



NSA Speakers Academy

Professional Relationships

You're Not Alone

The National Speakers Association and the collection of members who make up a significant portion of the speaking profession are unique. Whether you connect with other members in social media, in your Speakers Academy sessions, in your chapter, or at a client event in which you are sharing the stage, you will find one thing to be true: You are not alone. NSA members willingly help each other in ways not found in almost any other industry. To begin making the most of this generous network of professionals, give some thought to those you may already know in each of the following areas:

Your Speakers Academy Leader: _____

Product Expert: _____

Keynote Expert: _____

Authorship Expert: _____

Platform Skills Expert: _____

Storytelling Expert: _____

Technology Expert: _____

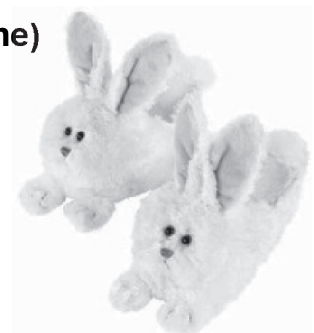
Intellectual Property Expert: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Whether you ask a few questions or form a more formal arrangement, there are a number of ways to ensure that — even when you're working in your pajamas and bunny slippers — you're not isolated and always have a source of expertise and help.

- ✓ **Accountability Partner (you can have more than one)**
- ✓ **Mastermind Group**
- ✓ **Mentor**
- ✓ **Business Partner**
- ✓ **Professional Coach**



Formalizing Your Relationships

A like-minded, goal-oriented group of people can dramatically leverage personal and business successes. Ideally, such a group creates a safe environment in which to focus on projects, assist with solving problems, participate in brainstorming ideas, encourage progress and celebrate completion of each step along the way. Should you wish to formalize a relationship with other speakers, the below best practices will elevate the success of this group.

Formal Group Structure to Create Accountability, Safety and Momentum:

- **GOALS:** Be clear about what you want to gain and what you have to offer to the group.
- **PARTICIPATE:** Decide as a group how often and how long you want to meet. Be as active as you can without monopolizing. Remember to listen.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Sharing what you learn and gain can be exciting and useful. However, please keep other group members' sharing confidential. Feel free to tell the world your own story.
- **TAKE EQUAL TURNS:** Give each person your full attention. No side talking. Adhere to agreed time allotments.
- **BE CONSISTENT:** Attend all meetings and stay to the end.

Suggested Meeting Process:

1. **Check in.** Share one success since last meeting.
2. **Divide meeting time** equally, with five minutes reserved for the close.
Time per member is _____ Take turns as timer.
3. Focus person states **issue or request**, giving some background information.
4. Group asks **clarifying questions**.
5. Group asks: "How can we help?"
6. Focus person states clearly, "**I want** you to..." and then listens. (Note taking is highly recommended). If brainstorming ideas are requested, see guidelines below.
7. Focus person summarizes insights and **action item(s)** to be taken.
8. **Repeat** process for each member.
9. **Close.** Each member commits to **at least one action item** to be accomplished before the next meeting. Confirm time, date and location of next meeting.

Brainstorming Guidelines:

- **ALL:** Agree to a time frame for completion.
- **FOCUS PERSON:** Clearly identify what problem or desire you want addressed.
- **GROUP:** Generate new ideas. Keep the energy going. No judging or interrupting idea sharing.
- **FOCUS PERSON:** All ideas are valid and should be acknowledged. Merely say, "Thank you," and write ideas down or ask someone to record for you. Avoid using up valuable time discussing why some ideas won't work. Choose the idea that is the best fit and commit to reporting back.

(reprinted with permission from the CAPS Fast Track Manual)

Mastermind Groups

Below is an informative article on the value of mastermind groups.

Leaders Gain Valuable Insights Through Mastermind Groups

by Christine W. Zust, M.A.

Two heads are always better than one, but how about 6, 8, or 10 heads? Welcome to the world of mastermind groups, a growing business phenomenon that is being used by leaders around the world for problem-solving, inspiration and motivation. Built on the foundation of trust, confidentiality and harmony, the group forms a collective brain trust to address some of life's greatest challenges.

Working together

Mastermind groups share the basic philosophy that more can be accomplished in less time by working together. Comprised of individuals who meet in an open, supportive environment on a regular basis, the mastermind group's sole purpose is to share thoughts, ideas, opinions and information. As individuals, we have the ability to see things from our own perspective, our own world view. By adding others to the mix, the group has a greater ability to share a combined intellect to see things from a new and different perspective; what some call the "third mind." It is that collective third mind that processes and distills information down to its essence, and it is there that thoughts crystallize into ideas. It is also where the "Aha!" moment occurs. As individuals, we cannot achieve this on our own because our myopic view can cloud our perspective. As a group, the possibilities for expansive thinking are endless.

Some mastermind groups are industry-specific. Other groups are broader based, with representatives from different businesses joining to brainstorm ideas on a variety of topics. Groups can address professional or personal issues, or both. Striving toward success and creating a positive, dynamic learning environment allows members to embrace their new-found "community."

Great expectations — laying the ground rules

When creating or joining a mastermind group, it is crucial to establish a clear-cut sense of purpose. Everyone in the group must buy into the purpose. These early stages of development are critical to the group's future success. If everyone in the group had a different expectation, disaster would be inevitable. Using the simple five W's and H provides guidelines. Who will be members of the group? What is the group's main purpose? What is our topic for discussion? When, where, and how often will we meet? Why will we meet? How will the meetings be structured? The questions are endless. If the group does not seem like a good fit for you, go to another group or create your own.

Members of a mastermind group learn quickly that they must leave their egos at the door. Those who are unwilling to relinquish power won't last long. Problems can occur when some members have unrealistic expectations of the group or they don't grasp the concept of collective thinking. Some members may expect the group to solve all of their business or personal problems, or they may want to use the group as a therapy session. Groups who have self-centered, dominant members may self-destruct if the group allows that behavior to continue. Individual members like this can undermine the true purpose of the group's formation. An individual member who tries to overpower the group will either be warned, or will eventually be voted out of the group, because that person throws off the balance of the group.

Trust and harmony form the foundation

The success of a mastermind group is built on the foundation of trust and harmony. As some members explain, the process of building trust can take as long as a year before group members feel comfortable with each other. That comfort comes from sharing information and ideas, and learning to accept opinions openly and willingly. If only safe, polite comments are shared, nothing is gained, nor is the feedback valuable. Members don't benefit from a group of yes people. They want diversity of opinions and backgrounds from members who will offer constructive criticism and valuable opinions that encourage others to look at an issue with fresh eyes. Gary Ralston, senior business consultant at Ralston Consulting in Columbus, Ohio, says that trust deepens as the group forms. "Confidentiality, like a water-tight bond, is the most important part of mastermind groups," Ralston says. "Everywhere else, you want your business to look good to the rest of the world, but in a mastermind group, you can admit anything without being penalized because everything discussed stays in the group." He adds, "We live in our own blind spots. Mastermind groups allow us to accurately locate reality."

Sustainability

Mike Benz, executive director and CEO of United Way Services in Cleveland, Ohio, has for the past four years been a member of a group of executives that has met monthly. A few members have come and gone from the program during that time, but Benz explains, it is critical to select the right people. "Not just anyone can come into the program. They must be invited to become part of the group." The first year, he explains, focused on developing trust. Between the second and third year, the group hit a few bumps in the road, which were ironed out. By the fourth year, the group established its momentum. "You have to make a commitment to yourself and your group members that you're in it for the long term," Benz adds. Seeking feedback from group members keeps the group productive. Ralston points out that his group always ends its meetings by asking each person to reflect on what worked and what didn't in the meeting, and how the group can improve the next meeting. It keeps the group focused and on track.

Group members determine how often the group meets. Members who are physically located in the same city might meet monthly. Others, who may be located in the same state, may opt for bi-monthly or quarterly meetings. Members of national mastermind groups opt for meeting about twice a year. Some mastermind group members choose to meet by telephone to keep in touch until they can meet in person, using bridge line teleconferencing. The duration of meetings depends on the group, but most meet for two to four hours; others who meet less frequently may opt to meet for a half or full-day. The group decides. Often, if a mastermind group has achieved the goals it set in the beginning, it may disband. For others, the group may meet with the same people for a decade or longer.

Some advice

Gary Ralston has participated in two mastermind groups — one is industry-specific; another, business-related. He offers the following advice to mastermind newbies:

- Establish the group's protocol before the group is formed.
- Take charge and be choosy about who you select as members in the starting group. It's better to start off small and build the group than to go for volume without substance.
- Know how to fire a group member if things aren't working out. Decide how you will eliminate group members before you form the group. If you wait until the group is up and running, and a problem exists, it will be too late to backtrack.
- Don't fool yourself. If you are not making a difference to other group members, or they are not making a difference to you, it might be time to find another group that is better suited to your needs.

If you are looking for a way to take your thinking to the next level, becoming a member of a mastermind group may be a solution worthy of your consideration. The benefits that a well-organized mastermind group can bring to your business and your life can be invaluable.

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When writing your own articles, this is an example of what is called a “Resource Box”: a brief bio and your contact information listed at the end of your article.

Your Mentor

During your life, you may have had a mentor who guided you through a new process or new start to a career. Your Speakers Academy may also offer a formal mentoring process, in which members agree to be your mentor for a specified period of time. Even if you are seeking out your own mentor, it is helpful to have a structured relationship, both for your own benefit and to clarify the expectation of both you and your mentor.

Suggested Mentor Guidelines:

1. It is recommended that you get together with your mentor at a regularly scheduled time and place. It may be their office or your office, during lunch after your chapter's program or before your academy sessions. Also consider arranging regular phone consultations.
2. Establish goals for each meeting. Be clear about what you want to learn.
3. Decide which mentors to go to for what information.
4. Call your mentor with your request. State your goal(s) for the meeting, anyone else you might bring, how much time you need, the proposed date and the place you want to meet.
5. If an agreement is *not* made, phone your next preferred mentor.
6. Once a meeting is arranged, review the mentor's background through online or printed information, in order to familiarize yourself with his or her business and expertise.
7. Organize your questions. Take relevant information and documents.
8. During the meeting, honor your mentor's time restraints.
9. Offer to pay for coffee, lunch or other expenses.
10. Express appreciation for your mentor's time, expertise and generosity. Send a thank-you note describing what a difference the meeting made to you and/or group members.

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The Media

Not only will you form long-lasting friendships with other speakers as you attend events, conferences, conventions, labs, and chapter and client meetings, you may also find yourself encountering members of the media interested in having you speak or provide a quotation based on your topic. The below are important reminders when working with the media and establishing strong bonds.

- ✓ **Work to create a win-win relationship**
- ✓ **Learn how to approach directors and editors**
- ✓ **Provide information of high value that fits in with their story or need**
- ✓ **Remember that your event alone is not usually a story — you'll need a newsworthy angle**
- ✓ **Make yourself indispensable to radio shows and television programs**
- ✓ **Be easy to work with**
- ✓ **Learn how to submit articles to the press**
- ✓ **Write a press release and send it out**
- ✓ **Be in the know so that you can spin your subject to meet their needs**

What are two current news stories for which you could serve as an expert resource or provide a contrary opinion about?

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-

Whom do you currently know in the news media that you might be able to learn from?

...And ACTION!

Go backstage of nearly any production house or even theme park and you're likely to see signs that indicate "the show starts now" or "beyond these walls, you're on!" The same is true in the speaking profession: You're on, even before you're on stage. People learn who you are long before you appear on their stage, and this includes social gatherings, networking events, business functions, and the moment you arrive at a client site. Keep these items in mind to put your best foot forward — developing your professional relationships by being seen as professional.

- ⇒ Assume the microphone is on and recording the moment you call into a radio show
- ⇒ See yourself as on camera the moment you step into a TV studio
- ⇒ Assume clients can see you in the parking lot
- ⇒ Assume that clients from a national speaking event will also be in the airport when you leave
- ⇒ Ask yourself if you'd want your participants to see you act that way
- ⇒ Consider the possibility that everyone is a potential client
- ⇒ Treat the wait staff and catering staff as if they are your client
- ⇒ Be congruent with your message. If you speak on health, ordering a huge slice of chocolate cake at lunch with the client is incongruent...unless you can spin the healthy virtues of chocolate!
- ⇒ Be YOU!

Is there anything you need to adjust to be YOU and maintain congruence with your message?



Professional Relationships Homework

Congratulations on the completion of your PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS Module. Your journey may have begun today or some time ago. Regardless of where you began, use this homework assignment to keep up the momentum.

My homework from this session is:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

