



5 tips for starting a networking group

Get more from your business relationships

Leads groups, networking groups, and masterminds all have one thing in common - they bring together people who share information and support each in advancing their careers. Many successful people attribute a significant part of their success to their ongoing networking groups. Here are a few tips to help you start your own group:

1. Get clear on your ideal clients, such as:

- Size (# employees, revenue or other qualifier)
- Type (public, private, tech, medical, research, etc.)
- What they want (evaluate, move, fill in your area).
- Where they work (facilities, real estate, planning or they may be the CFO or CEO).
- What other influencers you work with (design teams, brokers, developers or project managers).
- Your position in the market (Are you the Walmart, the local boutique or the Neiman Marcus of your industry?)

2. What will you do?

Let them know that you are assembling a group of professionals with similar interests. The group meets to share information that helps each other win new work and/or advance their careers.

Decide how often, where and for how long you will meet. For example, *"We meet for an hour on the 1st Thursday of the month at 8:30 at the Panera on Main Street"*. This allows people to plan their schedule and commit to the group.

What else? Will you discuss specific topics, invite occasional speakers, allow guests, etc.?

3. Types of useful information

- Leads for others
- Timing of a project
- What's happening at a specific firm
- Industry news/changes
- Key points from a recent event
- Clients that changed jobs
- Job openings (for group members or their clients)
- New tools to make business life easier

4. Meeting format

Some groups ask members pass out leads at meetings. Others go around the room so each person can verbally share what they are doing, what they know and what they need. One group I lead had people contribute in a conversational way – often building on what the last person said. Choose what works for you and your group.

5. Managing the process

Tools, such as google groups, can help manage information about participants, issue meeting invites and facilitate communication between meetings.

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