

## Meetup.com: A Resource to Consider?

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Over the last few months, I've heard from a few groups about their experiences using the online social network [Meetup](#) to attract new participants. I've even seen its effect at a local dance. This got me wanting to find out a little more about Meetup and how dance and song organizers have been using it. I don't have enough anecdotal information to really know how useful Meetup can be for dance and song groups, but let me share what I do know.

### What It Is

Meetup, whose slogan is "Use the Internet to get off the Internet", has been around for a decade now. If you aren't familiar with it, it's a social networking tool meant to facilitate face-to-face meetings. The organization's mission statement speaks to a lot of the values I hear traditional dancers and singers express: "Meetup's mission is to revitalize local community and help people around the world self-organize. Meetup believes that people can change their personal world, or the whole world, by organizing themselves into groups that are powerful enough to make a difference."

How this sentiment works in practice on their site is that organizers create groups (and pay dues of between \$12-\$19/mo) and those groups have members and events.

Meetup isn't the only site out there doing this sort of thing, of course. [BigTent](#) seems to be another resource, although this doesn't seem to have a lot of folk representation at the moment. And there's plenty of overlap with what you might already be doing with Facebook. Indeed, Meetup also connects with Facebook with an app. (I should note that it's a time of transition for Meetup, which just underwent a [major facelift](#) a few days ago that [not everyone likes](#).)

### Who Is Using It and How

*Meetup contra dance groups and interested members across the globe.*

There are a number of Meetup groups out there done by the organizers themselves. [Contra dance](#) and [square dance](#) both generate some hits across the country. English Country Dance doesn't seem to have a lot of representation, with the notable exception of the [Las Vegas Country Dance group](#). There is a little [morris](#) out there as well. "Folk song" and "folk music" generate lots of hits of [various stripes](#).

Meetup sites can contain a lot of information, as with this [Chicago Sacred Harp page](#). Reading the [quotes from participants](#) is also quite fun. (It's the sort of thing that would

be nice on any website, really.)

Looking through these can give you a sense of how organizers might use Meetup. There's another way Meetup can impact communities, too: a broader Meetup group can decide to go to a dance as one of their activities.

This can happen when one of the organizers of a group that finds fun, unusual things to do decides contra dancing sounds interesting. I experienced this type of Meetup effect at a dance recently, when [this contra dance](#) was sponsored by the [Nerd Fun – Boston](#), a group with almost 3,000 participants. Lo and behold, a group of a dozen or so descended on the dance.

### Is It Worth It?

A little effort and money can give you a Meetup site, but is it worth it? I don't know.

While \$12/month isn't a huge investment, it's not a drop in the bucket either; it's only going to be worth it if you see results. If you have several groups with close missions (e.g. contra and English or pub sings and a morris team), I could see combining forces to share the burden.

So, have you used Meetup or something like it to promote a song or dance event and/or find new participants? How? Did it work? Please leave a comment. I'd love to hear about it and I am sure others would as well.

– Max