

CTS Training Module Notes

Joining A Mastermind Group

Welcome to the “*Joining A Mastermind Group*” Training Module. Make sure you have reviewed the first training in this series, “Mastermind Fundamentals” before proceeding with this module. It’s imperative that you proceed with each module in this series in the proper order to gain a clear understanding of all of the elements involved in creating and maintaining productive Groups.

In this session, we’ll be reviewing with you the intricacies of being involved in a Mastermind Group, the responsibilities that come with that, and how you go about finding a CTS Mastermind Group to join. We’ll introduce you to the CTS Mastermind Website and show you how to navigate your way around to get yourself connected with other CTS Members interested in creating and joining Mastermind Groups.

First, let’s talk about how you determine whether you’re ready for this type of commitment, because that’s what this really is, a commitment. Every member of a group must be totally committed to the goals of the group, to help one another, to attend every session without exception, and to be on time every time. There is no grey area here, you’re either committed or you’re not. So we’ve created a document that you can download from the CTS Training Center that you need to review. Each of these downloads appears just to the left of this Training Module.

This document is called the “*CTS Mastermind Readiness Test,*” and it’s really a document that everyone needs to download and complete before joining any group. And when you complete this questionnaire, it’s vital that you be brutally honest with every one of your answers, or you can’t possibly gain an accurate assessment. The key to this step is to determine your “readiness” to participate fully in a group, and that you understand and accept the responsibilities that go along with being in a group. If you aren’t completely honest in your assessment, chances are you will have difficulty with the group and eventually you could be removed. So it’s key that

you answer each question as honestly as you can, and be very realistic with your answers. **ONLY** proceed to the next step if you successfully complete this test, and your "Honest" score indicates you are in fact ready for the commitment of participating in a Mastermind Group.

Next, every CTS Mastermind Group will need to follow specific guidelines, and here's where you must download and read two more documents. The first is "*Why Guidelines Are Important*," and as the title implies, it's imperative reading for everyone. One of the keys to a properly functioning group is to ensure every participant is aware of and committed to the group goals, and as such there needs to be some guidelines that govern the conduct of members. This particular document reviews why these guidelines are important and offers some great advice on how to deal with situations that come up that threaten the synergy of the group. It's only a 1-page document, but one we know you'll find extremely informative.

And of course the next document is the "*CTS Mastermind Group Guidelines*" document. And again, this one is mandatory, as it outlines several important subjects, such as meeting details, purpose of the group, commitments, participant conduct, etc. This is one document that everyone must read thoroughly and totally commit to its' content. So it's probably a good idea to save this document in a place you can find it easily and review it often, particularly in the beginning. On your very first group meeting, the facilitator will review this document with everyone to ensure complete understanding and agreement of its' content. Again, make sure you save this document in a place on your computer where you can find it easily, because you likely will be referring to it quite often.

And the final document every member must download and review is the "*Non-Disclosure*" Agreement. Essentially, during your group meetings, you will be discussing some very private things that may be brought up by members. Accordingly, each member must be assured that everything discussed will remain confidential within the group, and will not be shared with anyone outside of the group under any circumstances. This is a founding principle of every Mastermind Group,

and every participant must feel that anything they share will be held in the strictest confidence.

Accordingly, this Agreement must be read and signed by each participant, and then forwarded to the group Facilitator. The easiest way to do that is to complete and sign the document, then scan it and attach it to an email to your facilitator. Failing that you can fax the document or even mail it. But no member will be allowed to participate in any group without that signed document having been received by the group facilitator. And yes, the facilitator of each group must sign a Non-Disclosure document as well, and the facilitator must retain all copies of those documents and produce them to CTS if requested to do so.

Hopefully, all of you are now beginning to understand that Mastermind Groups are serious undertakings, and are not to be taken lightly. These are not places you go to get all of your CTS problems solved for you. Rather, they are gatherings of like-minded and committed members that agree to work together to provide creative solutions to common problems, and provide accountability structures to help each participant achieve their goals. It's an amazing opportunity for each of you to really "stretch" yourself, and if you are totally engaged in this process, the results can be amazing. But what you get out of your group will be totally dependent upon the degree of effort that you consistently put forth. Now that probably sounds familiar doesn't it, because that's exactly how CTS works.

Now, let's talk a little about the individual Mastermind Groups themselves, as there always seems to be some confusion regarding this. Here we'll discuss the formations and structure of the groups, how you will meet and what will take place during a typical Mastermind Group Meeting.

First, the ideal size of a group is 5-6 members, 6 being ideal, and each group will contain one Facilitator (we'll highlight the role of a "Facilitator on the next module in this series, "Facilitating A Mastermind Group). This is the optimum size that has proven to work best for most groups over the years. With too few participants, you can't generate enough good ideas and the energy of the group tends to sag. And too

many members creates a time problem, where many participants simply won't be able to get their issues addressed, or the meetings will simply run far too long to be effective. So ideally, keep the groups to 5-6 members and you'll be fine. Personally I prefer 6 members to a group the best, because if someone doesn't show up for a meeting you still have enough participants to get some creative ideas going. And that number **DOES** include the facilitator.

Most groups meet monthly, some twice a month. The frequency will be determined by the meeting agenda, but I find monthly meetings that run about 90 minutes have been the most productive, or sometimes they can run up to two hours, but no longer than that. Remember, the mind can only absorb what the "butt" will endure. The "monthly" frequency gives everyone enough time to accomplish the goals and tasks they committed to during the previous meeting, where meeting more often sometimes makes members feel "rushed" and they find it very difficult to get everything done.

All of the CTS Mastermind Group meetings take place via TeleConference, just like our Q&A calls do. The Vendor we recommend for this is FreeConferencecallhd.com, as they are a terrific provider and their service is free for everyone. It's very easy to acquire a free account, and it's an extremely simple system to use, even for those that tend to struggle with technology. Just go to their website and click on the "Sign Up Now" link and complete the information. Anyone that wishes to facilitate a group will be required to acquire this service. If you're participating in a group, you'll receive the call-in information for each of your meetings prior to the event from the Group Facilitator in the same fashion that you receive notifications for our CTS calls.

Now, let's get to the content of each Mastermind Group meeting, and this will change and evolve with each group as you develop synergy in the group and you begin to "grow" together. As your meeting begins, remember your initial goals. In my group, our focus is on everyone working together and moving forward with an "Action Plan" to improve productivity and solve specific problems. So that's basically what we open

each meeting with, a reminder of *“what we’re here to accomplish.”* And also a reminder that we have 90 minutes to get everything done.

The Group Facilitator opens the meeting, and we briefly review with each participant the Action Plan they shared on the last meeting, and how they fared with that. In almost every case, everyone over-accomplishes their lists, and that’s inspiring to hear. It is very uncommon for someone not to have completed everything they committed to, and this is a key ingredient in getting members to readily “open up.” Everyone must do what they say they will do, no exceptions or excuses. As we have repeatedly mentioned in this training series, these Mastermind Groups are only for the Committed, they aren’t for the “faint of heart.” This is where any “Success Stories” surface that any participant would like to share. This is always a favorite part of the meeting, as the individuals in my group are very focused and accomplished, so we do have some great successes to share from month to month. And you’ll begin to see that same commitment and synergy develop in your groups as well.

Then, we review our goals for the upcoming month, and each participant will share his/her goals in about 2 minutes. Obviously, these are very well prepared in advance, and they are very specific. This is what each member will commit to achieving before our next meeting, and they will include a brief “Action Plan” of how they will accomplish those goals. This information **MUST** be fully prepared well in advance of each meeting by all participants. This isn’t something you can “do on the fly,” it must be well prepared and documented ahead of time.

Next, our scheduled “Hotseat” participants will bring a specific challenge or issue to the group, and we’ll brainstorm for 15 minutes and attempt to offer solutions to that challenge. We usually have 2 or 3 Hotseat participants in each meeting, but everyone must “take a turn” at least at every 2nd meeting or so, and that includes the moderator. We do have a maximum of 3 “Hotseat Sessions” in each meeting, since that takes up 45 minutes, which is half of our allotted meeting time. This is a key portion of the meeting, as this is the forum we use where each individual can speak

directly about any problem or challenge they are having, and get the group's feedback and suggestions. Here are some of the guidelines we follow for our Hotseat sessions.

First, it's important that the participant has summarized their issue so they can deliver it in one or two minutes max. They must briefly describe their particular challenge and let the group know specifically what they are seeking, eg. finding a solution, generating ideas, asking for support, making a decision, getting to the root of a problem or concern, etc. The key here is that before attending your Group Meeting, as a Hotseat participant you have clearly thought through and written down your issue and what you want to get from the group, and that you can articulate that clearly in a very short time.

The group then may ask some clarifying questions to the Hotseat Participant, and they then begin to offer suggestions and advice to specifically address the issue or challenge. When there is about a minute or so remaining of the allotted 15 minutes, the Facilitator then asks the participant about the value of the information received, and what action items they commit to taking regarding this issue before the next meeting. Every suggestion given may or may not be used by the participant, but they all are received and appreciated in the spirit they are given. It's critical at this step that no judgments are made by any hotseat participant or any member offering advice or a solution. You can't get offended if your suggestion won't be used by the recipient, as it is **THEIR** choice and theirs alone as to what advice resonates with them. Remember, you check your egos at the door.

But suffice it to say these can be incredibly intense sessions, and they are timed very carefully to allow multiple members to participate at each meeting. Everyone that participates in a "Hotseat" always gets some great "take-aways" from those sessions. I'm sure by now you're beginning to better understand and appreciate the importance of that "*CTS Mastermind Readiness Test*" we reviewed earlier, as this simply isn't the place for those individuals that are unable or unwilling to totally commit to the process.

When we close the meeting, we thank everyone for their participation, and we establish the day and time of the next meeting. For my group, we meet the same time each month. For example, the last Thursday of the month. That makes scheduling very simple and it's easy for everyone to remember. When maintaining a schedule that's easy to remember, you ensure you have full participation. You must pick a day that everyone can do comfortably, so there needs to be flexibility from everyone. You'd be amazed how our group literally plan our lives around these meetings. Even if we're out of town, we still participate, as this 90 minutes each month has become absolutely sacred to all of us.

Website Notes:

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OK, now let's just do a quick review of what we covered here on this module. All the downloads we'll be referring to are just to the left of this training module.

- The first step for all of you is to complete the "*CTS Mastermind Readiness Test*," and be brutally honest with your answers. It's a complete waste of your time and everyone else's if you aren't ready to totally commit to a group.
- The next two documents to download are "*Why Guidelines Are Important*," and the "*CTS Mastermind Group Guidelines*." It's imperative that you read these thoroughly, and keep them in a place where you can find them easily, as you will likely refer to them often.
- The final document to download is the "*Non-Disclosure*" Agreement, and this one must be signed by each participant and forwarded to your Group Facilitator.
- Most groups will meet monthly for approximately 90 minutes on a conferencing line, and ideally you'll want to meet at the same day and time each month. For

instance, the last Thursday of the month. Any schedule that is easy to remember will gain greater attendance.

- It's imperative that each member of the group arrive on time for every meeting, no exceptions.
- When participating in a Hotseat session, you must ensure that you have clearly thought through and written down your issue and what you want to get from the group **BEFORE** you attend the meeting, and that you can articulate that message clearly in a very short time.
- The main goal is to get every participant exchanging ideas and solving problems, so the participation of every member is extremely important.
- No member can judge any suggestions given by any other members, as this is a free exchange of information and respecting everyone's opinion is mandatory.

Thanks for listening, and make sure you review the final module in this series, "*Facilitating a Mastermind Group*," even if you don't plan to facilitate a group yourself. There is some great information in that training that will help you understand the role and responsibilities of your facilitator, and we're sure you'll find that very helpful. Bye for now.