
How to Create a Lunch Bunch

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Revision History

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Abstract

How to conveniently decide where to go to lunch using the Konsenti system: <http://konsenti.com> is explained.

The History of every major Galactic Civilization tends to pass through three distinct and recognizable phases, those of Survival, Inquiry and Sophistication, otherwise known as the How, Why and Where phases. For instance, the first phase is characterized by the question "How can we eat?" the second by the question "Why do we eat?" and the third by the question "Where shall we have lunch?"

--Douglas Adams. 1981. The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

Lunch matters

The complexity of deciding where and when to go to lunch is exponentially proportional to the product of the number of lunchmates and their average pickiness.

You can invite people by phone. If you're inviting seven people to lunch, this is bound to take three and a half minutes, and will probably take more. You can use email; this makes it easy to invite seven people to lunch with seven mouse clicks and the typing of the invitation, which can be done in less than 45 seconds if you don't mind being terse.

However, things get more complicated once you start to receive responses. If someone can't make it, you may wish to expand the set of invitees. If someone wants a different time or a different day, you may wish to change to that time or day to accommodate that person. However, if someone else has already agreed, they will have to be informed of the change.

At this point in the process, you may not even have gotten to the question "Where?" Some people may not care; some may object to the first suggestion, some may object to the second suggestion, and the people who don't care will be exasperated by the people who object.

All of this may sound trivial, and you might wonder why anyone would want to build or use a software system designed to help people decide where to go to lunch. Personally, I think it's important because I don't see how mankind is going to be able to explore the stars together in peace if we can't decide where to go to lunch.

Creating a Lunch Bunch

The Konsenti [<http://konsenti.com>] system has been designed to maximize the possibility of having a successful lunch with minimum effort on the part of the instigator of the lunch and the potential lunchmates.

It does this in three main ways, all of which you can experiment with freely:

- You can create a private market that invites exactly the people you want,
- The expressed intentions of the invitees is visible at a glance,
- Counter-offers to the lunch can be made.

To create a group of people to invite to lunch:

1. Browse to the Konsenti website [<http://konsenti.com>].
2. Click on the "Markets" tab. (You don't have to create an identity yet; you can do all of this completely anonymously, and establish information later.) It currently doesn't cost anything to use the Konsenti system --- nothing you do will cause you to owe us anything. In the box labeled "Create a New Market" type in a name that represents the lunch bunch you want to create---for example "Crawford Carnivores" or "University Lunch Bunch". Your market will be completely private unless you choose later to publicize it. Click on the "Create Market" button.
3. You should see the configuration page for your new market where you can change the title and visibility of the market and the allowed *waydobs*, or "ways of doing business". If you want to reuse this market later to set up another lunch, go to the grid of allowed waydobs and select "Lunch" and click the button "Update Waydobs". (This Waydob may be on the second page of the grid.) By allowing this Waydob, a link to create an offer of the type "Lunch" will be presented to everyone in the navigation bar on the right of this page if they have the right to post offers into this market.

Optionally, you can assign a short, alphanumeric name for creating publishable URLs for your market. For example, if you name use the URL atom green, then you can tell people to "go to `green.konsenti.com`" (that is, `http://green.konsenti.com`) and if they do they will automatically be taken to your market.

You can also optionally upload some CSS to customize the appearance of your market. The ability to customize the system of course depends on how well you understand the produced XHTML, currently not publicly documented. A simple piece of CSS like:

```
html {  
    background-color: gray;  
}
```

will turn the background of your market gray when accessed via your customized URL.

4. Click on the "Manage Market" link at the top of the page to go to the page that lets you manage offers and users, so that you can create an offer and invite some users.
5. Find the link in the right navigation bar "Lunch" and click on it to create a lunch offer in this market.
6. You'll see a page for this offer. The first part of the page is the text summary of the offer. Below that you have a way to enter the two things that are needed for every lunch date: when, and where. Once you have typed in the name of a restaurant or other venue, and you will never have to type it in again, and will be able to choose between your own personal list of venues. Type in the name of a venue.
7. To enter a date, click on the input box labeled, "Enter the Date and Time of the Lunch:". You can then type in a date and time, but it is easier to just click on the calendar day at the top of the page to set the date, and the time of day to set the time. If necessary, you can show the month displayed. Clicking on a date or time will automatically change both the date/time shown at the upper left of the calendar entry box and the date/time field for the Lunch itself. You can use the same mechanism to input the expiration date (which defaults to one week in the future).
8. Click the button that says "Publish to planned Market".
9. You'll see the offer page, but now with the date and venue filled in in the description. This is what all of your invitees will see. You can interact with it by making a choice and then clicking "Express how you feel about this lunch". You can also cancel the lunch, or assert that the lunch is now set (that is, everybody is expected to show up who has said that they will.) As your invitees click on this offer, whatever they assert will show up in the text description, so that you will be able to see how many people want to come, how many people don't want

to come, and how many would come if you chose a different time or a different place.

10. Although it is optional, you might want to go the "My Profile" link and change your username and password and give an email address. Although this isn't needed, if you don't do this your friends won't know who is inviting them to lunch, and unless they are very friendly they might be less inclined to accept the invitation. If you don't enter an email, you won't be able to receive notifications about people interacting with your lunch invitation.
11. If you click on "My Profile" or explore somewhere else, you can always find your offer again by clicking on the "My Offers" tab at the top of the page.
12. Depending on your settings in your profile, you will either see a link that says "show invitations" or you will see a button that says "Invite someone via email". Type the email address of someone you want to invite into the box that says "Type in a new Friends module value:". You can invite many people at the same time by using comma separated-values. Anyone you invite will be sent an email explaining the invitation, and will be invited into the market you have created.
13. If you like, add a comment to the offer in the "text wiki" on the right hand side --- these will be presented to everyone who sees the offer. For example, you might comment: "Art's rib house has the best ribs in the world!!".
14. You can browse back to this offer by logging in with your anonymous account name, using your account name as your password --- but you should really go to the "My Profile" tab to change your username to something that your friends will recognize.
15. If you want to get an email whenever someone interacts with your lunch offer, you will have to provide an email address. You can then set a "watch" on the offer, so that you are emailed whenever someone interacts with it. You should also change your password to something secure. By clicking on the "Watches" link you can choose how often a digest of your messages will be sent to you, so that you aren't inundated by emails.

You have now created your own permanent market and invited some people to a lunch with it. The people who click on the invitation and come to the Konsenti site will automatically be part of your lunch market. As the market owner you have complete control over who is in your lunch-bunch market and what privileges they have. Creating another lunch offer in the same market can be done in the same way, but the market members can be invited just by clicking on their names.

Advanced lunch management features

Whenever you view an offer of type lunch, you see something very simple, but very important: a one-line summary of the number of people who are coming, are not coming, are unsure, want a different time, or want a different place. Often, to build consensus all one has to do is keep track of people's intentions and desires, and make these visible. The summary line accomplishes this. There are four other features of the Konsenti website that will help you in building consensus around a lunch, or any other kind of offer: the text wiki (*texi*) comment block, the invitee grid, the counteroffer, and the ability to cancel transitions.

The text wiki, or *texi*, is a simple place where people can enter comments about the lunch. The history of who commented what is always available, so that if someone makes a comment you don't like you can revert to an older version. The purpose of this comment area is to support a little conversation about the offer. The comment will be sent to whoever is invited to the offer.

On the offer screen of the the lunch offer you have created, you will either see a grid of invitations, or a link that says "show invitations", which will reveal the grid. The purpose of this grid is to let you manage the invitations. You can see whom has been invited, and you can see exactly when someone was or will be invited. Additionally, you can use this grid to invite or re-invite people. Since the summary line and the comment block can change whenever someone interacts with the offer, you might wish to re-invite someone either to simply remind them, or to show that, for example, a lot more people have now agreed to the lunch.

Since each user is in control of the rate at which they receive notifications from the Konsenti system, you can't necessarily invite someone via our system whenever you want---but you can schedule them to be notified of the invitation in the next digest that they will receive. Of course, if you know their email address, there is nothing stopping you from sending them a personal invitation with the URL of this offer in it.

Using the invitation grid, you can invite someone into the Konsenti system by entering their email address. They will then remain in your "friends" module, so that in the future, you will not have to type in their email address again. They'll receive an email describing the offer (in this, case, your lunch) and a link with which to register in the system.

If you allow it when you create the offer, someone may create a counter-offer. A counter-offer might be to have the same lunch but at a different time. The counter-offer is a separate offer, partially independent offer. Someone can agree to go to both offers, if they wish. The people invited to the counter-offer may differ from

the invitees of the original offer. The counter-offer is visible as an indented offer below the original offer. Someone may even propose a counter-offer to the counter-offer. If you and your friends decide to go the lunch specified by the counter-offer, you should explicitly cancel the first lunch, so that people will understand that it has been canceled in favor of the counter-offer.

As the owner of a lunch, you can cancel a transition. A permanent record of both the original and the canceling transition remain. You can use this feature to remove a commitment from someone that you don't trust or who tells you privately that they can't come. In the lunch, they could also change their commitment if they can reach the Internet themselves, but for other waydobs that might not be true. You should of course use these feature cautiously---canceling someone's expression of interest without permission is as rude as standing someone up for a lunch date! This feature should not be used to keep someone from being invited; if you don't want to invite everyone in your existing market, just create a new market with only the people that you want to invited in it. As you've seen for yourself if you've gone through the exercise described in this document, it doesn't take long.