



FPSA Mentor Circle



FPSA
MENTOR
CIRCLE

Welcome to the FPSA Mentor Circle Program!

This guide for the FPSA Mentor Circle provides program information and respective responsibilities for our Mentors and Mentees.

A Mentor Circle is a small group of professionals that meet together on a regular basis for an agreed upon length of time in an interactive virtual forum.

Ground Rules that lead to Mentor Circle success

- **Commitment to attendance:** Members must make a strong commitment to attend every session. Continuity is important. An individual's inability to attend affects everyone in the Circle.
- **Confidentiality:** What is said during a session is confidential and is intended to stay within the Circle. This is necessary so everyone can share openly and honestly. In order to do so, we must trust everyone in the Circle. Good judgment should still be used when sharing confidential information and details with the Circle.
- **Rapport within the Circle:** The success of a Circle is highly dependent on openness, honesty, and sharing by ALL members. Getting to know each other and choosing non-threatening, but personal and insightful, topics in the beginning will be key.
- **Appreciate:** The mix of personalities and talents within the group is beneficial. Individuals will have different views but should understand that there is something to be gained from everyone.

Expectations

- Business and personal needs arise, but participants are expected to schedule around Mentor Circle meetings when possible.
- Members who do not regularly attend will be asked to leave the Mentor Circle so that another member may join in order to benefit as many participants as possible.
- Members are expected to actively participate in Individual/Group sessions.
- During Group Sessions, members must be careful not to dominate the conversation so that everyone can be heard.
- Members must treat information shared and discussed in the Mentor Circle as confidential.
- Members should make an effort to form relationships with other members in the Circle, not just the mentor.

- Topics shall be generated within the Circle at the first meeting. For group sessions, the responsibility for kicking off the conversation will be rotated around the Circle from meeting to meeting.

A few tips...

- **Listen.** Good mentors and mentees listen hard. They hear not only what is said, but also to the underlying feelings, concerns and worries. Be prepared to check the accuracy of what you think is being said with statements like, “What I’m hearing is...”, or “can you clarify....”
- **Talk from your own experience.** When they can offer insight share your own views and opinions - talk about your own (good and bad) experiences. Be open about things you have learned over the years.
- **Have a sense of humor.** People can often be overwhelmed with worry, stress or concern about how things are going. Bring some perspective to this through your own experience and humor.
- **Respect the time.** Circle members have many commitments to others and projects they are a part of. Be on time for your meetings and respect both start and end times.
- **Show appreciation.** Let your Circle know if you are finding the discussions helpful. Just a few words of appreciation will be valued.
- **Create opportunities for you.** Your Circle is there to help, encourage and support you. It’s up to you to leverage their knowledge and experiences to facilitate your growth. You own your future!

Group Program Outline

Prior to the initial session, the Mentor Lead will ask Mentees for their top 5-6 topics from the list below, or any other topic the Mentee would like to discuss. The Mentor Lead presents all selected topics in the initial session and ask Mentees to select which topic they would like to research and present at one of the future scheduled sessions.

The Mentee is responsible for sending out any research articles or prep work pertaining to the topic a few days prior to their facilitated session to enable all Mentees to read through the material and be prepared for the discussion. The Mentee will need to prepare their discussion questions and facilitate the session with assistance from the Mentor Lead as needed. The Mentor Lead will talk with the Mentees prior to their facilitated session to ensure they are prepared.

This approach provides skill development for Mentees in how to facilitate meetings, research material, meeting preparation, presentation skills and confidence building.

Potential Discussion Topics/Growth Areas

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| > Analysis | > Leading Others |
| > Communication Styles | > Negotiation |
| > Community Involvement | > Networking |
| > Courageous Conversations | > Presentation Skills |
| > Cultural Differences | > Problem Solving |
| > Decision Making | > Professional Certifications |
| > Feedback (Giving & Receiving) | > Project Management |
| > Gender Differences | > Relationship Mgmt/Building Relationships |
| > Generational Differences | > Roadblocks/How to Remove Them |
| > Career Development/Planning | > Strategy |
| > Change Management | > Succession Planning |
| > Conducting Effective and Efficient Meetings | > Team Building |
| > Conflict Management | > Time Management |
| > Continuing Education | > Vision |
| > Influencing Others | > Work/Life Balance |
| > Innovation | |

Mentor Lead Guidelines

First Meeting Guidelines Recommended for the Mentor

Your initial meeting will set the stage for the rest of your Mentoring Circle duration. There are several things you should do to get started. Prior to the first meeting all participants will fill out a brief bio (Name, employer, position with a description of what this entails, how long with current employer, city/state where you live now), including a photo that will be shared with the group.

Lay the Groundwork

Get to know each other

- Do a quick icebreaker
- Everyone introduces themselves with a brief recap of your bio; answers a fun question (i.e. favorite movie), personal hobbies/interests/family and what they hope to get out of Mentoring Circle
- Set schedule for Mentee Topic Leaders and Meeting Coordinators (will take attendance and notes for the session).

Meeting logistics

- How frequently will we connect? For how long? Typically, sessions are every 4-6 weeks for 60-90 minutes, meeting at least 6 times. Schedule all sessions on your first call or schedule each session at the conclusion of the current one.
- How will we connect (conference calls, Skype/video conferencing)?
 - Scheduling: Mentor Lead will set up each meeting time & invite including conference dial-in information.
 - Take attendance at each call & verify the topic for the next meeting (the topic leader may want to meet with the mentor briefly prior to the next meeting to ensure alignment on the topic)
 - Ensuring another member does Coordinator duties if the main Coordinator is absent
- Session recap (Mentor Lead/Coordinator): Review notes and distribute after meeting
- Added bonus - Meet the other circle members if business travel takes you to their or joint location.

Mentoring topics (see above list of recommendations)

- Mentor Lead selects the top 8-10 topics from the recommendations provided by the Mentees and asks Mentees to select their topic to present and sets up schedule.
- Mentor Lead meets with Mentee prior to their session to coach them through the process, open ended questions, engaging the group, etc

Assess success

- How will we measure our progress/success?
- What are some obstacles we face in achieving these objectives?
Program survey will be conducted for feedback at end of year

Ongoing session facilitation tips:

- The Mentee is responsible for facilitating their topic. Mentor Lead needs to be prepared to assist if needed to ensure all Mentees are engaged. Rotate responses to questions to encourage full participation.
- Begin each session with a “roundtable” update. Ask each Mentee to provide one work update and one personal update. This helps to get the group warmed up by each having a chance to talk and a means to get to know each other more.
- Before the selected topic is discussed, ask the group if they had any related experiences or opportunity to leverage the learnings from the last session to help reinforce the learnings.
- At the end of each session, let the group know you’ll be asking for them to share these learnings at the next session to prepare them.
- Leader sends reminder to facilitator 1-2 weeks prior to each meeting and offers assistance. Can send/request questions to consider in advance with the articles.

- Reserve 5-10 minutes at the end of each meeting to ask what the group should keep/stop doing next time, decide on improvements and course corrections for next meeting
- For one session, instead of any one topic, ask each Mentee to bring one current challenge to share with the group and get ideas/feedback.

FPSA Professional Development Resource Center

The FPSA Professional Development Resource Center contains various educational resources that can also be leveraged for Mentor Circle discussion topics.

<https://www.fpsa.org/fpsa-womens-alliance/professionaldevelopment/>

You can find Industry Resources at <https://www.fpsa.org/resources/>

- Past WAN Webinars
- Past general and area specific FPSA Webinars
- Trend Studies
- Economics Newsletter
- Member White Papers
- Buyers Guide
- Process Expo Resources
- Field Industry Training (FIT) – Training and Certification
- Food Industry Executive - an online publication focusing on trends, technology, and the future of the food industry.

Thank you for being a valued FPSA member. We hope you find your Mentor Circle experience to be productive and rewarding!