Getting Started in High Speed Digital 1/1/08

There was this interesting e-mail thread I was in on recently that involved the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and their efforts to establish a volunteer, Ham Radio communications capability. We ran into this when we first started building our Packet Network. We talked to many local radio clubs, all of whom were interested, and even offered financial support and or endorsement for the project. But an established radio club usually has a charter and bylaws and a mission/ direction. Having some outsiders or even insiders come and and try to change things or to re-focus on a new mission seems to be very difficult.

So the solution we came up with was to start our own radio club. This is easy, it takes one or more people making up a name. If you get a little more organized, you can round up a few more people and start applying for a club callsign, and even get affiliated with the ARRL. This takes quite a while but has some benefits. The one lesson we learned was not to try to have your new club do too much. You don't need to teach classes (other clubs already do, you don't need to form a VEC (there already are several), and you don't need your own 2 meter FM repeater (as this is impossible). So the idea is to form a club, and focus just on your new mission, and not try to duplicate already existing functions already done elsewhere. One thing to avoid, and that is an excessive focus on internal meetings and processes and paperwork. These days, people are busy, and if most of your volunteer hours are devoted to internal meetings and travel, you will not be successful- except at meetings and travel.