Mastermind Group Case Study for Mid-Career Freelancers: Insights and Takeaways

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What is a Mastermind Group? Mastermind groups provide a supportive forum that helps all members’ businesses grow. The group is a safe place to discuss business and professional goals, as well as work-related and personal conflicts.

Our group’s goals: We formed a group composed of members with a similar background (3 to 6 years of freelancing medical writing with a publications focus) with the goals of:
- Sharing new opportunities and valuable information to broaden our businesses
- Broadening our network of trusted freelance colleagues
- Keeping one another accountable toward making regular progress towards our business goals

How does the group work? Initially, we met once a month via a conference call and focused on a predetermined theme or topic (Fig. 1). In each call, members would start by updating each other on their progress toward goals they had established at the beginning of the year, and then a single member led a longer discussion regarding a problem they were having, a goal they would like to achieve, or a business-related topic for discussion (Fig. 2). Because our meetings were so helpful to us, we decided to add a second meeting each month that allowed us to focus on any other business topics that members wanted to discuss, expand discussion of items already addressed, and catch up with each other.

Figure 1. Topics covered by our Mastermind group in 2019.

Meet our members:

- Dana Barberio is a medical writer and consultant, covering a wide variety of therapeutic areas and specializing in manuscripts, white papers, content marketing, and advertisements for biotech, pharma, CROs, non-profits, diagnostics, and microbiome-focused companies.

- Karoun H. Bagamian helps clients from research institutions, public health foundations, and international organizations complete their research projects by providing strategic planning, writing, and analytic services.

- Mia DeFino is a medical and scientific writer and editor who specializes in manuscripts, abstracts, posters, and conference coverage. Her clients include pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions, medical communication agencies, and publishing companies.

- Kristin Harper is a medical writer who specializes in research articles, grant proposals, and CME activities. Her clients include pharmaceutical companies, research institutions, public health foundations, and CME companies.

- Dana Barberio is a medical writer and editor who specializes in manuscripts, abstracts, posters, and conference coverage. Her clients include pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions, medical communication agencies, and publishing companies.

- Jessica Yen is a freelance writer, editor, and consultant who collaborates with non-profits, clinics, universities, and academic seeking to address health inequities. In her spare time, she dances, bicycles, and volunteers on several publication committees and within the local community.

- Donna Simcoe is a medical publication consultant for start-up companies and has authored publication practice articles. In her spare time, she dances, bicycles, and volunteers on several publication committees and within the local community.

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Figure 2. Monthly call structure.

Recap of meeting
Updates on monthly progress
Other questions/issues
Introduction of call topic
Group feedback/input

Access our handout with more information about starting your own group:

Best practices for a Mastermind Group:
- Keep each other accountable for goals and provide updates regularly
- Keep the group small for improved conversations
- Provide structure with room for flexibility
- Building trust and promoting commitment to the group are important

Challenges:
- Not enough time on the call to get to the heart of the matter
- Keeping track of lessons learned/information gained from each meeting
- Not enough time on the call to get to the heart of the matter

Potential improvements:
- Plan time to check-in on original goals in depth (quarterly/mid-year)
- Develop group goals to identify if the group is accomplishing what it set out to do
- Increase diversity of work within group (ie, make it entirely publications focused or more diverse, to allow for range of feedback)
- Keep information from group in central location