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Quick Start Guide for Creating Your Own Mastermind Group

Mastermind groups can take all sort of forms, but often the very best one is the one you create to your own specifications. Although paying to join a facilitated mastermind group is generally the easiest method and can be very effective, building your own group has its advantages. If you want to create your own mastermind group, follow these 10 steps and you're on your way!

1. **Decide on a focus for the group.** Having some level of commonality allows the group to create a bond and helps direct the conversation. Two to four shared characteristics is generally enough – some examples include gender, industry, experience, beliefs, marital status, or age.
2. **Decide where and when you will meet.** Some groups meet in person while other groups are virtual. If you are in a large city you will probably have enough people locally; however, with technology like Skype, virtual groups can be a very solid choice. Also decide how often you want to meet: weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, and for how long. A typical meeting lasts 60 – 90 minutes.
3. **Develop a format for each meeting.** There is flexibility here based on the needs, wants, and expectations of the group. However, setting a standard agenda helps ensure that each member gets the most out of every meeting through effective time management. A few options include:
 - a. **Member Hot Seat:** Each member checks in with the group for a few minutes, but the majority of the meeting is spent with one member in the “hot seat,” devoting everyone’s attention to that one member in order to provide feedback and support. The previous week’s “hot seat” participant also gets a few extra minutes for a progress report.
 - b. **Accountability Check-in:** All participants have equal time to share progress, ask questions and get support for ongoing activities.
 - c. **Topic Focus:** The meeting leader role rotates each time. The meeting leader picks a topic of interest for the group to discuss. Questions focus on biggest issues, best ideas, how-to questions, and the like.

Include in the format any rules and guidelines that seem necessary and appropriate. Things to include: keeping the confidence of group members by not sharing information with outsiders, and a minimum attendance requirement to ensure all members get the full benefit of the group.

4. **Set a minimum and maximum group size.** Depending on your goals, these numbers can vary, but most groups function best in the 4 – 10 range. Three or fewer isn't really much of a group, but more than 10 people makes the process take too long.



5. Create an initial list of names for people who meet the criteria in Step 1. These folks don't all have to be your personal acquaintances - consider members of Facebook groups, Twitter followers, and other virtual contacts.
6. Draft an invitation email describing the group characteristics, format, purpose and any other critical details. Include why you believe they might be a good fit. I also find it useful to encourage your initial list to reach out to others they believe will fit in as well. Make sure they know the size is limited and when responses are required.
7. Send the email to your initial list. As people respond, answer any questions they might have and keep track of the individuals who commit. I generally ask for a response either way so I know they received the invitation.
8. Pick a date and time by consensus. Unless the schedule is completely finalized, it is good to immediately begin discussing days and times with those who commit early to establish a regular meeting. A number of free applications are available online to simplify the process – try [Rally](#), [WhenIsGood](#), or [Doodle](#).
9. Set a start date. Once your minimum number is met, set the date for the first meeting. Decide if you will allow additional members to join after you get started. Also decide if the group will be ongoing, or for a fixed period of time (for example - one year).
10. Evaluate and adjust as necessary. Like all ventures it may be necessary to make some adjustments once the mastermind group has been working together for a period of time. Meeting the needs of the participants is the primary goal of a mastermind group, so checking in occasionally is a good practice to implement.

Although it generally takes a few meetings for the group to develop some level of relationship, eventually members of mastermind groups can form very strong bonds. You never know what kind of inspiration you're going to get from your fellow masterminds, and how you will help each other grow in life and in business. A mastermind group can help you reach your goals by providing you with accountability and the confidence of knowing the other group members are cheering you on. What are you waiting for? It's time to take action.

Have you used this guide to start your OWN mastermind group, or have you made progress in your business as a result of a group membership? Shoot me an e-mail and tell me all about it! You'll find me at gwen@gwenbortner.com.