



## 5 Steps For Effective Group Mentoring

By Ann Rolfe

*"The power of one, if fearless and focused is formidable,  
but the power of many working together is better."*

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, 14th President of the Philippines

Mentoring groups are springing up everywhere. When people have a need, chances are peers can assist and the reciprocal nature of peer mentoring makes it easy and enjoyable.

Tima, a successful indie author now on her third novel, meets weekly with members of a small local writer's group. They exchange their draft chapters for critique and suggestions. This adds value to the end result because it helps develop their writing and ability to market their work.

The University of NSW Business Society supports a peer mentoring program that helps new students with everything from exam tips, social connections and where to get the best cheap food.

In the corporate world, big players like Sun Microsystems, KPMG, Boeing and Deutsche Bank report significant results from their peer mentoring programs.

Group mentoring can take different formats and be called by various names:

A "Mentoring Circle" usually involves one or two mentors regularly meeting with several mentorees. The group/circle has a theme e.g. leadership.

A "Mastermind Group" takes a round-table approach where peers interact in a group mentoring conversation. No one is designated mentor or mentoree. It could be a one-off meeting to address a specific topic or an ongoing group meeting with a theme.

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Regardless of the format or name, an effective mentoring group:

1. **Meets regularly:** You may meet at a local café, in a boardroom, or online but you need to make it a scheduled time. It might be every Friday, the third Thursday of the month or the second Tuesday of every second month but it needs to become a routine that people can depend upon.
2. **Stays small enough to be manageable:** The writers group spend several hours a week together. One group I attend has found that for 4 people we need 1.5 – 2 hours for everyone to participate fully but another group of 4 people meets online for just 45 minutes. You can have larger groups but they do require more management of the available time.
3. **Has structure:** The writers have a quick catch-up over coffee before exchanging their draft chapter, silent reading followed by a pause for discussion of the work and lunch. By mutual consent they have developed a practice that works. The online group gets an emailed invitation. They can nominate a question or topic they want to discuss and the host chairs the online meeting, ensuring that each attendee gets to give and receive input. Adopting a format and following it allows everyone to get value from the time together.
4. **Has a convener:** In an organisation, administration of a mentoring group may be delegated, or be a shared or rotated task but someone has to take on the responsibility of organizing the meetings. This could involve setting up the venue, preparing the agenda sending reminders and/or chairing the meeting.
5. **Has a purpose:** Mentoring of any kind must fulfill a need. Keep the focus on the reasons for meeting and track outcomes to ensure members are gaining value. That's how mentoring works!

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