



Leading a Successful Mastermind

The "Master Mind" may be defined as: "Coordination of knowledge and effort, in a spirit of harmony, between two or more people, for the attainment of a definite purpose."

~ Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich

Napoleon Hill was one of the first to write about the "master mind alliance". He is often accredited with the idea, but attributed it to Andrew Carnegie, who undoubtedly learned it from someone before him. [Here is the chapter](#) from his book Think and Grow Rich that describes the master mind alliance, if you have not already read it. It is worth reading to understand the spirit of intent that is at the foundation of a well-done master mind alliance.

Mastermind groups rise and fall. Some last with a core group of members for years, even decades. Others begin with great passion and fizzle out over the course of a few weeks or months. There are some principles, processes and agreements that increase the chance of a mastermind group being successful. Whether you choose to participate in this mastermind group or another, look for a group that embodies these qualities to increase your likelihood of a successful experience.

A Collective Purpose

As Napoleon Hill describes in Think and Grow Rich, it is important for the success of your business to have a clear and definitive business purpose. It is also important for the collective of people in the mastermind group to have a collective definitive purpose. This collective purpose is the foundation necessary for the master mind to be working together 'in a spirit of harmony'.

The collective purpose will either be offered by the founder of the mastermind for your agreement or will be developed and agreed upon by the mastermind participants at the onset of the group.

It is recommended for this collective purpose to be read aloud to the group at the beginning of each mastermind session to support the members in aligning with the spirit of harmony needed for optimal success. If it is not read aloud at the beginning of each session, what process does the group have to keep this collective purpose top of mind?

Clear Leadership

The mastermind must have a person who takes on leadership for the group. The leader takes on the role of ensuring the group is meeting as per the agreed upon schedule and facilitates the meeting based on the agreed upon meeting agenda.



It is not necessary for the mastermind to have the same leader for the duration of the alliance. It can be agreed upon to share this role, rotating leadership responsibility every meeting or every 3-4 months. To support success in this alliance, how this leadership role is handled should be agreed upon at the outset of the alliance.

A Shared Vision

Just as a clear and common purpose for the group is important, a shared vision is also important. The vision of success will be different for each group. Success can include individual members achieving their business goals, consistently accomplishing their commitments to the group and other measurable activities. It can also include more soft goals like building solid business relationships with each other, supporting each other by promoting each other's work (when it makes sense to do so), forming joint ventures, and more. Whatever the shared vision is, it is critical to the long-term success of the group that the collective vision is agreed upon from the outset. This gives all members a clear picture of what they are working together towards.

Building Your A-Team

A mastermind is not just a collective of individuals jumbled together with their focus only on their own business goals. Rather, it's a team of people who are in good relationship together, share some common values, and are 100% committed towards the success of the mastermind, which means the success of each individual and the team as a whole.

Keep this in consideration when assembling this community together. It is not important for each person to be a business powerhouse with a laundry list of training and credentials. It is important to build a team of people who are a good fit in working together, can challenge each other comfortably, and share the common purpose and vision of the mastermind. Pay attention to this sense of community and strength of relationships as the mastermind is formed and throughout its duration.

Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement are operational givens that provide a framework for the mastermind alliance to work within. They include explicit expectations that the group of people will adhere to. Rules of engagement can include:

- Confidentiality
- Schedule
- Meeting Agenda
- How to Join the Mastermind
- How to Handle Difficult Conversations



- How to Leave the Mastermind

All of the participants of the mastermind are responsible for adhering to the rules of engagement and share equal responsibility in speaking up when they notice the rules of engagement not being followed.

Following are some considerations in what to look for when choosing a mastermind group.

Confidentiality

Generally speaking, participants agree to keep anything shared within the mastermind confidential unless they have express permission to share with others. What is the confidentiality agreement of this group? Confidentiality is never something that should be assumed. It is much more effective to have it explicitly agreed upon. It is one of the cornerstones of the foundation of trust that is necessary for members to feel at ease in discussing their challenges openly.

Schedule

For maximum participation, it is best to schedule the mastermind meetings on a fixed day each month (i.e. the 3rd Tuesday at 2pm) and for a fixed duration (i.e. 2 or 3 hours). This allows participants to build the mastermind meetings into their schedule easily. What, if anything, do you want to say about the expectation of people attending meetings according to this schedule?

Agenda

A meta-agenda that outlines a consistent flow for each meeting helps participants to show up focused, knowing what to expect, and ready to go. The leader is responsible for ensuring the meeting is facilitated according to this meta-agenda. An agenda should be agreed upon at the outset of the mastermind alliance. The group may consider altering the agenda if it feels there needs to be a change, either for a specific meeting or for ongoing use.

The meta-agenda should not just be 'everybody gets 10 minutes to share a problem or opportunity and have the group mastermind about it'. For the mastermind alliance to flourish, it should also include opportunities for inviting participants to be fully present, relationship strengthening and maintenance (see the section below 'Inviting the Whole Person').

How to Join the Mastermind

A mastermind group should be built consciously to build a team that both connects well with each other and is able to challenge each other when necessary. What needs to be in place to join your mastermind alliance? Are there specific characteristics, personality traits, or values that are desired in likely candidates? Or that you would like to avoid?

In forming the mastermind, how do you intentionally build relationship amongst the members? Taking time in a first meeting to establish relationship and build rapport. If this critical step is missed, it can



take longer for the group to find its rhythm with one another, making the mastermind outcomes less impactful.

Once the initial alliance is formed, what steps might need to be in place to welcome new members in future?

How to Have Difficult Conversations

In any group of people, it is likely that conflict will arise from time to time. What, if anything, do you want to say about how to handle difficult conversations? Who will take leadership in facilitating these discussions? Conflict is a place where either relationships are strengthened or the mastermind alliance can be at risk of falling apart. Being clear on these expectations from the onset can support the group in its continued success.

How to Leave the Mastermind

People leave mastermind alliances for a variety of reasons - some celebratory and some challenging for the individual or the group. If someone chooses to leave your mastermind alliance before it is complete, what is the process for leaving? Being clear about how someone leaves is as important to the remaining alliance as it is to the individual who is leaving.

Inviting the Whole Person

For the mastermind alliance to flourish, it is important to remember that each of the participants is a whole person with a whole life outside of your monthly meetings. How does the structure of the mastermind honor this reality? The meeting agenda can include processes for having a check-in about how each person is arriving, as an example of honoring this. The meetings can also be facilitated in a way that honors the whole person including their learning needs. An excellent way to do this is by holding the mastermind alliance within a Whole Person Process facilitated container ([learn more](#)).

A Special Note About Learning Needs

Each of us has different learning needs and a powerful mastermind alliance will support each other in meeting those needs.

- **Making the Ask:** while each person asking the mastermind for support should have their question ready prior to arriving, each person will have a different way of expressing that question. Some may need to provide context before making their ask while others may get directly to the point. Honor the needs of the individual.
- **Listening to Feedback:** how will each member best take in the feedback of the alliance? Some may prefer to sit silently and absorb everything and possibly ask clarifying questions at the end. Others may need to ask clarifying questions as the feedback unfolds so they can continue to be present to the conversation. Honor the needs of the individual.



- Documentation: Some people may want to take notes as they are listening. Others may prefer to listen and take notes for themselves afterwards. Still others may prefer to listen while someone else makes notes on their behalf. Honor the needs of the individual.

When you honor the needs of the individual in this way, you maximize their learning opportunities and in turn maximize the success of the mastermind alliance.

Making the Most of Your Participation

As a participant in a mastermind group, preparation, participation and accountability will help you maximize your experience.

Preparation

In the days leading up to each mastermind meeting, prepare yourself by:

- Reviewing your business purpose and vision. How have you been working from your purpose since the last meeting? How are you moving towards your vision?
- Review (and update as needed) your business goals (short, medium and long-term).
- What have you done that you committed to during the last mastermind session? Be ready to report your progress.
- What issue or opportunity is most pressing for your business right now? From this, what is the question you want to bring to the mastermind?

Participation

During the mastermind meeting:

- Participate fully, turning off any distractions like your phone.
- Listen deeply. Practicing deep, authentic listening is one of the great gifts of participating in a collective like this. Listen to listen, don't listen to respond.
- Offer whatever feedback you can to others. This could include practical advice based on your experience and knowledge. It could also include intuitive knowledge from tapping into the collective consciousness - what Napoleon Hill referred to as the psychic phase of the Mastermind principle.
- Be open and coachable. It's easy for the mind to shut down new perspectives that are different than your own. Do your best to be open and coachable throughout the process.
- Ask for what you need to meet your learning needs.



Accountability

In the time between mastermind meetings, you can maximize your business success by following through on your commitments to the alliance. This includes:

- Blocking out time in your calendar to work on the commitments you made.
- Considering an accountability partner from your group to connect with in between sessions to keep you motivated and on track.
- Checking in on others if there are specific ways you feel you can be of service to them in their commitments (not just to say 'let me know how I can help' but rather to say 'I might be able to help you by XYZ, would that be helpful too?').

The Role of Special Guests

The purpose of a mastermind group is for the participants to benefit from the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Each person bringing their individual knowledge and wisdom as well as tapping into the collective wisdom of the whole.

From time to time, it may be advisable to invite in a special guest who has specific knowledge that benefits all members of the mastermind in achieving their business goals and supports the collective in achieving its common purpose. However, these should be chosen with great care and not done frequently. Consider a special secondary meeting outside of your normal schedule for this learning opportunity if time permits.