Council of Emergency Medicine Residency Directors

Meeting of the Minds: The Power of Mastermind Group
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What is a Mastermind Group?

- Peer or near-peer mentorship platform
- Provides professional and personal growth, development, and promotion
- Collective intelligence for brainstorming power to address an individual's' professional or personal issue
- Working together to solve problems and challenges that group members are facing
- Focus can be longitudinal or problem focused
- Opportunity for more candid, open conversations about insecurities, struggles, and aspirations

Benefits	Challenges
Focus is growth and development	Establishing trust and collaboration
Collaborative	Different stages of career (relatability)
Peer mentorship	Can become hierarchical
Safe environment to air concerns	Coordination of meetings
Expanded networking	Lack of context (institutional differences)
Diverse skill sets & talents coming together to share	Varying personalities, experiences, backgrounds
External perspectives: can have global involvement	Making it relevant in your colleagues lives (prioritizing meetings)
More open and candid	Discussion points

Practical Tips regarding logistics for implementation

1. **How do you choose group membership?**
   - Recommend members be linked by at least one "uncommon commonality" (e.g. early career women in EM; physicians with an interest in entrepreneurship)
   - With the "uncommon commonality" as a constant, recommend maximizing diversity of perspective. Note: be mindful to group intention here. If career advancement will be a central topic, mixing participants at Instructor and Professor levels may not be wise. However other central topics lend themselves well to a mix of career stages. Know your group.
   - Vet an individual fully before extending an invitation. It can be awkward to "fire" someone from the Mastermind.
   - Size of the group is typically limited to less than 8 members (small group size allows for everyone to have time to share without excessively long meeting times)
   - Proximity does not matter: Virtual platforms allow for national and global collaboration. In fact, having members from geographically disparate institutions can be preferable to minimize competition and increase diversity of perspective. There are pros/cons of having institutional connections (pros: people would know the institutional infrastructure and culture. Cons: may raise apprehensions about ability to discuss specific job concerns)

2. **How often does the group meet?**
   - Timing itself not as important as picking a predictable schedule that works for the intent and needs of group.
   - Suggested options: monthly, every other month, or more intensive initially to establish group dynamics, then as needed
   - Timing of meetings: 1-2 hours

3. **What topics do you discuss?**
   - Should always include a "check-in" for all meetings to get members reacquainted and create an atmosphere of collaboration and sharing
     - Example from Dr. Teresa Chan: "Dragons/Demons"- each member says one dragon they've "slayed" and one demon they are "fighting".
   - Decide ahead of time key talking points or a topic to discuss
     - Can send out an agenda or call for topics to discuss
   - Platform for individuals asking for help in troubleshooting an issue they are dealing with professionally or personally

4. **Who moderates the discussion?**
   - Can be anyone in the group, but should be decided on ahead of time.
   - Moderator should be mindful of group dynamics, ensure equal participation and track time/progress through agenda

5. **How much structure is needed for each meeting?**
    ○ **Varies based** on group dynamics, level of trust, and commitment of members.

An example of a suggested format can be seen below, from:
Paetow G, Zaver F, Gottlieb M, et al. Online Mastermind Groups: A Non-hierarchical Mentorship Model for Professional Development. Cureus 10(7): e3013.
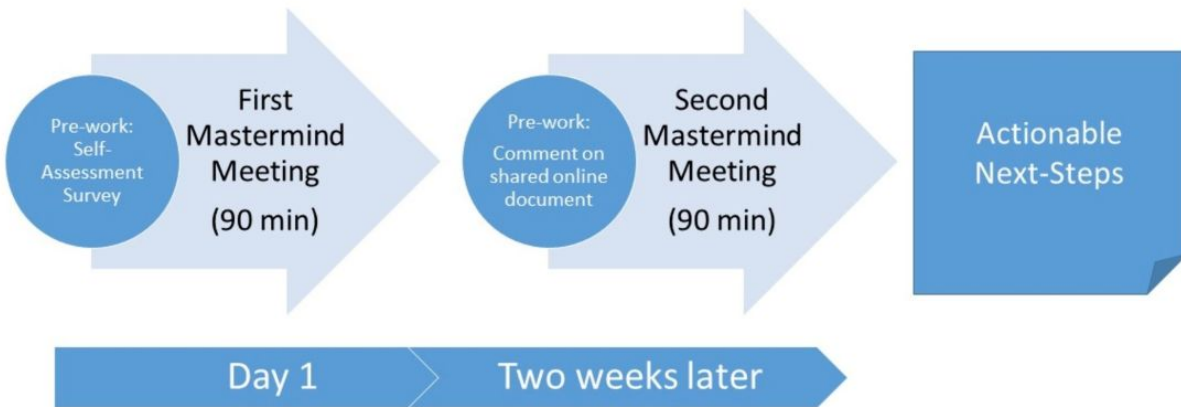
Additional tips adapted from: Create a "Mastermind Group. Harvard Business Review. August. 2015 9:2018. Available at: https://hbr.org/2015/08/create-a-mastermind-group-to-help-your-career

Tips and Tricks to enhance Effectiveness of the Group

● Choose group members wisely - Think about a group dynamic which will allow everyone to share their goals and challenges freely.
● Set ground rules and expectations - clarity reduces drama and anxiety
    ○ All members should specifically agree on: group purpose/intention, group values/culture, meeting frequency/length, new member selection process, expectations regarding preparation, meeting attendance and treatment of other team members, process for handling a group member not meeting expectations
● Create a structure - Choose a topic, and how you plan to moderate the conversation to involve all parties.
    ○ Suggested option: have a defined structure that your group follows each time to make flow easier (ie: check in, same order of speakers, mention something they need and help they can offer other member, move to topic of discussion).

Tips to maintain peer mentorship and avoid hierarchy:

- Choose the topic of conversation wisely. Make sure it is relatable for all involved, and that everyone can chime in
- For virtually connected groups, try to incorporate at least one in-person meeting at a venue that connects the group members. (eg if Mastermind group is centered around new academic ultrasound professionals, they might set up a 1 hour meeting at the national ultrasound conference that year, but otherwise, only connect via online meetings)
- Monitor time for each person contributing: should not be monopolized by one person talking or answering all the questions
- Strong facilitator to ensure equity of contributions of the group, and to highlight themes that apply broadly to everyone in the group
- Encourage everyone to share their struggles and vulnerability to help encourage openness and candidness
- Group consensus on ground rules, which should be re-introduced as new members join the group.

Different Models for Mastermind Groups

- **Facilitated Mastermind Group**:
  - Helpful to establish conversation and introduce members to the mastermind group idea/implementation.
  - Structured and led by a facilitator so that there is some degree of control and consistency between meeting topics, discussion length, and involvement of all group members
  - Specific objectives, which are pre-determined by the facilitator, but are flexible and can change as the group becomes cohesive and the direction of the mastermind group changes.
  - More focused on a specific topic, project, or professional development goal.
  - Experienced facilitators highly recommended, given the potential for the group dynamic to become hierarchical with members at differing career stages

- **Near-Peer Mastermind**:
  - Model for a group of individuals at similar career stages, which provides an opportunity for networking and discussing successes/challenges
  - Structure is more flexible, without the need for specific objectives for each meeting.
  - Allows for the opportunity to discuss struggles/successes that individuals bring up in conversation
  - Members are in similar career pathways and may relate more easily, providing insights from an objective/outside source
  - Allows for more vulnerability and connectedness

1. **True/False: The concept of a Mastermind Groups is relatively new, only recently described within the last decade.**
    a. False; Originally described in Napoleon Hill's 1937 book, "Think & Grow Rich", the concept of a Mastermind Group to promote professional development and mentorship has been primarily utilized in the business world.
2. **Which of the following are benefits of utilizing a Mastermind Group as a mentorship model?**
    a. Non-hierarchical nature of the group
    b. Diversity of opinions, suggestions, and perspectives
    c. Increased sense of commitment to all group members' continued success
    d. All of the above
3. **Which of the following are potential barriers to successfully implementing a Mastermind Group?**
    a. Logistics and Scheduling
    b. Participants' ability to share and be vulnerable
    c. Group cohesion without in-person meetings
    d. All of the above
4. **True/False: In order to have a high functioning, collaborative, and effective Mastermind Groups, the meetings must be done in person.**
    a. False; While in-person Mastermind Groups work well, virtually connected groups that meet via video-conferencing software have also been described.