIES THESE IDEAS

Teneo connects individuals from different geographies and industries to create bridges between otherwise disconnected personal networks.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like primarily making friends and acquaintances in your immediate social circles and industry. Picture a silo.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like intentionally building a network of friends with diverse experiences, industries, and geographies. Picture a bridge.

## 5. Culture Is Upstream Of Politics

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### EXPLANATION

Teneo believes that culture is upstream of politics. While politics and public policy are some of the legitimate domains we seek to shape, other domains operate in shaping the hearts and minds of people. Sometimes, politics is predetermined by cultural forces. If we only engage in politics, we are ceding the high ground of culture.

### HOW TENEO APPLIES THESE IDEAS

Teneo intentionally recruits leaders not only from the domains of policy, not-for-profits, law, and business, but also from culture and the arts, seeking to connect them with the rest of the membership and accelerate their careers.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like Prohibition in the 1920's: thinking that if the laws banned drinking, America's drinking culture would end. Picture Washington DC.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like the 1990's and early 2000's Gay Rights Campaign: knowing that if homosexuality became accepted in pop culture, the law would change. Picture Hollywood.

## 6. Confident Pluralism

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### EXPLANATION

Teneo embraces "confident pluralism," the notion that with tolerance, humility, and patience, a community can maintain unity while members strongly disagree about foundational ideas. Rather than seeking ideological purity, Teneo is building a community that can argue well in the context of a commitment to ongoing relationship.

### HOW TENEO APPLIES THESE IDEAS

Teneo is a big tent organization within the conservative movement. We don't shy away from robust debate among members in the context of a commitment to ongoing friendship.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like enforcing ideological uniformity. Picture a USSR Political Commissar looking over everyone's shoulder to ensure ideological purity.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like exploring ideas together even when we disagree. Picture a healthy liberal arts college.

## 7. Pastoral Care For The Whole Person

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### EXPLANATION

Teneo works to care for its members across personal dimensions of human flourishing. This care is not only good in itself, but it also fits with our network-based theory of social change. When a leader is thriving personally—has a strong faith, a healthy marriage, and is physically fit, for example—he or she is able to go forth into the world in strength to promote our shared ideals.

### HOW TENEO APPLIES THESE IDEAS

In addition policy and political events, Teneo offers events on things like parenting and marriage.

### TRADITIONAL MODEL

This looks like organizations only tending to the professional or political careers of their members. Think of a rising star brought low by a personal scandal.

### EMERGING MODEL

This looks like organizations maintaining a holistic focus on the whole individual. Picture a volunteer t-ball coach and entrepreneur.

**-Teneo Member**

“Teneo is a bit like a great liberal arts college, except that instead of 18, everyone is about 30 to 40. Instead of finding one’s footing, everyone is in a position of influence. Instead of a dilettante, everyone is, in some field or arena of endeavor, a national expert. And instead of ideas and discussion, Teneo is ideas and action. Aggregated together, **these attributes make Teneo a quietly powerful force.**”

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1**

### PARTICIPATION OVER CONTENT

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The goal of Teneo events is participation rather than information transfer or entertainment. People would rather be in the arena than in the audience.

#### **WHY DO WE THINK THAT?**

The most vibrant institutions in American life today are not the ones that ask little of their members, but the ones that require the most participation and the most sacrifice. Humans long for challenge and community, and the institutions that ask the most of their members fill that need.

To some this idea is obvious, but to many, it is counterintuitive.

In his book *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*, Dean Kelley picked up on an

extraordinary trend: the stricter the church, the more robust its growth. By “strict” he does not just mean theologically—he means behaviorally. These are churches that, because of their adherence to particular theologies, make wide-ranging and costly behavioral prescriptions.

“Humans don’t mind hardship, in fact they thrive on it; what they mind is not feeling necessary.”

—Sebastian Junger  
Author of *Tribe*

They invite their members *to do* and not just *to be*.

In a separate study, Dean Hoge and David Roozen also found a correlation between the strictness of a denomination and its growth rate. In other words, the churches that

ask more, not less, of their members succeed, precisely because they demand more.

This trend crosses religions. In the United States, Orthodox Judaism is having an extraordinary surge. While Nondenominational and Reformed Judaism have stagnant or declining membership, Orthodox Judaism, which makes all-encompassing behavioral prescriptions, is growing remarkably. To join an Orthodox community is to sign up for an immense amount of work and challenge. The theology of Orthodox Judaism, of course, differs widely from the theology of the “strict churches” studied by Dean Kelley. However, these two movements share a high cost of membership. Members are expected to be active, sacrificial members of their communities and to participate in regular and demanding activities for the good of the group—and those demands drive greater engagement from members.

The phenomenon also occurs in fitness. “Cultish” fitness programs such as CrossFit and SoulCycle are seeing the fastest growth. The first CrossFit gym opened in 2001, and now it has more than 15,000 locations in more than 150 countries. There are more CrossFit gyms than Domino’s Pizza locations. Founded in 2006, SoulCycle has grown

from a single studio in the Upper West Side to a nationwide chain with an enterprise value of about 900 million dollars. These programs are not your average big box gyms where you go to pretend to work out on treadmills and then enjoy the sauna; they are extremely demanding. The workouts are grueling, and if you miss a day, other members will ask you why. People love the accountability, and some even build their entire lives—and communities—around these gyms.

Teneo is not a religion or a gym, but we can still learn from these movements. The growth of strict religious organizations and demanding fitness routines is not *despite*, but *because* these groups make strenuous demands on their members.

In the words of Sebastian Junger in *Tribe*: “Humans don’t mind hardship, in fact they thrive on it; what they mind is not feeling necessary. Modern society has perfected the art of making people not feel necessary. It’s time for that to end.”

The Communist Party used to exploit this idea. Douglas Hyde, an ex-Communist and author of the fascinating work *Dedication and Leadership*, describes the process by which new recruits were trained by the Communist Party. The new recruit would not start with a lecture on Marxist theory. Instead, “[q]uite deliberately, and with good reason, the Party sends its new members, whenever possible, into some form of public activity before instruction begins.” For Hyde, this activity took the form of selling the *Daily Worker* on the side of the road, a profoundly embarrassing project in twentieth century England. Bystanders would alternately ignore, abuse, and debate with the new recruit. The recruit would generally fail to acquit himself well and go back to the party with a pile of newspapers unsold. But he would have a new commitment to the party and a new hunger to learn communist theory. By requiring an immediate and painful buy-in, the Communist Party created dedicated members.

Marvin Olasky, the scholar and practitioner who coined the phrase “compassionate conservatism,” once shared a story with us. For a long time when someone showed up at a homeless shelter, before they were given food, a bed, or clothing, they were given a job: men had to chop firewood and women had to sew clothing. The shelter didn’t really need their labor. However, they wanted them all to do an act that reminded them that they had value and could contribute to a community.

## **THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO**

Nearly every civic and political organization is trying to recruit young people. To date, nearly all of those programs look approximately the same: regional clubs that convene ten people for dinner with an outside speaker. Indeed in New York it seems at least half a dozen organizations will buy you dinner with Jonah Goldberg. However, these groups have mostly floundered. It is hard to get people to show up—many RSVP and then no-show, conversation is flat, and the group goes nowhere. Why?

The parent organizations have created a product focused on entertainment. Now, entertainment isn’t bad: the producers of Broadway’s *Hamilton* are great at delivering entertainment. However, these young leaders are not seeking entertainment from these groups: they are seeking engagement and community. They don’t want to be spoken to; they want to be part of the discussion. They don’t want to leave a dinner thinking, “That was a neat talk,” but rather, “I’m so excited to work on that project with that new person I just met.” But this model is counterintuitive. When we program events for busy people, it is reasonable to think that people want to attend the most fun and entertaining event. Yet we know we have to push for participation over mere entertainment.

Instead, Teneo is designing events that make demands on the participants. At Teneo’s annual retreat, we take inspiration from Renaissance Weekend, where every attendee is a speaker and is assigned to help shape or lead at least five events over the weekend. At Teneo, no dichotomy exists between speakers and guests—everyone brings something to offer. Too often the conservative movement designs poorly for spouses, who often are stay-at-home mothers. We have learned that often they have the most to offer and are very eager to engage. Most importantly, they want to be part of a community that says to them literally and metaphorically, “You matter here.”

We are experimenting with new ways of making asks and creating a posture of giving to the network. Consider two examples. First, during a panel discussion on media platforms censoring content at the SXSW tech conference in Austin, Texas, we ended the hour-long session with all 40 people in the room introducing themselves and stating one quick way fellow participants could help them. With those prompts, the ensuing drinks and mingling session was far more interesting and productive. The next day, we circulated every attendee’s name, email, and the specific ask made of the network. Second, on a recent trek to Israel, during the early days members shared something big that they were working on in their lives. Over the course of the week, members made a conscious effort to explore those needs and find practical ways to meet them. At the final dinner, the attendees each shared ways the community had already shown up for them and what specific people had committed to do for them after the trip.

Organizations have an opportunity to become stronger and, at the same time, better serve their members by embracing participation over information transfer.





## CONTENT VS. PARTICIPATION

	THE CONTENT MODEL	THE PARTICIPATION MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Transferring information from an expert to an audience	Engaging everyone in the room
<b>MODEL</b>	The “guy talks to a ballroom” model	The working group
<b>IMAGE</b>	Lecture Hall	Living Room
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	You want to be given more information	You want to be part of something we do together



# Stories of Success

VIGNETTES OF TENEO COMMUNITY LIFE

## WOMEN OF TENEO HUNTING MORE THAN MEMORIES

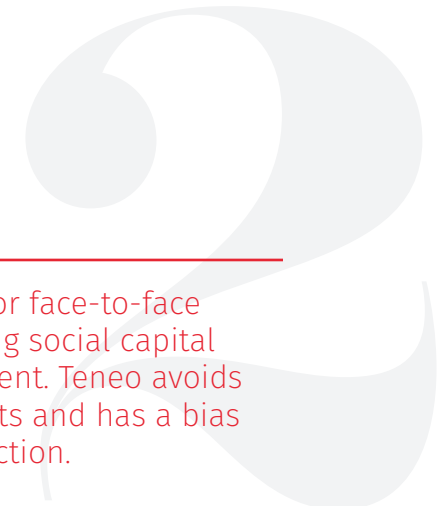
**TENEO MEMBERS:** Lila Ontiveros

**OCCASION:** An (almost) all-female hunting trip

**SETTING:** The legendary King Ranch | Largest ranch in Texas, larger than Rhode Island and visible from space

**DESCRIPTION:** Lila, along with her mentor and Houston legend Bo Huggins, hosted nine female Teneo Members for a hunting extravaganza. Twenty percent of the group was pregnant with future liberty-loving patriots. The lady gang hailed from all over the country, with a variety of professions—a White House superstar, financial wizards, Supermoms, life-saving doctors, a manufacturing genius, a legal mastermind, a real estate mogul. While their hometowns and day-to-day differed, they were all beginner huntresses with a thirst for adventure. They all got out of their comfort zone—physically, mentally, and emotionally. New life skills were acquired, and various venison recipes were shared across time zones. Surprising to the hosts, many of the women said it was the highlight of their 2018. The woman reached down and realized they had an unfound courage—which permeated their lives even after the trip concluded. One of the Supermoms became a wellness influencer. A financial ninja decided to take the entrepreneurial plunge. And a resident Yankee is finding a way to move to the Lone Star state.

**TAKEAWAY:** Getting out of your comfort zone, having a relentless support network, and a touch of adventure is a recipe for lifelong memories.



## DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2

### INCARNATE OVER VIRTUAL

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No substitute exists for face-to-face interactions in creating social capital and missional alignment. Teneo avoids technological shortcuts and has a bias toward human connection.

#### WHY DO WE THINK THAT?

When Alexis de Tocqueville visited America, he was struck by the many and frequent ways Americans engaged with each other. Dance halls, social welfare groups, garden clubs, debating societies—the equivalent of the Lions, Elks, and Rotary Clubs of the day. It seems unlikely to us that were a Tocqueville equivalent to visit today, he would comment on the profound relationships being formed by men playing the video game Fortnite. There has always been something profound about the incarnate—about real people in real conversations. Both history and theory defend it.

Consider these two historical examples. First, the Inklings. Every week, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and several others would meet for a beer at The Eagle and Child pub, or “The Bird and Baby” as they called it. Some of the most beloved books of the twentieth century grew out of the empty pint glasses and laughter of that group.

**–Niall Fergsuon**  
Historian and  
Bestselling Author

“Conviviality and congeniality are crucial to building dense networks. **To succeed, Teneo must be social in the old fashioned sense.** There must be a gregarious element.”

**–Teneo Member**

**“I always leave Teneo gatherings inspired and energized** to work harder than ever to promote conservative values in our nation.”

Or think about Renaissance Italy. Michaelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci stared each other down as they painted dueling battle scenes across from each other in the Palazzo Vecchio. These two geniuses—along with countless other great contemporaries—fought and argued and competed and ate together. In part, this closeness, in comradeship and competition, made the Renaissance so transformative.

In his masterful book *The Sociology of Philosophy*, Randall Collins argues that the evolution of ideas is driven by groups of friends who interact in person: “The history of philosophy is to a considerable extent the history of groups. Nothing abstract is meant here—nothing, but groups of friends, discussion partners, close-knit circles that often have the characteristics of social movements.” In other words, groups of friends arguing and laughing and pushing each other forward.

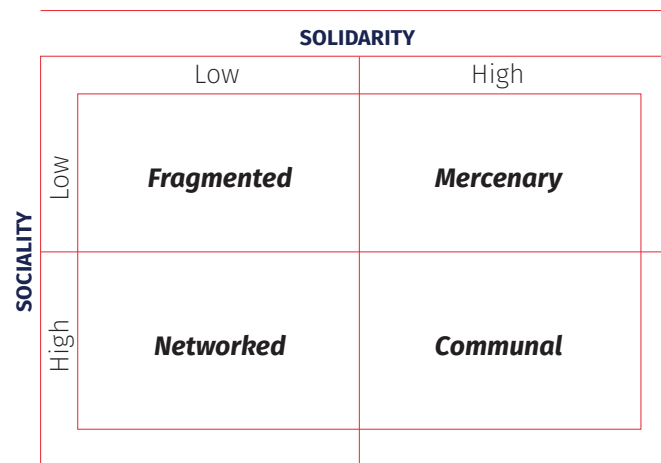
The underlying principle is a simple truth that is all too easy to forget in the Internet age: “There is no substitute for meeting face-to-face,” writes researcher Bonnie Shepherd. “Such exchanges can begin or continue via email,” she argues, but incarnated meetings remain the *sine qua non* of transformational exchanges.

Consider the excellent work from MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle, who explores what Heinrich von Kleist calls “the gradual completion of thoughts while speaking.” For Von Kleist, “ideas come from speaking” just as the French proverb holds that “appetite comes from eating.” Turkle summarizes: “The best thoughts . . . can be almost unintelligible as they emerge; what matters most is risky, thrilling conversation as a crucible for discovery.” This emergence happens best in person.

What we imagine is a raucous dinner conversation that explores big ideas, yes, but also real lives. The philosophical, intellectual, social, and fundamentally deeply human experience of the incarnate friendship and conversation is our goal.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim gives a framework that helps us understand why in-person interaction is so important. Durkheim categorizes social groups or networks based on their sociality and solidarity. “Sociality” just means friendship, while “solidarity” refers to a shared mission.

### DURKHEIM’S MATRIX OF ORGANIZATIONS



### ORGANIZATIONAL EXAMPLES.

<b>FRAGMENTED</b> (LOW FRIENDSHIP, LOW MISSION)	Most suburban neighborhoods, college alumni networks, think tank policy networks
<b>MERCENARY</b> (LOW FRIENDSHIP, HIGH MISSION)	Political parties, PETA members
<b>NETWORKED</b> (HIGH FRIENDSHIP, LOW MISSION)	A Mardi Gras Krewe, a Country Club, a London social club
<b>COMMUNAL</b> (HIGH FRIENDSHIP, HIGH MISSION)	A political campaign team, a military unit, a healthy religious small group

The groups that change the world are the ones that are “communal.” According to Durkheim, then, networks need intentionally to cultivate both friendship (sociality) and a shared sense of mission (solidarity) to reach their full potential.

### THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO

Digital social networks are powerful. They connect people over vast distances and are immensely—if superficially—engaging. We are contending not that these networks are bad, but that they are secondary. They’re a great way to keep up with a close friend in a different state, or to strike up an acquaintance with a friend of a friend, but they largely fail at making meaningful relationships.

Teneo is not an organization of Luddites. We embrace digital social networks in our lives and as an organization. We see the role of these virtual networks as powerful *additions* to our incarnated friendships, not a substitute for them.

To succeed, networks like Teneo must forge real friendships among their members. The best way to forge real friendships is to meet other people, not on digital platforms or over email, but in person with the time to really connect. Real friendship isn’t just about the laughter of a happy hour; it’s about support when a company fails or a parent dies, about counsel when facing a decision and challenge when falling short of our potential. Community is not easy, but it is important for the functioning of a network, and more importantly for human flourishing.

In the words of Niall Ferguson, “Conviviality and congeniality are crucial to building dense networks. To succeed, Teneo must be social in the old fashioned sense. There must be a gregarious element.”

That’s why we think the dinner after the speech by the famous author is often more meaningful than the speech. Teneo cares about ideas—and precisely because

we care about those ideas we focus first on community and then on ideas. We love content because it spurs richer conversation, toward the hard work of living an examined life. We build much of our community life—from salon dinners to the format of the annual retreat—with a focus on forging meaningful and challenging relationships between Teneo members because we believe that allows us to engage with and advocate for ideas more effectively.

Organizations should not walk away from digital tools, but should remember that connections over virtual social networks are made meaningful only by close bonds created in person.



### VIRTUAL VS. INCARNATE

	THE VIRTUAL MODEL	THE INCARNATE MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Building relationships with digital tools	Building relationships with in-person events
<b>MODEL</b>	The social network model	The ropes course model
<b>IMAGE</b>	Facebook	The Inklings
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	You can build meaningful connections online	Relationships are built best in person

## The Gathering

*Teneo is honored to work alongside and learn from other organizations. These brief case studies highlight the important models and ideas of our partners that animate our own work.*

The Gathering is the Davos of Christian private philanthropy. It is a small, influential gathering of high net worth Christians seeking a safe, neutral place to relax, talk, teach, listen, and learn. By restricting itself to principals only, it has created a space for valuable peer-to-peer exchange. No asks are made at the conference, freeing donors from the pressures that characterize most philanthropy conferences. Real conversations and real learning take place, improving the state of Christian philanthropy.

In one sense, The Gathering has created a network by default. So far, The Gathering's leadership has focused on curating an event rather than creating a network. But inevitably, because of the homogenous nature of its participants—mostly wealthy, conservative Christians—an informal network has emerged. A shared experience (philanthropy), shared values (Christianity), and a shared physical gathering space (the conference) naturally create a network.

### Key Takeaways

Creating a space for people with a shared set of beliefs to engage face-to-face about a topic and with each other can naturally create a network.

# Stories of Success

VIGNETTES OF TENEO COMMUNITY LIFE



## A FAMOUS AUTHOR OVERCOMES HIS “SURLY RECLUSIVENESS”

**TENEO MEMBERS:** Joe Lindsley, Jonathan Lusk, Cory Kennedy, Maleka Momand, and more

**OCCASION:** A conversation with Oren Cass

**SETTING:** Downtown Austin and the Teneo HQ tiny home

**DESCRIPTION:** Oren Cass wrote a fascinating and heterodox book, *The Once and Future Worker*, that had policy wonks arguing and politicians listening. He was in Austin to meet with a Teneo member so we decided to host a small gathering for Oren to discuss his work. The conversation was, well, as interesting as a conversation between two economists on a stage can be. The real fun happened later that night when Oren joined the Teneo team for pizza in East Austin and drinks back at the Teneo tiny house. What began as a standard policy talk ended as a meeting of minds at two in the morning. Oren said it was the first time he thought he'd actually made new friends at a book event.

**TAKEAWAY:** Book your babysitter longer than you think you need. The conversations after the event matter as much as the event itself.



### DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3

## VULNERABILITY OVER STRENGTH

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At Teneo, we encourage vulnerability because effective relationships—and therefore networks—are defined by trust, and vulnerability is one of the fastest paths to trust.

#### WHY DO WE THINK THAT?

Effective networks are characterized by trust. In *Connecting to Change the World*, authors Peter Plastrik and Madeleine Taylor write, “Weaving networks is about building relationships. Productive relationships in networks are built on trust.” It’s a commonsense but overlooked idea: without trust, a network will not function.

The value of trust can best be seen in absence. In his classic management book *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen M.R. Covey writes:

*Low trust causes friction . . . Low trust is the greatest cost in life and in organizations, including families. Low trust creates hidden agendas, politics, interpersonal conflict, interdepartmental rivalries, win-lose thinking, defensive and protective communication—all of which reduce the speed of trust. Low trust slows everything—every decision, every communication, and every relationship.*

**–Leonard Leo,**  
The Federalist Society

“The remarkable thing about Teneo is that **you short-circuited the trust-building process** among hundreds of leaders in different industries. The opportunity you have now is to operationalize that trust.”

**–Teneo Member**

“Teneo feels, almost from the first moment, like **your oldest and dearest friends** from your past all gathered together; people are open, honest, heartfelt, and true.”

Without trust, life grinds to a halt. Communities aren't formed, bad habits aren't challenged, introductions aren't made, businesses aren't started, friendships aren't forged.

The effects of distrust can be seen at the national level. In his 2001 book *Social Capital*, Francis Fukuyama shows that trust is crucial to national economic prosperity: "Widespread distrust in a society, in other words, imposes a kind of tax on all forms of economic activity, a tax that high-trust societies do not have to pay."

Covey identified 13 ways to build trust:

1. **Talk straight.** Shoot straight with people and tell the truth.
2. **Demonstrate respect.** Show that you really care, even in the small things.
3. **Create transparency.** Don't be afraid to be open, authentic, and vulnerable.
4. **Right wrongs.** When you make a mistake, own it and try to fix it.
5. **Show loyalty.** Give credit to others even when they're not around.
6. **Deliver results.** Get the job done without excuses.
7. **Get better.** Seek and grow from feedback.
8. **Confront reality.** Don't ignore problems, confront them head on.
9. **Clarify expectations.** Bring expectations out into the open.
10. **Practice accountability.** Own your results.
11. **Listen first.** Avoid assumptions and hear what others are trying to communicate.

**12. Keep commitments.** Do what you say you're going to do.

**13. Extend trust.** Take the risk of making the first move.

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Underlying two of these recommendations—creating transparency and extending trust—is a single idea: the power of vulnerability. For Covey, transparency is about being genuine, open, authentic, and vulnerable. "Extending trust" is taking the risk of making the first move. At root, these practices are about vulnerability.

According to researcher Brene Brown, vulnerability is "uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure." Brown, who wrote a book on trust, ties that idea to vulnerability: "We don't understand that vulnerability is the center of hard emotions... But it's also the birthplace of trust."

What does vulnerability look like? It looks like sharing more than an elevator pitch and a resume. It looks like telling the stories of the moments that shaped who you are. It looks like gatherings where everyone shares what they're working on, but also what they need help with.

If we want to build a highly effective network, we need to be able to trust each other. We think vulnerability is the straightest path to trust.

Teneo ally Leonard Leo, co-founder of The Federalist Society, said of Teneo: "When you're fighting a battle for the heart and soul of our culture, you want to know you're in the trenches with someone you can trust, someone you know, and someone who will have your back. We don't win unless we build friendship and fellowship with other people—and that's what you're doing here with Teneo."

"When you're fighting a battle for the heart and soul of our culture, you want to know you're in the trenches with someone you can trust."

—Leonard Leo

The Federalist Society

## THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO

Think about the last conference you went to. Did any panelist mention her failed startup? Did anyone talk about the behavioral issue he's having with his oldest child? Did the keynote speaker admit that she wanted to run for office, but was terrified of losing? Most organizations and gatherings avoid vulnerability. We seek it.

The traditional model is missing a real opportunity for people to connect with each other and build high-trust relationships. That's why Teneo spends so much time encouraging people to "show up and be seen." The biggest breakthroughs happen not when someone brags about his resume, but when someone with a startling resume leaves it at the door and asks for help.

We work to incorporate this practice in a few ways across Teneo programming: a hallmark of our retreats are "Morning Stories," which is a tradition in which members stand up and tell vulnerable stories about struggle and failure. These have ranged from the death of a parent to a lost pregnancy, from a humiliating professional defeat to financial ruin. Our tradition is to end these five minute talks with a huge round of applause to signal the community's support for the vulnerability shown.

In our regional chapters, our leaders are more focused on 1:1 connections and prompting conversations around "what is hard right now?"—a prompt that leads to a very different kind of dinner conversation than what typically occurs with a DC policy pundit.

Finally, the tone we set changes how our outside guests and mentors engage with us. Hugh Hewitt spoke powerfully to us about suffering. David McIntosh shared about the challenges of serving in Congress. And countless others bring and share their personal struggles, victories,

and defeats with us in a way they rarely do elsewhere. One memorable retreat morning session involved a sitting U.S. Senator and his wife talking about a fight they got in about having a baby sitter on a Saturday morning. Guests honor our vulnerability with a vulnerability of their own, creating moments of real connection.



### STRENGTH VS. VULNERABILITY

	THE STRENGTH MODEL	THE VULNERABILITY MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Strength through success	Strength through vulnerability
<b>MODEL</b>	Lead with your resume	The church small group model
<b>IMAGE</b>	A podium	A front porch
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	People only want to hear about my successes	People want to know the real me



# Stories of Success

VIGNETTES OF TENEO COMMUNITY LIFE

## A FIRESIDE FRIENDSHIP

**TENEO MEMBERS:** Hillary Waldron

**OCCASION:** The annual retreat

**SETTING:** Evening, sitting next to a fire pit



**DESCRIPTION:** From Hillary: “I was at a Retreat, sitting next to a fire pit with a guy from my chapter, but not one I necessarily know well. We sat together talking for a long time, mainly about his new job. The conversation meandered around the superficial for over an hour—details about work, opinions on the administration, typical DC chit-chat. He gave me multiple opportunities to escape—suggesting I might want to talk to someone else or get another drink. We reached a point where we sat in silence for a moment, and suddenly he told me his mother had died before she could see him formally appointed to his new position and how much that saddened him. She had died only a few months earlier, his father not long before that, and it all came out over the course of the next hour—emotions, regrets, memories. I think he had never actually taken the time to tell anyone. The best Teneo moments happen when you linger. Don’t look around to see who else might be nearby. Stay late to help clean up. Be intentional with your own silence. Let someone monopolize your time, or monopolize theirs. See what happens.”

**TAKEAWAY:** The best Teneo moments happen when you linger.



**—Teneo Member**

“Though I consider myself fortunate to be part of the prestigious alumni networks of Princeton, Columbia Law School, and Harvard Business School, **I am actually more thankful for the community that is Teneo.** From finding jobs to forming companies, publishing books to meeting the country’s leading thinkers, Teneo has created tremendous opportunity for me.”

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4** THE STRENGTH OF WEAK TIES

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Teneo recognizes the strength of weak ties: the idea that often acquaintances rather than friends are best positioned to share valuable information and opportunities. We actively seek to connect otherwise disconnected people to strengthen the conservative movement to further the flourishing of all.

### **WHY DO WE THINK THAT?**

In his seminal article “The Strength of Weak Ties,” Mark Granovetter argues that acquaintances (“weak ties”) are often more valuable than friends (“strong ties”) in helping you find or disseminate information.

The degree of overlap between two people’s networks is almost always directly tied to the strength of their relationship. You can think of it this way: Your two best friends probably know each other, but they probably do not know the consultant you see once a year at work. If you wanted to find a new job opportunity, who is more helpful: one of your best friends or the consultant you barely know? Most people would guess it is your best friend. But they’d be wrong.

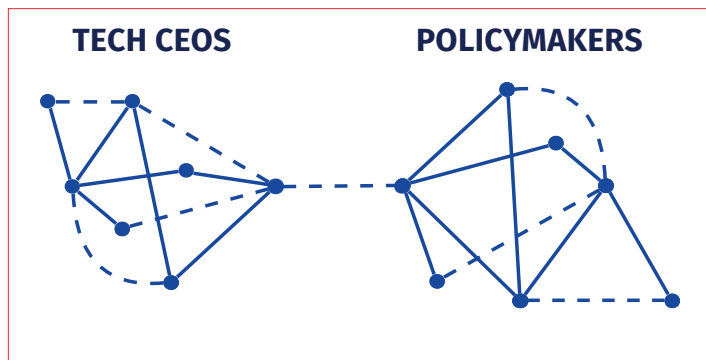
It turns out that your best friend and you have a lot of overlap in your network: you know the

same people. So if you need a job and have been asking people for a job, asking your friend (who knows all the same people you do) probably won't yield any leads. However, asking that consultant whom you see once a year opens up a vast network much more likely to produce a lead.

This theory is born out in the data: Granovetter found that 56% of job opportunities were discovered through contacts that individuals see less than twice a week, and another 28% were found through contacts individuals only saw once a year or less. That's shocking: almost a third of jobs are found through acquaintances who see each other once a year or less. When you're looking for a job, the guy whose name you struggle to remember is more valuable than your best friend. That's the power of weak ties.

At Teneo, we try to build weak ties and strong ties. In the words of Teneo member Sean Clifford, "Strong ties beget weak ties." Building a deep friendship inevitably leads to lots of new acquaintances. To argue for more weak ties is to argue against deep ties. The goal is always to build a wider and denser network. At Teneo, we actively build deep ties between members while recognizing that most of the value to the network occurs as soon as a weak tie is formed.

## AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE STRENGTH OF WEAK TIES.



Let's turn to an illustration of the power of weak ties. Say there are two informal groups—conservative tech CEOs in California (a few do exist) and conservative policymakers in DC working on new Internet regulations. These two groups need to be able to connect and share information.

In both groups, most of the members have "strong ties" to each other. They know most of the same people, but most don't know anyone in the other group. These groups live on opposite coasts, and so they're unlikely to bump into each other at PTA meetings or dinner parties. They have different geographies, social lives, and professional experiences. Between these two networks is what Ron Burt would call a "structural hole," a gap between networks that prevents knowledge from transferring between them easily. However, in this example, assume there is a single "bridge" between the two groups. This is a "weak tie" that spans the structural hole and allows these two groups to communicate.

To summarize much of Granovetter and Burt: information is twice as likely to reach its intended destination if the first jump is to an acquaintance rather than a friend, especially if the acquaintance is tied into different networks.

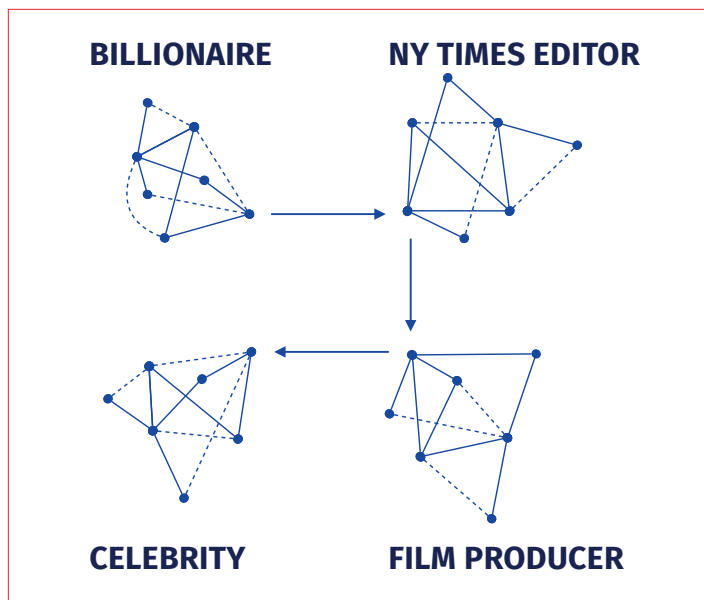
Teneo intentionally forges exactly these sorts of relationships. The tech CEO and policymaker may both be Teneo members who went on a trek to Barcelona together, or one may just know that the other is a Teneo member and reach out.

When these two are also connected to influential members of the media, Congressmen on the relevant committees, and powerful donors, the chance of seeing good ideas triumph skyrockets.

What matters is not just the fact that a relationship is a weak tie; the deeper question is a weak tie *to whom*. By building bridging relationships between otherwise disconnected networks of leaders, an organization can greatly improve coordination within the movement.

Building cross-disciplinary relationships between otherwise disconnected people can yield powerful results. The conservative movement has a deficit of these bridging relationships, and it suffers as a result.

Let's return to the story we told briefly in the first chapter. Say a hedge fund billionaire wants to push a specific progressive project. Although his network may primarily exist of other finance types, he lives in New York and has become cocktail party friends with a member of *The New York Times* Editorial Board. He calls the NYT editor and gets her on board with the project. She may call her friend from Princeton, a Hollywood producer, and enlist his help. The producer knows a celebrity actor interested in the same project and enlists her help as well. Suddenly, there is a seeming groundswell of support for the progressive project. A celebrity spokesperson, a mound of cash, and editorial support from the paper of record. With three calls, the left has mobilized an immense amount of social, financial, and cultural capital behind a single cause.



Imagine a similar moment on the right. A conservative CEO in Ohio calls the state representative he supports financially. The representative may call another donor, a contracts lawyer, who calls his pastor. Some financial and social capital has been marshaled, but the relative difference between this moment on the left and right is enormous.

On the left, networks tend to be stronger. They more easily span the gaps between key cultural institutions. This allows progressives to mobilize different types of capital more quickly and effectively.

## THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO

Organizations and the networks that arise around them are built around a mission that often makes them somewhat homogenous. The Federalist Society is for lawyers. The Adam Smith Society is for MBAs. The Harvard Club is for Harvard Alumni. The natural homogeneity of these groups can result in structural holes, cutting the network off from other networks that could be valuable. While these organizations accomplish their missions, for networks such as Teneo that are explicitly trying to shape society for the common good, structural holes present a real barrier to success.

Weak ties are powerful. They span gaps in networks and help valuable information travel quickly. At Teneo, we focus on building relationships—the stronger the better—that tie our members, friends, and allies together. We want to be constantly connecting unlikely people, individuals who would probably never meet without the mediating institution of Teneo. That initial bond is a weak tie. Ideally that connection blossoms into a deeper relationship and a denser network, but that first connection yields the most value.



## STRONG TIES VS. WEAK TIES

	THE STONG TIES MODEL	THE WEAK TIES MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Depending on a small, homogenous friend group	Building a diverse network of friends and acquaintances
<b>MODEL</b>	The “I only hang out with my friends” model	The Davos model
<b>IMAGE</b>	A silo	A bridge
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	Strong ties are more powerful than weak ties	Weak ties are more powerful than strong ties



—TS Eliot

**“If [our values] go, the whole of our culture goes.** Then you must start painfully again, and you cannot put on a new culture ready made. You must wait for the grass to grow to feed the sheep to give the wool out of which your new coat will be made.”

## DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5

# CULTURE IS UPSTREAM OF POLITICS

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Culture is upstream of politics. While politics and public policy are some of the legitimate domains we seek to shape, other domains operate in shaping the hearts and minds of people. Sometimes, politics is predetermined by cultural forces. If we only engage in politics, we are ceding the high ground of culture.

## WHY DO WE THINK THAT?

When we are talking about culture and culture formation, we are talking about the creation and dissemination of public stories that shape individual lives. It is intrinsically a conversation of elites because not everyone has access to the institutions that shape culture.

These culture-shaping institutions include the academy, art, religion, media, entertainment, and advertising. They are largely located in large, coastal metropolitan centers such as Boston, New York, DC, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Within these institutions are storytelling cultural creatives that shape our social imagination—the stories, myths, and legends we tell about the nature of the good life. For example, the TV show *Will and Grace* introduced many Americans to the gay experience in a friendly, non-threatening way. *Will and Grace* was written, filmed, and distributed by a small number of elites in Hollywood, yet its

reach was enormous. It was a small but effective part of a much larger, self-conscious effort that changed Middle America's view of the gay community.

The unique power of culture is its ability to influence individuals without conscious reflection. Culture is the frame or story through which we live our lives. It shapes what is thinkable, sayable, and doable in a given place and time. George Orwell observed:

*At any given moment there is an 'orthodoxy,' a body of ideas of which it is assumed that all right-thinking people will accept without question. It is not exactly forbidden to say this, that, or the other, but it is 'not done' to say it... . Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in the high-brow periodicals.*

The Overton Window is a concept that illustrates the same idea: this "window" defines the outer bounds of what is okay to talk about or to consider. It was developed to explain the development of public policy: within education policy, for example, a range of policies seem credible, from school choice to homeschooling to improving public schools. Shutting down all public schools and also compulsory public schooling would both be outside the window. We might consider the Overton window shift in a case study of politicians' sexual behavior: during the Clinton impeachment, Gloria Steinman and *The New York Times* both argued that a president's sexual behavior was a private matter. Recently, Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings demonstrated that the Overton Window had shifted.

Leftist strategies have shifted Overton Window at Google, which has made Christian faith and conservative values no longer permissible and accepted speech. A senior executive

at Google shared that in the last year he stopped posting on any of the internal message boards, which used to host important and wide-ranging discussions. He fears posting anything even slightly against the grain because he has seen mob squads get spun up to destroy fellow employees.

Shaping culture is shaping what people take seriously, what ideas—and even what candidates—they determine they can consider. Volodymyr Zelensky became the President of Ukraine after starring in "Servant of the People," a television comedy in which Zelensky played a schoolteacher who unexpectedly became the President of Ukraine. The idea of Zelensky as president began as a comedy in the sphere of culture, but became a reality in the sphere of politics.

## **THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO**

Culture matters, but conservatives continue to produce many more white papers than Hollywood blockbusters. Conservatives tend to focus on the next election and the next business opportunity while largely ignoring culture-shaping institutions.

The Teneo membership committee is focused on understanding what institutions and vocations shape culture and then strategically recruiting values-aligned leaders in those fields into Teneo. But this is not straightforward, nor is it easy. We have had to adapt some of our approaches to successfully engage these communities in Teneo in at least three ways:

First, we have to think about membership criteria differently to be able to find the right people. What makes a ballet dancer conservative? It's far easier to assess a lawyer's bona fides. Recruiting culture-shapers requires more direct work to get to know them and what they believe.

Second, when we invite them into the community, many may not see the importance of anything related to culture change. So we have to present Teneo in a way that resonates

with them. For example, even though policy discussions are only a small part of our programming, some culture leaders might want to avoid anything too political.

Finally, many cultural leaders fear being ‘outed’ and experiencing retribution in their fields. For example, this is precisely what happened with Friends of Abe, a libertarian-leaning network of film-related people in Los Angeles. Therefore, we have to be diligent in protecting their identities.

Overall we believe conservatives must take the opportunity to engage deeply with culture. The True, Good, and Beautiful are worth pursuing and promoting—and are done so largely through fields including film, music, the arts, fashion, and other realms we often know little about. The first step is to start to get to know the leaders shaping them.



## THE POLITICAL MODEL VS. THE CULTURAL MODEL

	THE POLITICAL MODEL	THE CULTURAL MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Focusing on politics first, believing culture will follow	Focusing on culture first, knowing that politics will follow
<b>MODEL</b>	The 1920’s Prohibition Model (thinking that if the laws changed, America’s drinking culture would end)	The Gay Rights Campaign (knowing that if homosexuality became accepted in pop culture, the law would change)
<b>IMAGE</b>	Washington, DC	Hollywood
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	Politics is upstream of culture	Culture is upstream of politics

## Christian Union

*Teneo is honored to work alongside and learn from other organizations. These brief case studies highlight the important models and ideas of our partners that animate our own work.*

Christian Union (CU) is a ministry that focuses on three primary activities: developing bold Christian leaders at the Ivy League universities in America; building networks of Christian leaders in cities; and promoting national revival through the Christian Union Day & Night ministry.

CU adopts the network theory of change. Its fundraising literature describes its goal: to “shape the hearts and minds of many thousands who graduate from these schools and who become the elites in other American cultural institutions.” Why? Because “[t]he pages of history reveal that even small groups of committed, passionate Christian leaders have made an extraordinary impact on their respective cultures in different eras.”

Unlike many campus ministries, all CU Bible studies are all led by highly qualified ministry faculty, which allows them to deliver high-quality teaching with an intellectual bent appropriate to these campuses.

By providing a focused, high-quality ministry, CU has impacted thousands of students who have gone on to serve in key roles across the country. In 2018, more than a thousand Ivy League students were part of a

Case Study



weekly CU Bible study. These students have gone on to work in Hollywood, Wall Street, BigLaw, medicine, and academia. They are being trained at these universities and then sent out into the most powerful institutions in the country.

CU has recently moved beyond campus and out into the cities to which these graduates tend to flock. These city chapters convene influential Christian alumni from across the Ivy League and continue to support them as they work in key institutions. This new Cities Ministry “helps professionals grow as godly influencers — and connect with other like-minded believers — in strategic cities. Because, while movements are often identified by one high-level name, it takes coordinated networks to bring about change.”

## Key Takeaways

By intentionally restricting itself to the campuses of elite colleges, Christian Union is leveraging its resources to great effect. Its clear focus has had the benefit of creating an influential network in major cities that will have additional benefits. Christian Union punches above its weight by maintaining a clear focus on elite institutions.

# Stories of Success

VIGNETTES OF TENEQ COMMUNITY LIFE



## A “LITTLE PLATOON” REMEMBERS THE ALAMO

**TENEQ MEMBERS:** LeElle Slifer, Jamie Kohlmann, and David and Keelie Luttrell

**OCCASION:** Texas Independence Day

**SETTING:** The Luttrell home

**DESCRIPTION:** Taking inspiration from Dennis Prager’s Fourth of July Declaration, the Dallas chapter hosted its first inaugural Texas Independence Day Celebration. Teneq members gathered at the home of David and Keelie Luttrell to learn about the state’s fight for independence as well as a little bit of Lone Star trivia. We discovered that the Texas Declaration of Independence sought to protect some of the very same rights that the American Colonists fought for in the Revolutionary War and that are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution—the right to bear arms, the right to trial by jury, and the right to freedom of religion. Teneq Members capped off the evening with Texas chili (the official state food), pecan pie (with pecans from the official state tree), and, of course, Shiner Bock beer.

**TAKEAWAY:** The best events are often hyper-local.

—Teneo Member

**“No other place allows for the raw, honest, intellectually curious way Teneans explore thorny problems together**—and not just the political ones, but the personal, societal, and business dilemmas we all face.”

—Teneo Member

**“Even disagreements have inspired me** to double down on my passions and make a bigger impact to further causes I believe in.”

## DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6

# CONFIDENT PLURALISM OVER DOGMATISM

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Teneo embraces “confident pluralism,” the notion that with tolerance, humility, and patience, a community can maintain unity while members strongly disagree about foundational ideas. Rather than seeking ideological purity, Teneo is building a community that can argue well in the context of a commitment to ongoing relationship.

## WHY DO WE THINK THAT?

In a time of increasing polarization, debate within organizations has become difficult.

While searching for ways to encourage a vibrant viewpoint diversity in a unified community, Teneo discovered the notion of “confident pluralism” put forward by scholar John Inazu. A community embracing confident pluralism can work together toward the common good even in the midst of serious differences and disagreements. Inazu says this kind of community requires three postures: **tolerance, humility, and patience.**

*Tolerance* is an enduring commitment to keep showing up and engaging. It is the stance that says even though your uncle may be crazy, you’ll still show up next Thanksgiving to celebrate family. Tolerance does not imply approval. Our members disagree deeply, and that won’t change any time soon. Our members debate with one

another, and that won't change any time soon either. But our members also tolerate each other. For Inazu, tolerance is closest to endurance. We may disagree, but we don't stop showing up and living life together.

*Humility* is the stance that you're willing to entertain the idea that you might be wrong. It's holding beliefs with an open hand, not a closed fist. It's being ready to discuss your most deeply held beliefs. At Teneo, we eschew ideological fundamentalism and the strident tone that all too often goes with it.

*Patience*, Inazu writes, "asks us to listen, understand, and empathize with those who see the world differently." We don't just show up to the lectern and begin a debate. We live, work, and play together. We talk over long dinners. We disagree in the context of a commitment to an ongoing relationship.

A community that embraces confident pluralism is one that shows vulnerability and curiosity. Through expressing our own uncertainties but not holding back on what we are confident about, we share with others our own minds and experiences. Through this we form deeper understandings, we practice a healthy posture toward others, and we build greater trust within the network.

## THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO

Ideological organizations can end up in difficult positions. For example, the editors at *National Review* were nearly unanimous in writing their NeverTrump cover issue. Months later, after pressure from donors and subscribers, they basically changed course. This type of change happens when organizations feel pressure to define an ideology or when they fail to facilitate dialogue among their community.

With respect to ideology, Teneo is thin and facilitative. Teneo's ideology is defined in our four key ideological commitments; within those commitments, we have lots

of healthy debate among the members. To be "thin" is to resist further definition as an organization. This position makes the questions like, "Does Teneo support gun control?" Or "Does Teneo support Donald Trump?" easy to answer: beyond our core convictions, Teneo takes no positions, though our members certainly have positions. To be facilitative means to enable and encourage our members to explore and express their views on a wide range of topics.

For example, at a retreat we will have a breakout session on the state of Modern Orthodox Judaism next to a discussion on Evangelical church planting. Such pluralism—*can we really talk about these things here?* But not everyone agrees?—requires confidence that disagreement can sit unresolved.

Teneo aims to cultivate a community to explore and refine the best arguments on the day's leading topics. This goal means that members will end up in passionate discussions to deepen their understanding—not to adjudicate where Teneo as an organization stands. "Confident pluralism" helps make this ideal possible.



## DOGMATISM VS. CONFIDENT PLURALISM

	THE DOGMATIC MODEL	THE CULTURAL MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	My way or the highway	The idea that you can engage in robust and friendly debate over deeply held beliefs
<b>MODEL</b>	Enforcing uniformity	Exploring together
<b>IMAGE</b>	A USSR Political Commissar	A healthy liberal arts college
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	Groups should have strong and strictly enforced ideologies	Among friends, robust debate is healthy



# Stories of Success

VIGNETTES OF TENEO COMMUNITY LIFE



## TENEO FAMILIES CRASH A CALIFORNIA SINGALONG

**TENEO MEMBERS:** Evan Taranta and Kylee Teti

**OCCASION:** *The Sound of Music* sing-along

**SETTING:** The Los Angeles Hollywood Bowl

**DESCRIPTION:** From Evan Taranta “Every year, Angelenos gather at the Hollywood Bowl to sing along to *The Sound of Music*. They boo at the Nazis, hiss at the baroness, and bark at the traitor Rolf when they appear on screen. It’s an event that inspires community, even in a crazy city like LA, and it was even better to share the experience with Teneo families, kids included. Prior to the event, we read an essay by Maria Von Trapp on the importance of instilling family values through art and music. We talked about the essay during our picnic and shared ways we incorporate the arts into our lives at home. Our daughters were in awe of the event, and *The Sound of Music* has become their favorite movie. Now they know all the songs and often perform for us at home.”

**TAKEAWAY:** Teneo is for the whole family, not just the hard-charging professional.

—Teneo Member

“We have so many avenues for policy thoughts; **Teneo is the only one we have as a movement that cares even more about your personal strength and flourishing**, because we can only build our movement from the inside out.”

—Teneo Member

“**Teneo is like church for conservatism.** It’s a community where you can grow in knowledge, be encouraged and strengthened, find tangible help in accomplishing your goals.”

## DESIGN PRINCIPLE 7

### PASTORAL CARE FOR THE WHOLE PERSON

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Teneo works to care for its members across personal dimensions of human flourishing. This care is not only good in itself, but it also fits with our network-based theory of social change. When a leader is thriving personally—has a strong faith, a healthy marriage, and is physically fit, for example—he or she is able to go forth into the world in strength to promote our shared ideals.

#### WHY DO WE THINK THAT?

At the first Teneo retreat, held at Osprey Point in Maryland, we gave out only one book: *Why Great Men Fall*, a book profiling leaders who experienced epic collapses, often due to ethical lapses. The book explores principles including invincibility (e.g., that a leader is untouchable) and dessert (i.e., that long days of hard work justify a certain action). Ironically, many of these leaders had been to great training programs and schools; they knew what it took to rise as a leader—but something was missing.

In the early days of Teneo, we explored creating space for more personal conversations—about marriage, failure, work, etc. We found that for many of our leaders those topics were more important and certainly less served by other communities of which they are a part.

Some might be surprised to find at a Teneo retreat discussions about losing a loved one,

caring for aging parents, managing a dual career household, thriving in your marriage, and financial planning. We group these conversations in what we call the Five F's: faith, family, fitness, friendship, and finance—and aspire that all of our members would flourish in each of these areas.

On the one hand, these topics are about personal development—and therefore these conversations are good in their own right. But they are also valuable because of our model of social change: when our leaders are thriving in each of the Five F's, they go out into the world in strength.

Just consider:

- A strong faith grounds leaders in a vision of true human flourishing.
- With a strong marriage, leaders gain a troupe of cheerleaders and counselors.
- When one is physically fit, he has enough energy and perseverance for any challenge.
- With strong friendships, leaders can better weather defeats.
- When one has a sound financial plan, she can run for office.

Or consider that if a leader fails in any one of these areas, the leader fails. Any of: a crisis of faith, divorce, severe illness, isolation, or bankruptcy will sidetrack, if not forever cripple, a leader's ability to shape the world.

## THIS PRINCIPLE AND TENEO

If the Five F's are a priority, how do we help leaders develop in them? We've explored a few approaches at Teneo, including what we call a content model and a relationship model.

The content model brings together the best materials (counselors, books, guides, apps, etc.) and distributes

them and encourages their usage through digital and real-life encounters. Consider a webinar with 30 attendees on building a healthy marriage. Or a small-group discussion at a retreat about managing failure. Teneo plays no role in creating the content, but can play a small role in making it known, available, and consumed.

The relationship model facilitates peers coming alongside peers to show up, have conversations, and be available as needed. Think about Jonathan Lusk, a Teneo member in Houston who just shows up in people's lives over and over. If someone in his community runs into a serious problem, they call him for advice. Jonathan has earned the right to lean into people's lives through his investment in those lives. We think of the formal and informal leaders in Teneo this way: they are intentionally seeking friendship with others in the network so that, ultimately, that person would flourish. The path could be small and informal (e.g., a condolences note on the death of a grandparent) or significant (e.g., taking someone's kids in for a few days during an illness of a parent). We might consider this litmus test: through Teneo, have you gained at least one new person whom you can call in a difficult situation?

Thus there are two related, big ideas around how we think about leadership development: (1) growing leaders is not only about right thinking of key subjects; it is also about right practices throughout life; and (2) some leaders grow best when surrounded by close confidants in whom they have great trust.



## WHOLE SELF VS. WORKING PROFESSIONAL

	THE WORKING PROFESSIONAL MODEL	THE WHOLE SELF MODEL
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Focus on right belief	Focuses on right living
<b>MODEL</b>	The “my life is my job” model	The holistic model
<b>IMAGE</b>	The overworked, overweight, estranged executive	The volunteer t-ball coach/ entrepreneur
<b>ASSUMPTION</b>	Career comes first, everything else will be fine	Human flourishing is a prerequisite of great work



# Stories of Success

VIGNETTES OF TENEO COMMUNITY LIFE

## COMMUNITY IN TRAGEDY

**TENEO MEMBERS:** Rachel and Bennett Gerli, Heather Grizzle, Simone Ledeen, Catherine Keller

**OCCASION:** The funeral reception of Roger Pellegrini, father of Teneo Member Georgia Pellegrini

**SETTING:** The Pellegrini home

**DESCRIPTION:** Roger Pellegrini passed away unexpectedly at his home in Sparkhill, NY. Roger was an avid gardener and was in the middle of many projects around the home, including garden updates and pressurized pool cleaning. He had even bought ingredients to make his wife dinner that night. He was a loving husband and a wonderful father. In just a few days, Teneo members rallied behind Georgia, traveling to the reception and sending notes and gifts. Assisted by a host of Teneo members, Rachel Gerli organized a beautiful reception after the funeral for more than a hundred people that included many of Roger’s favorite foods: deviled eggs, charcuterie boards, caprese skewers, and watermelon bites. One Teneo member drove from DC and back in a day to give emotional and logistical support. In tragedy, the Teneo community pulled together. In the words of Rachel, “You’re good people, Teneo members, and we all are lucky to count you as friends.”

**TAKEAWAY:** Community is about supporting in the hard times as much as celebrating the good times.

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## The Blackstone Legal Fellowship

*Teneo is honored to work alongside and learn from other organizations. These brief case studies highlight the important models and ideas of our partners that animate our own work.*

The Blackstone Legal Fellowship is a training program that brings together exceptional Christian law students and prepares them for careers marked by integrity, excellence, and leadership. Essential aspects of the Blackstone Fellowship are supplemental legal training in a Christian worldview, opportunities for strategic networking, and ongoing career facilitation.

A well-funded and influential arm of the Alliance Defending Freedom, this organization fits well within the employment structure of the civil legal profession, where relationships with state attorneys general and judges are extremely beneficial. The Blackstone imprimatur acts as a sort of “scarlet pimpernel” among the Christian judiciary. Being a Blackstone fellow is a signal of worldview. A judge looking for a clerk who shares his beliefs knows that Blackstone provides a reliable pipeline of highly talented, qualified applicants to consider. Through personal introductions, Blackstone successfully places clerks in key roles throughout the legal profession.

The success of Blackstone is not due to the high caliber teaching—though it has that—but rather to the personal and deep community it has created both among fellows and between Blackstone staff and fellows. Key staff connects with several hundred fellows every month on topics ranging from jobs to marriage, clerkships to finding a good church to

join. Fellows feel the Blackstone team is FOR them, regardless of where they are or what big things they are working on. The staff embodies this pastoral care approach to supporting fellows certainly in their vocation, but also well beyond into the other parts of their flourishing.

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## Key Takeaways

Blackstone is so effective, in part, because its staff genuinely cares about the flourishing of its fellows. Regular contact and assistance build a strong bond and helps Blackstone fellows flourish as individuals and therefore in their conservative legal careers.

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## CONCLUSION

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Was this radical? Or so obvious as to be boring? In conversations, none of these design principles seem controversial. The stories and examples all seemed to resonate with our early readers.

**So how do we explain the reality that most “movement organizations” operate on opposing design principles?**

### THREE HYPOTHESES:

**FIRST**, many major organizations were designed over 50 years ago during a time when we knew a lot less about movement design. Indeed, it is difficult to shift historic organizations.

**SECOND**, running an organization on these principles is actually very hard. It is simpler to ship content than to build a community.

**THIRD**, it can be difficult to persuade donors to pursue new strategies. The conservative movement is championed by two types of donors— wealthy individuals and foundation leaders. To both of these constituencies, it is easier to sell the reigning strategy we know: defiant content distributed digitally to a mass audience designed to drive political outcomes.

We are proud of the conservative movement and what it has accomplished following this model. However, we think there is an opportunity to pursue a complementary strategy—building a high-trust network of leaders to accelerate the ideas articulated by legacy organizations.

### SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

At Teneo, the hard work now begins as we are convicted to pursue these principles differently and better. We are eager to continue learning how aligned organizations are designing effective communities.

We are on a generational quest to deliver on a civilizational endeavor: the preservation of freedom. It is an opportunity and a responsibility we do not take lightly, and it is on the shoulders of giants we stand upon in our work day in and day out.

In closing, we want to thank the Teneo Board of Directors, leadership, regional chairs, and the dozens of allies who have shaped this document, these ideas, and, above all, our lives.



# CHARGE

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By Joe Lindsley, Teneo Member, Author, and  
Director of Teneo Treks

When the framers of the Constitution emerged from Independence Hall in 1787, a woman asked Ben Franklin, “What have you given us?”

“A Republic,” he said. “If you can keep it.”

In an era of rising polarization, fake news, vindictive rhetoric, and growing isolation, can the republic endure? Will there be a breaking point?

Imagine a historian in 100 years investigating how the republic was reinvigorated in our time.

Despite the historical horrors of communism and totalitarianism, a rising socialism and a craving for didactic authoritarianism emerged. An epidemic of loneliness and isolation, a great unawakening, was sweeping the nation. Americans are held in the sway of a pop culture determined by a small cadre of elites. Many leaders were timid, scheming, lacking a vision, scraping by to give handouts to stay in power. While some key organizations were quietly, steadily protecting the institutions of the republic, the great space outside of those institutions—the public square—was dominated by people screaming at each other over the Internet.

The future historian would find that amid the din of anger and aspersion, confusion and chaos, a society emerged to fight these forces. A group of innovative, bold leaders positioned across the key sectors of society committed themselves to fostering the discourse necessary for self-government, determined to conserve the best of our traditions while pushing each other to innovate. The historian would discover a band of leaders who, by forming strong friendships, held each other accountable,

whether they ended up in Congress, in the boardroom, or on foreign battlefields.

The historian would discover Teneo.

That’s what we’re building. For the past 11 years, we’ve quietly built a network of more than 800 innovators, renegades, and leaders. We’re bigger and more professionally diverse than Congress. By forming a league, we’ve supported and encouraged each other as we’ve been entrusted with positions of influence. Because we are tight-knit, when we get to positions of influence—so often the downfall!—we hold each other accountable. By gathering for an annual retreat and by traveling on meaningful trips around the world together, we’ve stayed close. And when frustrated by a barrier or inspired by a big idea, we are not helpless: we have a network of hundreds to reach out to and lean on.

We’ve helped each other in difficult situations, we have encouraged each other to live with greater purpose, and we’re forming a new elite—a democratic elite proper to America, not based on a system of gentry and entitlement, but on a commitment to excellence and flourishing.



**Yours sincerely,  
Joe Lindsley**

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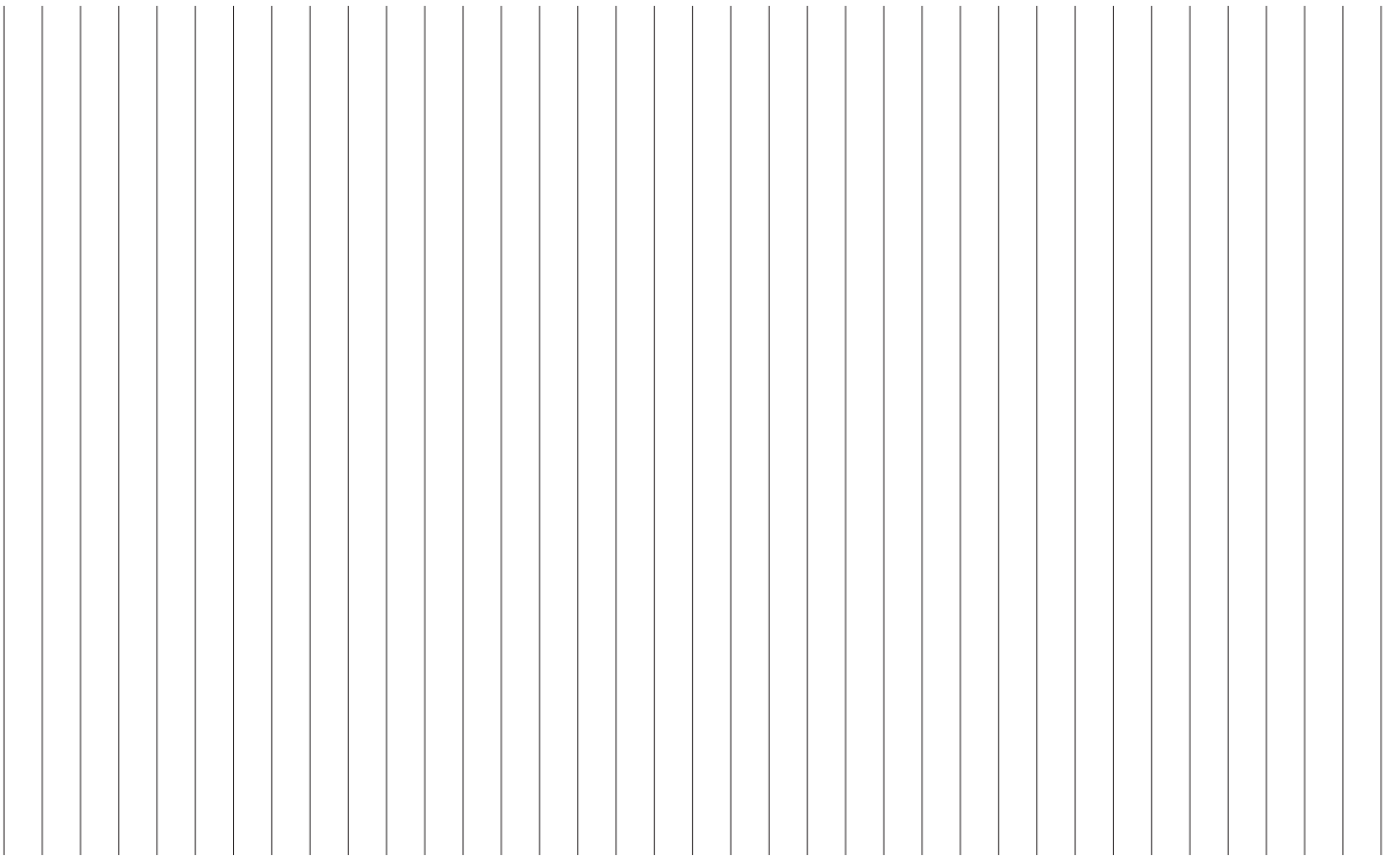
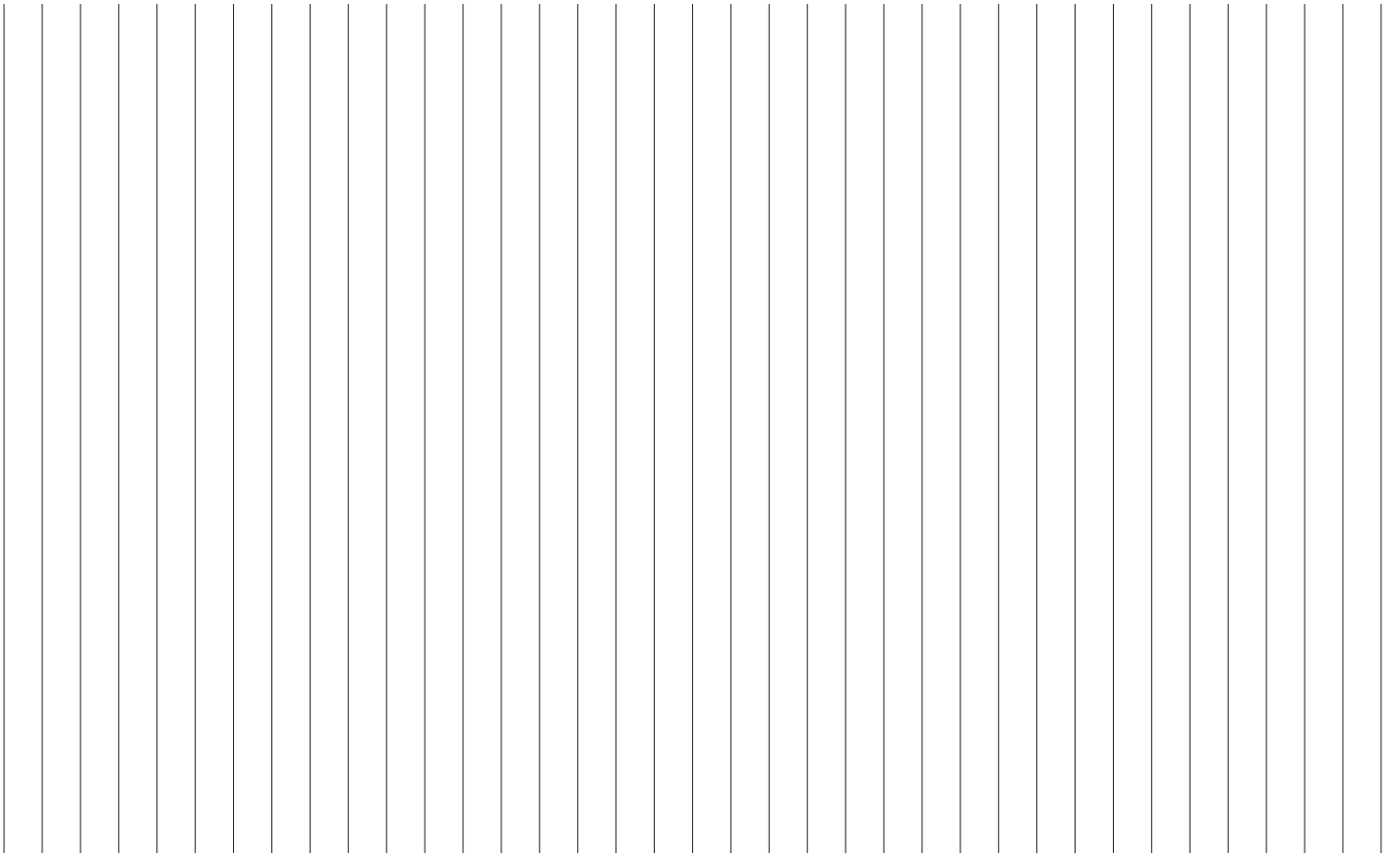
**Wes Drees**, for his servant leadership in crafting and living out the principles in this book

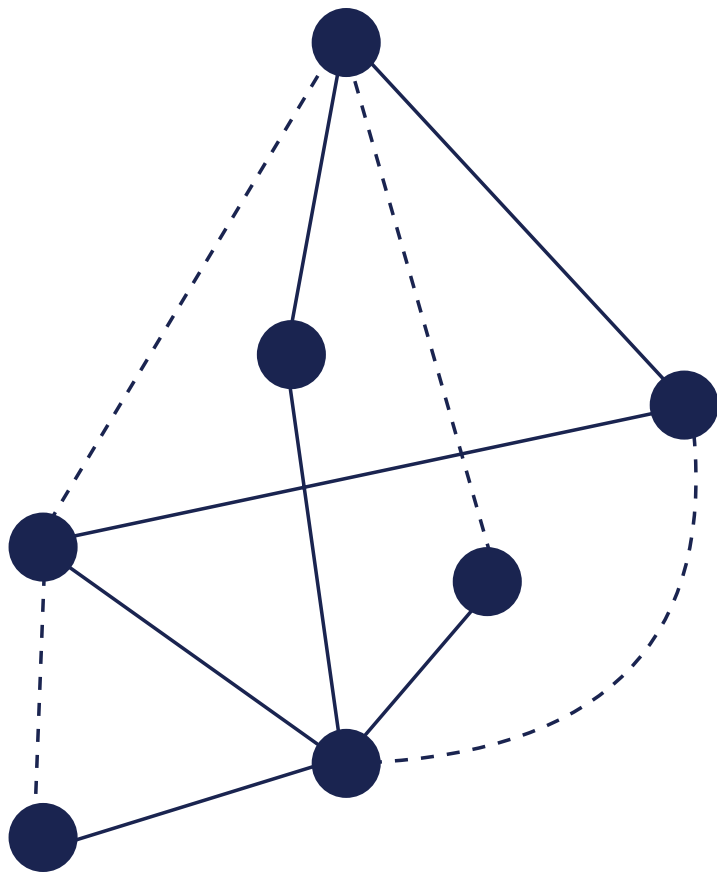
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# Community Vision

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We believe the heroes of history are networks of well-positioned people working together toward the same goal. If you want to change the world, you need to build a group of friends with trust, influence, and shared values.

*Community Vision* argues for the importance of networks and provides a playbook to build effective networks.

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“Often **the biggest changes in history** are the achievements of thinly documented, informally organized groups.”

**Niall Ferguson, Historian and Bestselling Author**

“When you’re fighting a battle for the heart and soul of our culture, you want to know you’re in the trenches with someone you can trust, someone you know, and someone who will have your back. **We don’t win unless we build friendship and fellowship** with other people—and that’s what you’re doing here with Teneo.”

**Leonard Leo, Co-founder, The Federalist Society**

“If there were ever a time for a new generation of leaders to emerge to break through the political impasse, the time is now. Indeed, Teneo’s mission has never been more important—and **I’m honored to be a member.**”

**Mike Gallagher, Teneo Member and U.S. Congressman**