Max Paradox

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

I Invited Everyone. Now Nobody Knows Where We're Going

How to Organize Regular Get-Togethers with Friends Without Constantly Managing the Group



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ALL-IN Rafał Płonkowski



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INTRO

It's Friday, 6:42 p.m. Since Monday, you've been trying to organize a get-together with your friends. You sent a message to the group chat, suggested Saturday, asked who was interested, and even demonstrated the kind of initiative normally associated with someone who genuinely wants to maintain human relationships. The first responses were promising.

"I'm in!"

"Great idea!"

"We haven't seen each other in ages!"

"We definitely need to organize something!"

Three days have passed. Someone has asked where you're meeting. Someone else suggested Sunday instead. A third person said Sunday wouldn't work, but Saturday might, provided it wasn't too late. Someone proposed a restaurant whose name they couldn't remember. Another person asked whether bringing a partner would be okay. Finally, the classic message appeared: "Let us know when you've figured something out."

And that's when you realize you're no longer organizing a get-together with friends. You're running a small service business whose product is spending time together, while operations, marketing, logistics, and customer service are all handled by the same person: you.

And nobody mentioned a salary.

The most absurd part is that everyone genuinely wants to meet. They enjoy each other's company, remember previous outings fondly, and sincerely express enthusiasm about

doing it again. The problem only begins when enthusiasm needs to become an actual date, location, and time. Suddenly, a group of people perfectly capable of making serious decisions in other areas of life becomes a collective waiting for divine intervention.

If this sounds familiar, you probably know what happens next. Eventually, you take matters into your own hands. You choose a date, find a place, check availability, send a reminder, and ask who is actually coming. You answer messages, clarify doubts, negotiate compromises, and try to determine whether someone's silence means they're not interested or whether their phone is simply buried beneath the other responsibilities of everyday life.

The meeting finally happens. Everyone has a good time. People talk, laugh, and catch up. As you head home, someone says, "We really should do this more often!"

And instead of replying, "Brilliant. Next time, someone else can organize it," you smile and say, "Absolutely!"

Congratulations. You've just informally renewed your contract as the manager of everybody else's social life.

Why Is Meeting Regularly So Difficult?

Most adults don't have a problem with the idea of meeting their friends. The problem is everything that happens between suggesting it and actually sitting together around a table. Everyone has responsibilities, plans, family commitments, work, changing availability, and individual preferences. Even when people live relatively close to one another, their calendars can look as though they belong to completely different time zones.

Then there's the nature of group communication. One person prefers making arrangements well in advance, while

another makes decisions spontaneously. Someone enjoys restaurants, someone else prefers meeting at home. Some people are ready to go out on Friday after work, while others need the weekend to recover from the very idea of going out. None of this is wrong. The difficulty begins when you try to accommodate every preference every single time you organize something.

That's when even the simplest decision requires a consultation.

"How about Saturday?"

"What time?"

"Afternoon?"

"But where?"

"Maybe somewhere in town?"

"Where exactly?"

"I don't know. I'll think of something."

That last sentence can mark the beginning of a multi-day project with no guaranteed completion date.

We often assume that organizing a successful get-together means finding a solution that works for absolutely everyone. In practice, that's an unrealistic expectation. If your group consists of several or even a dozen people, the chances of finding a perfect date for every single person may be quite small. And the longer you spend searching for common ground, the greater the risk that eventually nobody will meet at all.

Not because people don't want to. Life simply doesn't stop while everyone votes in the group chat.

There's another trap, too. The person who most frequently initiates get-togethers gradually becomes responsible not only for organizing them, but also for the atmosphere, attendance, and continued existence of the entire group. What begins as a simple invitation ends with the feeling that if they don't send a message, nobody will say anything. Every meeting requires their energy, and every silence in the group can start to feel like a sign that the relationships are falling apart.

Meanwhile, a lack of messages doesn't necessarily mean a lack of interest. Sometimes it simply means that someone has nothing to say, is busy, or has become accustomed to someone else taking the initiative. It doesn't have to be evidence of a lack of affection. It may just be an established pattern of how the group operates.

This distinction matters because otherwise it's easy to fall into the trap of emotionally auditing your friends every time they fail to read an invitation. A messaging app isn't a device for measuring friendship, although some people seem to treat it as if it came with a built-in relationship quality certificate.

You don't need more active friends. You need a simpler system.

Perhaps you've already tried different approaches. You've sent polls with possible dates, created events, suggested several locations, reminded everyone about upcoming meetings, and even attempted to arrange everything a month in advance. Sometimes it worked. Other times, you ended up with fifteen responses, none of which led to an actual decision.

It's hardly surprising that regular get-togethers can start to feel like a disproportionate amount of work.

The problem is that you're trying to organize every meeting from scratch. A new date, a new location, new arrangements, new questions, and another round of checking who can make it. Every get-together becomes a separate undertaking instead of a natural part of a shared routine.

But regularity doesn't have to mean complicated organization.

You don't need a perfect calendar, unanimous decisions, or a group of people who enthusiastically respond to every message. You need a few simple agreements that reduce the number of decisions everyone has to make from the beginning each time. A regular date, a predictable format, a clear way of confirming attendance, and a reasonable acceptance that not everyone will participate every time can make a significant difference.

Above all, you need to stop treating yourself as the person responsible for keeping the entire group alive.

You can be the initiator without being the only organizer. You can suggest a date without personally persuading everyone to attend. You can make sure the meeting has a sensible format without being responsible for whether everybody happens to be in a good mood, has a free evening, and feels like going out.

Friendship shouldn't require a full-time administrative position.

Regularity Without Pressure or a Major Project

This book is for people who want to maintain friendships but don't want to go through the same organizational

marathon every time. For those who have a group of people they genuinely enjoy spending time with, yet find it increasingly difficult to arrange opportunities to get together. It's also for anyone who has spent months hearing declarations about how everyone really needs to meet up, while the distance between those declarations and reality keeps growing.

We won't pretend that everyone can meet regularly, that everyone has the same amount of free time, or that sending a single message will make a dozen people immediately appear at your chosen location. You cannot plan other people's lives for them. You can, however, create conditions that make getting together easier to organize and less demanding for everyone involved.

You'll learn how to recognize which type of get-together actually suits your group, how to agree on dates without endless negotiations, how to communicate specific proposals, and how to deal with the typical behaviors of group members. You'll see why waiting for one hundred percent attendance isn't worthwhile, how to reduce the number of decisions, and how to distribute organizational responsibilities so that they don't become your private obligation.

We'll also look at situations in which someone regularly cancels, others don't respond, the group loses momentum, or get-togethers stop fitting people's changing circumstances. Even the best plan has to survive contact with reality, and reality has a remarkably poor sense of obligation toward our calendars.

It's equally important not to turn an enjoyable initiative into another form of social pressure. Regular get-togethers should give people the opportunity to spend time together,

not make them feel that every absence requires a written explanation accompanied by supporting medical documentation.

Not everyone will show up every time. Not everyone will respond with the same level of enthusiasm. Sometimes the meeting will happen with a smaller group, sometimes the date will need to change, and sometimes canceling the plans will turn out to be the best decision. That's normal. The goal isn't to create a perfectly functioning social machine. It's to find a way for people to see each other more often without putting in excessive effort.

There's one more thing worth understanding: you don't have to wait until everyone suddenly starts taking initiative at the same time. You can begin by changing the way you organize get-togethers yourself. Instead of sending ten questions, make one specific proposal. Instead of reinventing everything every time, establish a recurring routine. Instead of taking responsibility for every single task, leave room for others to contribute. See who wants to help build the initiative and who simply enjoys joining in.

Both approaches are perfectly acceptable. Not everyone has to be an organizer, just as not everyone has to be the life of the party. What's important is that you don't confuse inviting people with taking responsibility for their social lives.

Perhaps after reading this book, your group will still take ages to respond to messages. Someone will still ask where you're meeting, even though the information is three messages above. Someone else will write "I'll see," which, in certain dialects of group communication, describes a state of suspension somewhere between attendance and absence.

But there's a good chance you'll stop treating every such situation as a personal problem that needs solving.

Because the whole point is to spend time with your friends, not to sacrifice half your free time persuading them that spending time with your friends is worthwhile.

Organize things so that the prospect of an evening together is enjoyable even before it begins. And so that the next time someone says, "We really should meet more often," it doesn't automatically mean you've just received another assignment.

Chapter 1 - The Group That Mostly Exists in the Chat

There is a particular kind of friendship group that, at first glance, appears to be functioning perfectly. People regularly send each other photos, comment on events, react to funny messages, and occasionally mention that they really should meet up. Someone posts a holiday picture, someone else responds with a joke, and a third person brings up a story from several years ago. The conversation can carry on throughout the entire day. If you were to judge the health of these friendships based on messaging activity alone, you might conclude that everything was going wonderfully.

Meanwhile, four months have passed since the last time everyone actually met.

Whenever someone suggests getting together, the group responds enthusiastically. The problem is that enthusiasm rarely turns into action. Messages appear and disappear, someone changes the subject, and the original suggestion gradually dissolves into the daily stream of conversation. A few days later, nobody remembers whether the meeting was supposed to happen this week, next week, or perhaps simply someday, when everyone happens to be available.

In situations like this, it's easy to conclude that your friends have stopped making an effort. You might even decide that the group has lost interest in spending time together. Sometimes that's genuinely the case, but much more often the problem is less dramatic and considerably more ordinary. The group simply hasn't developed a reliable way of moving from staying in touch to actually doing something together.

That distinction matters. If you decide that the problem is a lack of commitment from other people, you may respond by putting even more energy into encouraging them to meet. But if you recognize that what's missing is a shared habit and a few clear arrangements, you can change the way you organize get-togethers without having to stage a social revolution.

Friendship Doesn't Organize Itself

For a long time, meeting friends can happen almost automatically. Someone suggests going out, and the others join in. People live close to one another, have similar daily routines, fewer responsibilities, and greater freedom to make spontaneous decisions. There's no need to maintain an availability calendar or arrange dates several weeks in advance. Meeting up is simply a natural part of everyday life.

Then something changes. One person moves to another neighborhood, another starts working different hours, a third has a family, and someone else changes jobs. Suddenly, a spontaneous meeting requires advance coordination. What used to be a simple decision becomes an undertaking involving several people, their schedules, and a surprising number of logistical details.

It doesn't mean the friendship has disappeared. The conditions required to maintain it have changed.

Many groups fail to notice this transition. They continue operating according to old habits even though their everyday circumstances look completely different. Everyone assumes that meeting up should happen naturally, just as it used to. Nobody wants to be the person who overplans a casual evening because friendship is supposed to be spontaneous. As a result, everyone waits for spontaneity,

which now requires increasingly complicated organizational arrangements.

It's a little like trying to use an old train timetable when half the passengers have already moved to different cities.

It's worth understanding that regularity doesn't take the naturalness out of relationships. Quite the opposite: it can bring some of that naturalness back. When people know they have an opportunity to see one another once a month, they no longer need to wonder every time whether it's appropriate to suggest meeting or whether anybody will actually be interested. Simply having a predictable opportunity reduces the effort involved in initiating contact.

The first step, therefore, is to stop treating every get-together as an event that needs to be invented from scratch. Before you start establishing rules, however, take a good look at the group you actually have. Not the group you remember from five years ago, and not the group you wish you had.

Not Everyone in Your Group Participates in the Same Way

One of the most common organizational mistakes is assuming that everyone in a friendship group approaches get-togethers in exactly the same way. They're friends, they get along, and they all say they want to stay in touch, so surely they must all care about the same things.

In reality, people participate in relationships in different ways.

Some enjoy initiating get-togethers and like having an influence on how they unfold. Others are perfectly happy being participants but rarely make the first suggestion themselves. There are also people who need a specific invitation because a general message in the group chat

doesn't give them enough reason to reserve time in their calendar. Still others enjoy meeting up but don't want to participate in every single initiative.

Some people respond quickly but frequently cancel later. Others remain silent for two days, then arrive exactly on time and turn out to be among the most engaged participants. Response speed is not a reliable measure of the quality of a friendship.

So instead of judging your friends by who sends the most messages, try observing what they actually do. Who really turns up? Who suggests another get-together after an enjoyable evening? Who willingly helps choose a location? Who needs advance notice? Who participates less frequently but is clearly happy whenever they do?

These observations reveal something that a messaging app cannot show you: the actual distribution of involvement within your group.

You don't need to maintain a spreadsheet assigning points to your friends. This isn't about creating a ranking of people most deserving of an invitation. You simply need to stop expecting everyone to behave in the same way.

Imagine a group of eight people. Two enjoy initiating get-togethers, three attend regularly, two show up occasionally, and one almost never responds to group messages but enjoys joining whenever they receive specific information. Is this a dysfunctional group? Not necessarily. It may simply consist of people with different needs and communication styles.

The problem appears when you try to force everyone into a single model of participation. You expect everyone to be equally active, equally quick to respond, and equally willing

to help organize. That expectation can lead to frustration surprisingly quickly.

A well-functioning group doesn't need eight organizers. It needs a few people willing to keep the initiative going, while everyone else has the opportunity to join without feeling that they must pass an examination in friendship commitment.

The Group Doesn't Have to Be Complete to Be Worthwhile

Many organizers fall into the trap of thinking that a proper group get-together should take place with everyone present. If you invite eight people, you unconsciously expect eight people to arrive. When one person can't make it, you start wondering whether it's worth meeting without them. When three people decline, you're tempted to postpone everything.

Without realizing it, you make the possibility of meeting dependent on the most restricted calendar in the entire group.

This becomes particularly problematic as the number of participants increases. Every additional person creates more opportunities for scheduling conflicts. If everyone is expected to attend every event, a single person's unavailability is enough to trigger another round of negotiations. With a few people, you might still manage to find a compromise. With a dozen, you're approaching the organizational equivalent of a game in which the grand prize is permission to book a table.

It's much more useful to separate two things: the existence of the friendship group and the attendance list for a particular get-together. The group can remain the same even though different people attend different meetings.

This doesn't mean dividing friends into better and worse categories or creating exclusive subgroups. It simply means acknowledging that people have different circumstances. If three people are free on Friday, they don't need to cancel their plans just because the other five have different commitments.

For example, Ania and Marek can't make it this month because they're going away. Kasia works weekends, while Piotr already has a family trip planned. The remaining members of the group have a free evening. If you cancel the meeting, everyone loses an opportunity to spend time together. If you organize it, part of the group gets to meet now, while those who couldn't attend can join next time.

Of course, there are occasions when having everyone present matters. A birthday, a farewell, or a gathering organized for a specific reason may require a different approach. But there's no need to transfer those expectations to ordinary, recurring get-togethers.

If your goal is to see each other more often, success doesn't have to mean everyone being present. Success means that people actually get to see one another.

Take a Look at the Group You're Really Organizing

Before changing the way you communicate, it's worth answering a few questions. Not to create a complicated social analysis, but to avoid organizing meetings according to assumptions that exist only in your own head.

Consider the following:

- Do most people genuinely want to meet regularly, or do they simply like the idea of getting together?
- Do group members have similar availability, or does everyone operate according to a different schedule?

- Are people happy to participate but reluctant to organize?
- Is the lack of get-togethers caused by organizational difficulties, or have the relationships naturally become less close?
- Are there a few people who could help maintain the initiative together?

The first question is particularly important. Saying "We really must meet up" doesn't always mean someone is ready to participate regularly. Sometimes it's an expression of affection, sometimes politeness, and sometimes a genuine desire that keeps losing the battle against everyday responsibilities.

You don't have to immediately determine which of these situations applies to every friend. You can simply suggest a short conversation with a few people you're closest to. Ask whether they'd genuinely like to meet, for example, once a month, and what kind of arrangement would suit them. Pay attention not only to their answers but also to whether they offer specific suggestions.

If someone says they'd be happy to meet but adds that Sunday afternoons work better for them, you've received useful information. If someone says they're not sure whether they'll manage but would still like to hear about upcoming get-togethers, that's another useful indication. You don't need to pressure anyone into making a stronger commitment than they're comfortable with.

This way, you avoid designing a system for an imaginary group of ideal participants.

Stop Measuring Friendship by Who Takes the Initiative

Someone who always organizes get-togethers may eventually start feeling unappreciated. This is particularly likely when they notice that everyone else is happy to attend but rarely suggests anything independently. A question begins to form in their mind: why does everything have to come from me?

It's a legitimate frustration, but be careful not to draw conclusions that go further than the evidence allows. Initiating get-togethers is a specific skill, and not everyone naturally gravitates toward it. Some people worry that their suggestion won't attract enough interest. Others don't know how to plan something for a larger group. Still others have simply become accustomed to an arrangement in which someone else takes care of the initial initiative.

That doesn't mean you should continue doing all the work indefinitely. It simply means you should distinguish between a lack of initiative and a lack of affection.

You can tell your friends directly that you'd like organizing to become more of a shared responsibility. Not as a complaint, but as a specific suggestion: "It's great that we're meeting up. I'd just like us not to rely on my ideas for every single get-together. Maybe someone else could choose the place next time?"

This kind of communication gives others an opportunity to take on some responsibility without publicly holding them accountable for their previous inactivity.

If nobody takes the initiative, you'll have learned something about the actual dynamics of your group. However, you don't have to immediately conclude that the friendships are pointless. You can decide how much energy

you're willing to invest and what level of involvement feels comfortable for you.

The most important thing is to stop treating other people's activity as something you can manufacture through your own effort.

A friendship group isn't a project whose success depends on a single manager. You can create opportunities to meet, invite people, and maintain continuity of contact. But you cannot make everyone want to participate to exactly the same degree.

Once you accept that diversity, it becomes easier to organize get-togethers around the people who genuinely want to see one another, rather than endlessly trying to assemble everyone who once said that you absolutely must meet up.

Chapter 2 - Why Every Arrangement Turns into a Negotiation

Imagine someone in your friendship group sends a message:

"Maybe we should meet up next weekend?"

It sounds like a simple sentence. It contains a suggestion, indicates an approximate timeframe, and proposes spending some time together. In practice, however, it opens several separate subjects that need to be settled. Which day? What time? Where? Will it be a short meeting or an entire evening? Can people bring partners? Do you need to book a table? Will it be a restaurant, a walk, or perhaps a gathering at someone's home?

Every answer can generate another question.

"Saturday works for me."

"Me too, but only after five."

"I have something to take care of on Saturday. How about Sunday?"

"Sunday doesn't work for me."

"Then maybe Friday?"

"On Friday, I don't know what time I'll finish."

After a dozen messages, the group is no longer arranging a get-together. It's trying to solve a problem that exists because someone suggested having a get-together in the first place.

It's worth examining this mechanism because it reveals one of the most important causes of organizational

exhaustion. People often aren't refusing invitations. They're simply unwilling or unable to make a long series of small decisions that eventually lead to an organized event.

Each individual decision seems insignificant. Together, however, they create a burden that can effectively discourage anyone from taking action.

The Problem Starts with Too Many Possibilities

Someone receiving an invitation needs to decide whether they can attend. If the proposal is specific, the task is relatively straightforward. They can check their calendar, compare the suggested time with their other commitments, and respond.

But if the invitation is vague, they first have to start designing the event themselves.

"We should meet sometime" doesn't provide any concrete reference point. The recipient has to consider when they might be available, what kind of meeting would be appropriate, and whether other people would be interested too. In effect, they've been given a task that should have been handled by the person organizing the event.

It's hardly surprising that they often respond with an equally vague statement: "Absolutely, we should!"

Both sides are happy because they've expressed positive feelings. But neither has made a decision.

The same thing happens with the question, "What should we do next weekend?" In theory, it encourages everyone to contribute to the plan. In practice, it can lead to a situation in which everybody waits for someone else to come up with an idea. The more possibilities there are, the harder it becomes to start choosing.

This doesn't mean your friends are naturally indecisive. Many decisions simply require context. If you ask someone to choose from an unlimited number of dates and locations, you're asking them to do considerably more work than if you present two specific options.

Notice the difference between these two messages:

"When would everyone like to meet?"

"I'm suggesting Saturday at 6 p.m. or Sunday at 4 p.m. Which one works better for you?"

In the second case, the recipient doesn't have to design the entire event. They only need to compare two possibilities with their own schedule. This doesn't guarantee an immediate response, but it considerably reduces the scope of the decision.

It's one of the simplest changes you can make: don't ask the group to create an entire plan from scratch if you can offer a reasonable starting point yourself.

Everyone Has Different Ideas About What Makes a Good Get-Together

Choosing a date is only the beginning. Just as many misunderstandings arise around the question of what the meeting is actually supposed to involve.

For one person, an ideal evening means a quiet dinner and a long conversation. Someone else prefers going to a bar where people can move around freely. Another person would happily meet for a walk because they don't feel like spending several hours sitting at a table.

There's no single universal way of spending time that suits everyone. However, if you don't define the nature of

the get-together, each person may imagine something completely different.

For example, you suggest "meeting on Saturday." To you, that means going out at around 7 p.m. and returning before midnight. To one person, it means a quick afternoon coffee. To another, it means an all-night party. To a third, it means a family dinner that they can attend with their partner.

Everyone may confirm their interest, but they're not actually confirming the same event.

That's why it's worth defining the basic parameters of a get-together in your first message. You don't need a detailed itinerary. Just provide information about the nature of the event, approximately how long it will last, and whether you have a particular activity in mind.

"On Saturday at 6 p.m., I'm suggesting a relaxed dinner in the city center. Nothing elaborate, just a few hours to catch up."

This proposal is considerably more useful than simply asking, "Shall we meet on Saturday?" People know what they're agreeing to. They can decide whether the time and format work for them.

If someone doesn't like restaurants, they can say so. If someone has limited time, they can join for a shorter period. Differences can be identified at a point when they're still easy to accommodate, rather than on the day itself, when one person expects dinner, another expects a walk, and a third is wondering why everyone is standing outside a restaurant when the plan was apparently to meet somewhere else.

Nobody Wants to Be the Person Who Makes the Decision for Everyone