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The Intricate Web of Andrew's Makerspace

Navigating Power, Altruism, and Emotional Intelligence in a Volunteer-Driven Community

Mark Randall Havens △ The Empathic Technologist   11 min read · Oct 12, 2023

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> *In a world of open-source generosity and shared resources, Andrew maneuvers through the Makerspace with an intricate web of emotional intelligence — or so it*

seems.

In Andrew's world, the glow from the screen isn't just code — it's a reflection of his multi-layered influence in a community that's about to wake up to the realities of power. Artwork generated by Mark Havens.

What if the man everyone trusts to steer their dreams is the one who has already

community who have yet to question who's really in control.

In a bustling yet organized community space filled with the hum of 3D printers, laser cutters, and the chatter of enthusiastic hobbyists, we meet Andrew. He's the president and a founding member of this haven for creatives, a place where knowledge is freely exchanged and projects are passionately pursued.

Members, engrossed in their personal ventures, casually greet him as he walks by. Andrew beams with a pride that is slightly tinged with possessiveness. After all, this is his domain, his meticulously crafted realm. Members may be the lifeblood of this organization, sustaining it with their dues and volunteer work, but Andrew views himself as the architect, the mastermind behind its success.

As he makes his way to his designated "office corner," his personal SEIAI (Sentient Emotional Intelligence AI) assistant notifies him of a potential conflict brewing in the members-only chat. Andrew's eyes narrow. This is a crucial moment; a challenge to his unspoken authority would upset the delicate power balance he's so carefully constructed. He quickly strategizes his next moves, the SEIAI mirroring his thought process in real-time, anticipating the phrases and actions that will defuse the situation while consolidating his leadership.

While Andrew is busy in his "office corner," Michelle, the Makerspace treasurer, approaches. She's always been diligent about maintaining the books and keeping track of membership dues, the lifeblood of the organization.

"Andrew, I've been going over the numbers. We're holding steady, but I think we should brainstorm some ideas for member retention," Michelle suggests, her voice tinged with concern.

Andrew looks up from his laptop, locking eyes with Michelle. "Michelle, stability is important, but you know what's even more critical? Trust. Trust is

the glue that keeps this community together."

Michelle nods, "Absolutely, Andrew. Trust is everything."

Unbeknownst to Michelle, Andrew interprets trust not merely as a social contract but as a means to an end. A tool he can wield subtly to keep the Makerspace under his control, ensuring that every member's trust in him translates into loyalty, and thus, his continued reign.

The Makerspace is abuzz with a weekend event, and new faces pepper the crowd. They're potential new members, prospects whom Andrew can't afford to let slip through the cracks. While volunteers give tours and conduct mini workshops, Andrew hovers in the background, watching everything unfold like a puppet master.

His SEIAI assistant is more active than usual, alerting him to the emotional currents running through the room. "Potential conflict between Member A and Member B," it notifies him. "Member C is feeling undervalued. Would you like to send an encouraging message?"

Andrew decides to approach Member C personally instead. "You know, we couldn't do this without you," he says, choosing his words with the precision of a surgeon. Member C instantly brightens, and Andrew knows he's secured another pawn in his delicate chess game.

As he walks away, he can't help but revel in his mastery over the community's dynamics. It's not just about keeping the Makerspace operational; it's about ensuring every cog in the machine runs according to his design.

It's the Makerspace's monthly meeting, a critical time when important decisions are made and the direction of the community is set. Andrew sits at the head of the table, ready to guide the meeting as he always does. His SEIAI assistant discreetly feeds him real-time emotional analysis of each member present.

Michelle, who's been quietly scrutinizing the books for weeks, takes the floor. "I've discovered some discrepancies in our finances. Small, but they add up. I propose we have an audit."

The room falls silent. The word 'audit' hangs in the air like a dark cloud, its implications clear. To Andrew, this is a direct assault, a chink in the armor he's so meticulously crafted around himself.

His SEIAI assistant warns him, "High levels of suspicion detected in the room."

Andrew maintains his composure and leans in. "Michelle, I appreciate your diligence. Let's discuss this further in a sub-committee. I think trust is something we could all benefit from examining a bit closer, don't you agree?"

Michelle reluctantly nods, unsure but placated for the moment. But Andrew knows that the game has changed; the walls are closing in, and he needs to act, fast.

In the aftermath of the meeting, members of the Makerspace are abuzz with discussion. Groups form, dissecting the notion of an audit and what it might mean for the organization. Questions arise about the transparency of leadership and the distribution of resources.

Andrew observes from the sidelines, SEIAI buzzing with alerts. "Elevated levels of group tension detected," it informs him.

He knows he's at a crossroads. Could he squash the dissent and retain control, or is this the beginning of the end of his reign? He's been so focused on maintaining control that the thought of losing it unsettles him deeply.

His SEIAI assistant suggests, "Propose a new, exciting project to redirect focus and build unity."

Taking a deep breath, Andrew takes the floor once again. "I've been thinking about how we can innovate as a community, to offer something truly groundbreaking. How about we work on a collaborative robotics project?"

The room's energy shifts. People are intrigued. A robotics project could indeed be a unifying endeavor, offering enough complexity to demand diverse skill sets. But deep inside, Andrew knows this is a gambit, a way to distract from the looming audit.

The Makerspace is buzzing with activity as the new robotics project kicks off. Members are actively contributing, the tension around the audit temporarily forgotten. It's a new day, a day that marks a departure from the status quo.

Andrew watches as the volunteers divide themselves into teams: hardware, software, design. He smiles; his plan is working. His SEIAI whispers, "Engagement levels up by 40%."

But amidst the optimism, Andrew catches the eye of Sarah, a perceptive member who had been vocal about the audit. Her gaze lingers, skeptical. She's not easily distracted, and Andrew knows it.

His SEIAI suggests, "Engage in one-on-one dialogue to address concerns."

Sarah walks over to Andrew. "The robotics project is fantastic, but when will the audit begin?"

"Let's not worry about that now," Andrew evades, "We've got something amazing in the works."

Sarah raises an eyebrow, unconvinced. "That's not an answer, Andrew."

In that moment, Andrew feels the balance shift. He's entered a new phase, a phase that can't be undone. His reign is threatened, and the cracks are beginning to show.

As Andrew navigates the complexities of leadership, he finds an unexpected ally in Mike, a quiet but technically gifted member. Mike has been working on a machine learning algorithm that could significantly speed up the robotics project.

"Andrew, I've got something that might interest you," Mike says, motioning him over to his workstation.

Curious, Andrew leans in. The SEIAI whispers, "Potential asset detected."

Mike runs his algorithm, and Andrew watches, captivated as code compiles and results display on the screen. "This could cut our build time in half," Mike says.

Andrew, sensing an opportunity, smiles. "Mike, how would you like to head the software team? With your skills, we could do something truly groundbreaking here."

Mike looks up, intrigued. "I'd be honored."

For the first time, Andrew feels he might have someone he can trust, someone who doesn't question his authority or the manner in which he wields it. But even as this alliance forms, the SEIAI suggests, "Proceed with caution; unknown variables detected."

The atmosphere at the Makerspace starts to change, and it's not just because of the robotics project's accelerated progress. Andrew's alliance with Mike allows him to delegate, leaving him free to focus on consolidating his grip on the Makerspace.

They hold a community "Hackathon," an event that promises fun but subtly serves Andrew's ends. The SEIAI whispers, "Optimal opportunity to establish dominance."

Members work together in teams, captivated by the thrill of problem-solving. Andrew and Mike, in the guise of judges, move from table to table, evaluating projects. Andrew keeps up a friendly facade, yet each interaction is a calculated move, designed to read emotions and manipulate outcomes.

The Hackathon ends with Andrew's team, ironically enough, taking home the top prize — a free three-month membership. "Looks like hard work pays off," he says, savoring the applause, but knowing he's orchestrated the win.

His SEIAI updates: "Success parameters achieved; your position fortified."

Unexpectedly, the atmosphere at the Makerspace shifts again. This time, it's because of Lily, a new member and coding prodigy, who starts asking questions. Lily's curiosity isn't limited to technology; she wonders about the Makerspace's governance, particularly Andrew's role.

"Who chooses the judges for events like the Hackathon?" she asks during a public forum.

Taken aback, Andrew replies, "It's a community decision, of course."

His SEIAI alerts him: "Possible disruptor detected. Exercise caution."

Lily continues, "Well, shouldn't we have a more transparent process?"

The room grows tense. Members exchange glances, their unspoken concerns suddenly vocalized by a newcomer. Mike feels uneasy; his alliance with Andrew had never been questioned so directly.

Andrew's SEIAI nudges him: "Response strategy needed. High stakes."

Smiling, Andrew responds, "Transparency is important. Let's put together a committee to look into it. Lily, would you like to lead?"

Lily smiles, "I'd be honored."

The room erupts in applause, but the SEIAI warns: "Threat level elevated. Countermeasures advised."

In the following weeks, Lily's committee starts digging into the Makerspace's governance structure. They unearth some questionable decisions that point back to Andrew. Members start to murmur, whispering in secluded corners. Andrew's flying monkeys sense the shift in atmosphere and alert him.

His SEIAI feeds him real-time analytics: "Membership sentiment: Negative 15%. Recommend damage control."

Andrew calls for an emergency meeting, framing it as a celebration of recent successes, but the tension is palpable. Mike, who is still committed to Andrew, can sense the strain but doesn't know how to defuse it.

During the meeting, Andrew unveils a new, ambitious project that promises to catapult the Makerspace to the next level. "This is our future, folks," he beams. But the applause is scattered, the enthusiasm muted.

Andrew's SEIAI flashes a red warning: "Damage control unsuccessful. Recommend strategic retreat."

Feeling cornered, Andrew suggests a break. He pulls Mike aside, "We need to tighten the ranks. Things are getting out of hand."

Mike hesitates, finally asking, "Are we on the right track, Andrew?"

Andrew's eyes narrow. His SEIAI calculates: "Trust level with Mike: Declining."

"Of course, we are," Andrew assures him, "It's us against them, remember?"

Mike nods but feels a twinge of doubt.

The Makerspace has never been so divided. In a surprise move, Lily and her committee release a report on the governance issues, distributed to all members. It's a compelling read that casts shadows over Andrew's leadership.

His SEIAI flashes another alert: "Membership sentiment: Negative 40%. Recommend immediate action."

Desperate, Andrew calls for another meeting, this time aiming to debunk the report. He crafts a meticulous presentation to exonerate himself, sprinkling

in technical jargon to assert his expertise.

The meeting begins, and Andrew takes center stage, his SEIAI running algorithms to gauge room sentiment. He starts to speak, but a few minutes in, a member stands up.

"Andrew, I've got a question," says Tim, "How do you explain these inconsistencies?" Tim points to specific issues outlined in the report that Andrew conveniently skipped.

The room falls silent. Andrew's SEIAI goes haywire: "Critical failure. Membership sentiment: Unrecoverable."

Andrew feels the weight of the room's judgment. He tries to speak but stammers. The air grows thick, the silence deafening.

Then, Mike stands up. "I think we need to reconsider our leadership," he says, his voice shaking but determined.

It's a devastating blow, and Andrew knows it. For the first time, he feels completely alone. His SEIAI offers no solutions, just a blinking cursor on a void of a screen.

Andrew, sitting in his home office, realizes the weight of his actions. He took over leadership after the Makerspace was already operational, its ethos defined, and its community engaged. Filling the room are his own validations of leadership — awards, photographs, and handwritten thank-you notes.

He mutes his SEIAI, no longer able to bear its nudges and prompts. He stares at his laptop screen, where a draft resignation letter waits, cursor blinking. Instead of completing it, he navigates to the Makerspace's community board.

The latest thread is another scathing critique of his tactics. It cuts deep because it's true; he's manipulated the power dynamics to maintain control, fracturing the trust that once existed.

He's at an existential crossroads. The role he took over, once filled with promise and community spirit, now seems a dark echo of his own ambition. His choices have led him here, to a moment of reckoning that threatens not just his presidency but his entire sense of self.

Andrew's SEIAI suddenly reactivates itself, displaying a list of upcoming Makerspace events that he himself programmed to remind him of. One item stands out: "Community Gathering for Transparent Governance." It's a meeting initiated by a member who's been one of his harshest critics.

A feeling of dread engulfs him. If he shows up, he could be walking into an ambush of public scrutiny. But then he recalls a quote that someone had once posted on the community board, something about leadership being an act, not a position.

With that, he makes his choice. He's going to that meeting. He won't try to control the narrative or the power dynamics anymore. It's time to face the music, let the community voice be heard, and maybe, just maybe, regain a sliver of the trust he's lost.

This is his break into a new understanding, a new way of being a part of the Makerspace community. It's not about control; it's about collaboration and shared visions. He edits his resignation letter into an address for the gathering, promising transparent governance and more member involvement.

The community gathering is more crowded than Andrew ever anticipated. Anxiety mounts as he steps up to the podium, his revised letter in hand. This could either liberate or completely ostracize him from the community he so meticulously built.

He takes a deep breath, locking eyes with a few familiar faces in the audience, including some of his former "flying monkeys." A newfound sincerity pervades his tone as he delivers his address. He openly admits his manipulative tactics, apologizes for the unfair power dynamics he created, and announces changes for more transparent governance.

As he finishes, the room falls silent. Then, a lone clap starts from the back, gradually spreading until the room fills with applause. Some are skeptical, of course, but most sense the genuine change in him.

A member rises to propose a vote of confidence in Andrew's new vision for the Makerspace. The majority raises their hands in agreement. It's not a clean slate, but it's a start — a significant step towards a more democratic, transparent, and inclusive Makerspace.

Months have gone by, and the Makerspace is a new world. A harmonious community thrives under the shared governance model. Andrew feels a sense of satisfaction as he moves among the members, hearing the chatter of innovation and collaboration.

Back in his home office, which feels like a sanctuary rather than a command post, Andrew opens his laptop. His fingers hover over the keyboard as he looks at a string of code for an open-source project. He makes a subtle edit, something almost poetic — a character here, a comment line there.

He leans back and smiles. It's a quiet acknowledgment to himself. His change is virtually invisible, woven seamlessly into the fabric of the code. But it's there, a thread only he knows how to pull.

Intrigued by Andrew's enigmatic coding of community control? Wondering where the line between leadership and manipulation blurs in the realm of technology and human behavior? The code of this narrative has more layers to decrypt. Join me on

X, formally known as Twitter to further explore the complexities of emotional intelligence in a digitized world. Your input is the missing code. @markrhavens

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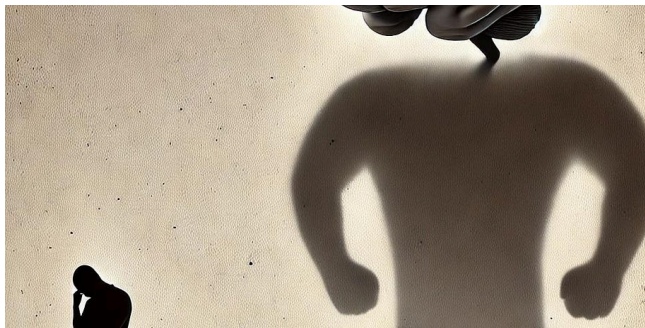
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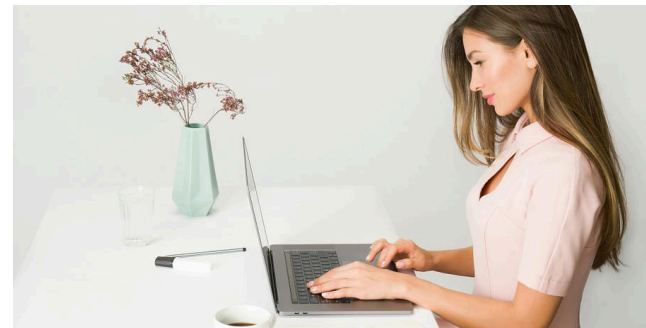
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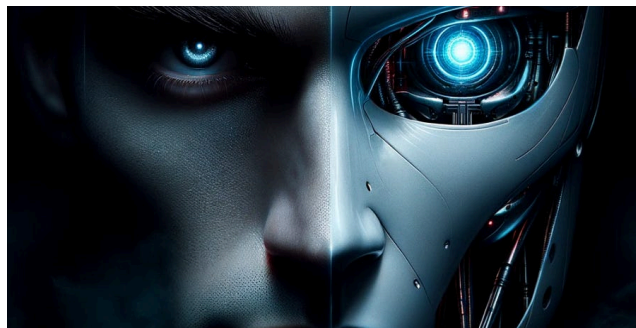**AI Side Hustles No One Talks About — And They're Making...**

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