

## **Building a Worldwide Social Reputation System – SRS**

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“A Community is a group of people doing favors for each other”

Bernard Lietaer - Author of The Future of Money and architect of the Euro.

### Summary

It is proposed in this paper to expand the existing social online reputation systems to create a worldwide Social Reputation System (SRS) to measure the amount of social capital a person has built by positively interacting with others - as our present Financial Credit System indicates the credit worthiness a person has built by meeting financial obligations.

With SRS in place a good person will be recognizable anywhere as such and will have more opportunities since people will more easily trust them. In a similar way, widely available credit reports allow lending institutions to recognize good borrowers and to treat them accordingly.

Furthermore, this system is to be freely available online to every person who wishes to use it and who may contribute information to it as they build their online database. The vision is to make the system non-commercial, with an open source free software application and a non-centralized architecture. This collaborative database is to double as a living directory that can be used by each participant to find and connect with any other, searching by name, location, organization, skill or interest within a web of trust.

### Model

A prototype model of an online Social Reputation System has been designed has been in use since 1998, it presently interconnects over 50,000 people in over 100 countries, the name of the network is Friendly Favors - [www.favours.org](http://www.favours.org)

To explore FF you will need to first register online and then login to explore it. As an Applicant you will have limited access to others in the network. To enjoy higher features you will need to be accepted into the web of trust. For this to happen you need to locate within the network an active participant that will recognize you and is willing to post a good referral in your online profile, thus vouching for you Identity if you are an Acquaintance (referral level 1), or also vouching for your Integrity if you are selected as a Friend (referral level 2). The accumulations of those referral points are used as votes to build each participant's social reputation.

Having an online community with real names and verifiable trusted relationships serves as a solid base for other social innovations; for example Favors.org has since 1999 its own mutual credit complementary social currency called Thankyous – which has already saved its participants over US\$2 million and has strengthened relationships by encouraging participants to do more favors for each other. For each referral point a participant receives the person can issue 100Ts on credit – so the overdraft protection is proportional to my social capital. You can learn more about Thankyous by visiting FAQs after login in at Favors.org and through the following article: <http://tinyurl.com/zcm8j>

## Body

Our economic system uses financial credit rating services to determine the credit risk of each individual and organization. These databases are the most important tools used by economic institutions to determine who has access to credit and to what degree.

We all recognize the value of having a good credit rating and have allowed corporations to develop such a system. People also recognize the value of being a good human being but so far we do not have a good way to measure good will. Integrity, honesty, generosity, friendship are human qualities that are valuable mostly to humans, not necessarily to businesses, therefore we should not expect corporations to invest in accounting for these soft assets. A true Social Reputation System – SRS – must then be done by people as a self-serving service.

Countless times we encounter situations in which our financial credit rating is not enough. A potential employer wants personal references and so is a landlord before renting us. Or there are emergencies, like when one of your children ends hospitalized overseas and it will take you 3 days to get there – who can you call in that area that you can trust and ask to please help your child until you can get there? Certainly credit reports do not work well in these situations, actually in many developing countries criminals are the ones with the best credit

Friendly Favors is being collaboratively developed since 1995, under the early guidance of the late futurist Willis Harman, as a free social networking tool and is being improved by its users as a free global utility. In the year 2000, it was officially launched in New York City at the State of the World Forum to interconnect this 4,000 strong think-tank - [www.favors.org/SWF](http://www.favors.org/SWF)

This inter-relational database assigns one profile to each player – accidental multiple profiles are merged as soon they are found so there is only one reputation being built. Participants have the ability to edit and write in their own profiles and can read the profiles of others in their group and those that choose to be visible in other groups as well (an option chosen by about half of the participants). People are encouraged to post comments on the profiles of the people they know, similarly as eBay does it with its popular trade references or Amazon.com does it with book reader's reviews. These voluntarily and freely posted references are called Referrals and together they fuel SRS.

Those people I have chosen as Friends have access to the Personal page of my profile (my home address, home numbers, email addresses and personal notes). Friends (+2) have also access to my online contacts and they have the ability to write in my profile. Their additions are automatically signed and they can make their notes public or private (visible only to them, me and volunteer group coordinators). Acquaintances (+1) can see the Professional page of my profile which has the information normally found in a business card plus my picture and bio. Others in the network have access to the Public page of my profile (name, occupation, city, state, country, website, picture, bio, interests and a way to send a blind email). Unavailable status is used for those I do not wish to contact me, it has the same information as the Public profile but it does not have a link to send me a blind email. The number of how many people have chosen to disconnect me is visible in my profile statistics.

An early decision was to make this social reputation system transparent, versus the secrecy involved with credit and finances. This allowed us to design the software using open system architecture and accepting the help of volunteer programmers. All its equipment is donated and is 100% run by volunteers, in turn group coordinators benefit in-kind by becoming some of the most connected individuals in their group.

Examples of groups and coordinators that have tried this technology

FF14137 - Brad deGraf and his Media Venture Collective - [www.mediaventure.org](http://www.mediaventure.org) > Rolodex – The network is used to interconnect 365 supporters, donors and recipient of grants – [www.favors.org/VC](http://www.favors.org/VC)

GEN109 - Richard Flyer and his Conscious Community Network - [www.ItsTimeReno.org](http://www.ItsTimeReno.org) > CC Network > Social Networking – Used to interconnect 295 involved citizens of Reno and thus improve their community – [www.favors.org/CCBN](http://www.favors.org/CCBN)

140 - Carol Hansen Grey. Volunteer coordinator serving the interconnectivity needs of several groups, among them: Gather the Women (5838 participants) - [www.favors.org/GTW](http://www.favors.org/GTW) - and Global Women's Forum (386) - [www.favors.org/GWF](http://www.favors.org/GWF)

Examples of other groups are:

Institute of Noetic Sciences – [www.favors.org/IONS](http://www.favors.org/IONS)

World Business Academy – [www.favors.org/ACAD](http://www.favors.org/ACAD)

Gaia University - [www.favors.org/GAIA](http://www.favors.org/GAIA)

Global Ecovillage Network – [www.favors.org/GEN](http://www.favors.org/GEN)

Auroville Network – [www.favors.org/AURO](http://www.favors.org/AURO)

Testing the Favors.org model

1. Please go to [www.favors.org](http://www.favors.org)
2. Click on Apply, fill the online form and submit.
3. Your Login and user instructions will arrive via email.
4. Login and find instructions on Help.

How to see someone's Online Reputation:

1. Login at [www.favors.org/FF](http://www.favors.org/FF) - Use "I Forgot My Password" if you need to, or Register if you are new to the network.
2. Use People Find to locate the profile of the person you wish to view and click on Statistics.
3. Under Goodwill Reserve click on Referral Points.

How to give a Referral:

1. Login and Find the profile of the person you wish to give a referral.
2. Click on the Check Mark icon below the person's picture.
3. Choose a Referral level, write what you would like others to know about this person and click on Save Changes.

## Conclusion

Work should continue to build a solid system that may eventually connect and held the social reputation of most people.

I believe this system will serve us better by being non-commercial, independent from government and corporations and run democratically by the people it serves.

The service should be available for free and by invitation, thus the web of trust can be followed and maintained.

It should be ever easier to use so more people would be able to benefit from it.

Only one profile per person, to prevent having a good and a bad reputation.

It should allow easy transfer of information from other platforms and vice versa.

No advertising banners and no pop-ups. Respect the time and intelligence of the user.

Simple access from mobile phones. Voice activated when we can.

Multilingual, I can have different information pages in each of the languages I can communicate with.

Allow my friends and coordinators to write and edit information in my profile, which I can edit if I wish. Keep an audit trail of each entry, like [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org) does it.

Once we learn how to use a Social Reputation System it is easy to imagine the day when a good SRS is all financial institutions may require to extend financial credit to people without yet a financial credit history. Doing this will humanize a system now run by machines and it will give priority to people's social dimensions, just like it should be.

Sergio Lub

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