Steps in Creating our Peer-to-Peer Mastermind Group

A peer-to-peer mastermind group differs from a traditional mastermind group because it's collaborative, a little more casual, and its participants are all peers in the TTI Success Insights' VAA family. Many other types of mastermind groups are made up of people from different industries and are often more structured with hard accountabilities. While each person has to decide what type of group is right for them, we prefer the peer-to-peer approach as it best fits our styles and needs within the group.

Purpose Statement: Determine the purpose of your group. What does the group want to focus on and what is the reason for the groups existence?

Inviting Members: You can post your intentions to start a group in the TTI Success Insights' LinkedIn Group and state the purpose of the group, such as networking, marketing, general, etc. You can also directly contact those you would like to invite to the group. Attending conference and meeting other VAA's makes this a lot easier. You get to build friendships and peer relationships at conference, boot camps and other industry events.

"Being around people who are different from us makes us more creative, more diligent and harder-working." **(Phillips, 2014)**

LinkedIn Private Group: Create your own group on LinkedIn so you can easily share with the group; this will include the rules and guidelines for being a member of the group. You want to create the guidelines and ensure all members agree. This will make it easier if you (for some unexpected reason) have an unlikely issue or conflict with a member. If you bring in others who are not VAAs, it changes the dynamics. Having a group of just VAAs creates an instant bond as you all have common ground.

Group Communication: Setup a group email so it will be easy to communicate with everyone and ensure quickness when emailing. This also makes it easier for the group to communicate with each other directly. Many within our specific group communicate outside of sessions and support one another. We even had one member go through their own HD report for the first time from one of our group and debriefed together.

Scheduling Session Day & Time: Scheduling your sessions can be a bit tricky, depending on where the members of your group are located. You will need to figure out what day and time works best. Our group has members in 5 time zones creating a bit of a challenge. Through communication, we landed on Fridays at 3pm central, which covered the range of time zones that worked for everyone.

Calendar Invite: Send out a reoccurring calendar invite to the group so it is on everyone's calendars, set the invite with a reminder so it pops up for the group before the call. Some like a three-day reminder and then a one-hour reminder; or you can just let each person set their own reminders.

Technology: How will the session be held? Examples include: in person, conference call, video chat session, to name a few. Determine what works best for your group and communicate the details. If you chose a video session or use screen sharing features plan ahead to get the team up to speed before the first session. Everyone has different levels of tech savviness. Some members will be able to connect quickly and easily while others will need a little support to get going. Try to do this prior to the first call. However, it's best to build in time for a little delay on the first session while working out the details.

Session Recording: If you chose video sessions, ask the group if they would like to record the sessions. You can share the recording on your private LinkedIn group page for just your group who might have missed the session. Members sometimes want to go back and review something discussed again. Our group has appreciated this option so they feel they did not miss out when they have a previous commitment and can't attend.

Agendas: Communicate with your group on what topics you would like to discuss and the structure for your sessions. You can create a schedule of topics, in advance, for the next 6-8 sessions so everyone knows the topic and can come prepared. We have a blended method with some pre-discussed topics and also member requests. This includes members discussing their own needs such as specific clients, business pitches, coaching sessions, feedback, debriefing suggestions and more. Pre-discussed topics might include some type of networking, marketing, CMS software, coaching tools, guest speaker, to name a few.

Facilitator: Determine who will be the group facilitator. This person's role is not to be a leader, they are a facilitator meant to help the group with planning and navigating the sessions. You may also want to determine a backup or co-facilitator to cover during times there is a scheduling conflict. This keeps it easy so the group does not have to think too much about the planning piece, reaching out to guest speakers, the technology hosting, etc.

Be Patient: It's completely normal to take a couple of sessions to build up the routine and connection among the group. It is also typical to have a technical issue that slows down the start of the session at the beginning. Occasionally, a session may need to be canceled due to scheduling conflicts with the majority of the group. Remember the group has primary responsibilities to their business first and foremost. However, if the conflicts occur often you may want to consider changing to a more convenient day and time.

Lastly HAVE FUN: It's easy to get caught up focusing on the business but these groups can be so much fun! Our group routinely has times we crack up about some random topic. It makes the upcoming session something to look forward to and something in which we all enjoy participating. The positive support and encouragement the group provides is inspiring and motivating. **Thank you for taking the time to review our story and if you have any questions do not hesitate to reach out!**

Final Thoughts

"Scott E. Page, professor of complex systems, political science and economics at the University of Michigan, puts it this way, "Diversity trumps ability." He's applied mathematical modeling and case studies to prove that teams of strong, but diverse, individuals outperform teams of the best individuals with similar perspectives and ways of approaching a problem. Solution finding lies in the greater possibility created through the collective combination of diverse ideas and approaches." **(Woods, 2008)**

Works Cited

Phillips, K. W. (2014, October 1). *How Diversity Makes Us Smarter*. Retrieved from Scientific American Policy & Ethics: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/

Woods, S. (2008). *Thinking About Diveristy of Thought*. Retrieved from WORKINGPAPER: http://workforcediversitynetwork.com/docs/articles/article_thinkingaboutdiversityofthought_woods.pdf

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How Our Group was Started and Setup

Group Name: VAA Peer-to-Peer Mastermind Group

Group Size: 12 Members (6-8 typical attendees)

Session Frequency: 2nd & Last Friday Monthly from 3pm-4:30pm Central

Session Length: 90 Minutes

Session Method: ZOOM video/telephonic service

Benefits of Mastermind Group:

- Sharing Proven Best Practices
- Debrief Practice with each other
- Team that's "in it with you" attitude
- Access to a Range of Expertise
- Creative Ideas & Solutions
- Combined Career Experiences
- Financial Opportunities to Collaborate
- And more…

"I love that I can share insecurities and challenges knowing that each person on the call responds with empathy and encouragement! Stephen Covey called it "abundance mentality." Sharing and building up another person makes you stronger, not weaker (the opposite is "scarcity mentality")." **~ VAA Wanda Swain**

How we started

Our mastermind group was started not long after the TTI Success Insights annual conference this year. The original purpose of the group was to focus on new VAAs only, since I was relatively new myself. I wanted to pull together a group of people going through similar experiences starting out their careers, coaching practices, consulting work, etc. There is a strong similarity between all of us as VAAs during our journeys, and it can feel very lonely being a solopreneur. However, after really thinking about this, I was reminded of the power of "diversity of thought." I realized that a group of both new and experienced VAAs would be even more powerful. This allowed us to pull together those with structured, proven methods and those with new, fresh ideas and concepts. The end result has been amazing.

I started by posting in our TTI Success Insights VAA LinkedIn group that I was creating the group and looking for those who would be interested. The initial response was amazing! Traditionally if you research mastermind groups they are smaller in size, around 4-6 people. With less than four people, the energy level is low, and with more than six, you can potentially run out of time leaving people feeling shortchanged.

Remember there are no rules for mastermind groups; only best practices and suggestions. Don't hesitate to build your own model that works for you and your group. We took a different approach starting with 17 people knowing that some may not stay with the group. This turned out to be accurate as we ended up with 12 people. Of those, seven or eight consistently attend every session. We have a few who attend less often but still bring a lot to the table!

One of the initial visions for this group was to be less formal and more supportive. In some groups, they become too serious and too intense. This is why our group is a *peer-to-peer* mastermind group. We are peers helping support, and even peer coach, each other at times to become the best we can be.

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