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The Success Principles: How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be

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CONDUCTING A MASTERMIND MEETING

Mastermind meetings should be conducted weekly or every other week with all members of the group in attendance. They can be conducted in person or over the phone. About 1 to 2 hours is an ideal length of time. For the first few meetings, it's recommended that each member get the entire hour to familiarize the others with his or her situation, opportunities, needs, and challenges, while the other members brainstorm ways they can support that person. During later meetings, participants each get a small amount of time to update the others, ask for help, and get feedback. Each meeting should follow the proven format below to ensure that each participant gets their needs met and therefore stays involved.

Your group should also assign someone to be the timekeeper—either the same person each session or a different participant for each meeting—to ensure that all members adhere to their preapproved time to speak and receive attention.

Step 1: Ask for Spiritual Guidance by Delivering an Invocation

Ideally, mastermind meetings should start with a request for the group to be filled and surrounded with powerful spiritual energy. Members can trade off delivering the invocation. Using whatever spiritual belief structure the leader has, they ask the universal force to assist the group with each other's needs. A sample invocation that asks God or that higher power to be present might be:

We ask now to be filled and surrounded with light, and our hearts be open to receive guidance from the higher power.

Step 2: Share What's New and Good

A good way to bond with each other and keep excitement high is to each share a success story. Even small successes achieved since the last meeting give others in the group the feeling that the process is working and is something they need to stay involved with.

Step 3: Negotiate for Time

Although the normal weekly time allotment might be 10 to 15 minutes per person, there may be times when one participant needs extra time during that week's session to discuss a particularly difficult situation. During the step,

they can ask for the amount of extra time they think they'll need. Others in the group may have their own challenges that week and need extra time, too. Still others may decide to give up their time entirely,

as they do not have anything to discuss. Using the timekeeper as referee, each member negotiates for the amount of time he or she thinks is needed.

During the negotiating step, you'll often hear comments such as "I just lost my assistant and I need time to talk about that." . . . "I want to read you this new proposal I've written and get your feedback on it." . . . "I need to find a printing company in the Far East and I don't know the first thing about that."

Once the negotiation process is complete and everyone agrees to the schedule, the meeting begins in earnest, with the timekeeper ensuring that everyone stays on time and on focus. If some members don't get their needs met, the group will risk losing them as participants. Still others—the dominators or needy types—may monopolize the meeting or turn their brainstorming responses into a personal discourse.

Step 4: Individual Members Speak while the Group Listens and Brainstorms Solutions

What kinds of discussions can you expect during a mastermind meeting? "I need contacts." . . . "I need referrals." . . . "I'm lost at this new aspect of my business." . . . "I'm looking for an expert to help me develop this idea." . . . "I need you to open your Rolodex card files to me." . . . "I need to raise \$40,000." . . . "I need advice on handling customer service."

After the allotted time of explanation, discussion, and brainstorming, the timekeeper says, "Time's up!" and the group moves on to the next member's needs.

Discussions can be personal or professional—it doesn't matter. As long as all members are getting value, they'll stay involved with the group. As long as you're giving value, everyone will want you to be there. You'll find that groups tend to go through phases. They start out fairly businesslike, but as people get to know each other and begin to delve into personal challenges such as "My wife and I are having problems" or "I think my son is taking drugs" or "I just lost my job," they take on a special personal bond. You and the other members can use the group any way you want.

Step 5: Make a Commitment to Stretch

Once members have had their time to present, discuss, brainstorm, and gain feedback, the timekeeper asks each member in turn to commit verbally to a next action that will move him or her forward toward the achievement of his or her goals—something that the member will agree to accomplish before the next meeting. The commitment needs to be a stretch.

It could be a result of what the member heard from the group that day: "Okay, I'm going to make three calls to hire a new salesperson" or "I'm going to call John Deerfield at Consolidated and pitch our new service." This commitment ensures that everyone is continually moving forward toward the completion of their goals, which is the ultimate benefit of a mastermind group.

Step 6: End with a Moment of Gratitude

Your meeting might end with a group prayer expressing gratitude. Or you might go around the table with each member saying one thing he or she appreciates about another person in the group. Or you might end with the "What I feel like saying" exercise described in Principle 49 ("Have a Heart Talk"), pages 330 through 335.

Step 7: Be Accountable

When members assemble the very next week, each member shares something related to the goal he set at the previous meeting. Did each member take action? Did they achieve their goal?

You'll find one of the real values of a mastermind group is the accountability factor—other members checking up on you to make sure you meet your stated commitments. People are more productive when they have a stated deadline and are held accountable to it. The reality is that if you know you're going to be asked next week about the commitment you made today, you'll take steps to accomplish it by next week's deadline. It's one way to ensure you'll accomplish a lot more.