



# PEER CIRCLES

M E E T I N G   G U I D E



# C O N T E N T S

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# PURPOSE

Joining a peer group is an incredibly effective way to accelerate your professional growth.

Consider this steroids for your career track. But there's a catch, you will only get back what you put in.

TAKEAWAY: INVEST IN YOURSELF



**"What happens in a room  
when you are present  
cannot happen on the  
printed page or on the  
screen."**

GLORIA STEINEM, FEMINIST, AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST

# GROUND RULES

Your Peer Circle's success depends on you and the group following these ground rules.

# #1 Total Confidentiality

## What does total confidentiality mean?

- Absolutely no sharing outside of the group (not even with spouses or besties).
- You can share what you have gained, as it relates to you. For example, "I learned through a peer member's experience that we shouldn't hire a back end developer until we know what types of websites we will be building."
- You may not share names or experiences revealing that person's identity.
- You may not use any knowledge you gain about other companies for a competitive or self-serving advantage.
- When in doubt? Trust your gut and err on the side of not sharing.
- You may share if your peer circle member has given you permission to do so.

*A breach in trust will result in you losing your membership to Women in Digital and immediate removal from peer circle.*

## # 2

# Show up

## What does it mean to show up?

- To gain the most from your peer circles you should try to attend as many as you can.
- You should also be mentally present. Keep your phone out of sight and be fully engaged in your circle's Ask & Give processing.
- When you invest your focus and time on a productive peer meeting, you will all win and emerge with value added knowledge.

# #3 Professional Focus

## What does professional focus sound like?

- While personal and professional lives intersect on a daily basis, it's important to ensure your Asks and Gives are largely professional in focus.
- Use your judgement as a group and ask for permission to discuss a personal issue. For example, this is personal, but do you all think it is relevant?
- Highly relevant personal issues for professional women include: maiden name changes, child care costs, maternity leave negotiation, family planning or whether or not to marry. Non-relevant issues include: a bad break up, marital issues or personal financial stress.
- The litmus test on a personal issue: Will my group gain from hearing about my experience here. Can my group truly solve this issue?

*Keep your Asks for the group on a professional level, or directly related to your professional development.*

# #4 Be Open + Vulnerable

## What does it mean to truly be open and vulnerable?

- The best advice is often the hardest to hear. Be open to hearing your group's honest and constructive feedback.
- You should leave a peer meeting feeling like you gained something of value to apply directly to your personal or professional growth. If not, don't blame your peer group – look in the mirror. Were you open enough? Were you vulnerable enough? Did you really hear what they were saying?
- As a peer member, it's also critical that you provide honest and open advice to your peers. Your honesty is paramount!

*Always be open and vulnerable. The true test? Are you gaining value at every meeting? If not you may need to open up more.*



# ROLES

The success of your peer circle will take a team effort.

Choose assigned roles at your first meeting and stick to them for the first year. Change roles on an annual basis to ensure fresh perspectives.

TAKEAWAY: YOU'VE GOT THIS

# ROLES AND ASSIGNMENTS

## Leader

- Keep meetings and attendees on track and on schedule
- Call a topic to a close when necessary to move on
- Leader can be the same person every meeting, or switched. But ensure someone is leading

## Secretary

- Take meeting notes w/ action steps for each member
- Email out after meeting.
- Recap in next meeting to check in on goals and action step accomplishments

## Invite Owner

- Owns the monthly calendar invitation
- Updates location
- Follows up w/ those not responsive to insure attendance

## Treasurer

- Collect donations from members for food and snacks (if necessary - depends on meeting space)
- Recommend \$5/person per meeting and keep track

# CHANGE HAPPENS

If a member of your peer circle would like to step down from her role, that's fine. Simply reassign.

If someone is not performing their role to the group's satisfaction, make it a topic at your next meeting and gain a commitment to change or reassign the role.

Also, new members may be assigned to your circle as your chapter grows.

# MEETINGS

This meeting agenda is a tested approach ensuring you all gain the most from your time.

# MEETING AGENDA

MEET ONCE A MONTH FOR 2.5 HOURS. YOUR GROUP CAN CHOOSE THE BEST TIME OF DAY - MORNING OR EVENINGS. STICK WITH THE SAME DATE EVERY MONTH, DO NOT ATTEMPT COORDINATING SCHEDULES EVERY MONTH. FOR EX: MEET THE 3RD TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

:10 Settle in

Everyone get settled and comfortable.

:10-:50 Peer Updates

How have you all been since the last meeting? Each peer rate her business and personal life on a scale of 1-10. One being the worst and 10 being the absolute best. (Secretary write their scores down on a sheet of paper or white board).

:50-1:00 Decision Time

You have 1.5 hours left in your meeting. Of the members who just gave updates, who has the most pressing challenge or Ask? Make a group decision on which Asks you will spend the remainder of the meeting processing.

1:00-2:15 Ask & Give Exchange

Spend 15 minutes on each Ask. To start, spend 5 minutes asking her questions. *Questions only! No statements or conclusions.* Then spend 10 minutes providing possible solutions + recommendations. (Secretary take notes of suggestions). Circle Leader will close it up and move on to the next Ask.

2:15-2:30 Close

Say good-bye and take care of any housekeeping items to plan for your next meeting.

# ASKS + GIVES

Here are examples of Asks in the context of a Peer Circle.  
The Gives will be your recommended solutions.

- I need to improve my presentation skills to get my next promotion. What resources should I use?
- I have an employee on my team who is seriously underperforming. What can I do to turn it around?
- My team is struggling to really offer a new service and to do it well. What steps should we take?
- I'm nervous about asking for a raise, but I haven't had one in two years. What's the best way to go about this?
- I love my job, but I feel like my manager doesn't love me. How can I improve our relationship?

# TIPS

- **Use your judgement as a group.** If one of you has an especially urgent or significant issue that can't be solved in 15 minutes, create a **power circle** and stay after or choose another time to meet w/ 2-3 of you.
- **Try your best to stick to the 15 minutes**, but don't stress if you go over. Just keep in mind that going over will limit your group's time to process other Asks.
- **Alcohol should be limited or prohibited.** Make a group decision on what fits best. But clear, fresh minds are best.
- **Rotate meetings at your workplaces each month.** Or, if you must choose a public venue, choose a private room not a restaurant or coffee shop. We love our local library meeting spaces!
- Use HQ for any issues or questions. We're here to help!



# QUESTIONS ARE A SIGN OF STRENGTH.

Are we really the first women in digital hosting peer circles?

Natural peer circles are all around us and many of you may have your go to professional circles of colleagues, but, yes, this is the first time Women in Digital has tested Peer Circles en masse. We piloted the concept in Columbus and have high hopes for this model. Please let us know if you have any questions, suggestions or issues that may arise.

WE'RE HERE  
FOR YA.

[info@womenin.digital](mailto:info@womenin.digital)

Email us if you have any peer circle issues  
not addressed in this deck.