



Peer Mentoring Circles: Mutual Support for Social Enterprise

A peer mentoring circle is a consistent group of people who commit to coming together regularly to provide mutual support around a shared interest.

Forming a peer mentoring circle in your local area for aspiring and active social entrepreneurs is another way to increase the success of your social enterprise and achieve social impact. And peer mentoring circles have other benefits too, such as building relationships and community.

Forming a social enterprise peer mentoring circle can be grassroots, meaning a single social entrepreneur with initiative can make it happen in your community. Outside support is not required and the organic formation of a peer mentoring circle may increase its chance of long-term success.

The start-up can be very simple and the outcomes vast. Peer circles build relationships, share experiences and provide opportunities for growth of the entrepreneur and the social enterprise.

Top Tips for Success:

- A Champion is required to initiate the formation of a peer circle and to keep it going
- The members need to be committed
- Having a shared interest and vision for the circle keeps members engaged
- An ideal size is between 5 – 8
- Members who 'click', the chemistry is right
- Keep decision-making open and democratic
- Agree on the basics: time/place for regular meetings; general format; respectful communication
- Informal and committed is a great combination

Things for Consideration for a Social Enterprise Peer Mentoring Circle

- Entrepreneurs at different stages of business in different sectors
- Supporters of social enterprise with relevant skills and expertise to share
- Format could include informal go-around followed by exploring a specific area of entrepreneurial interest to the group
- Invite specialists for mini-workshops

A Peer Circle Inception Story

by Maureen Strickland, Social Enterprise Development Specialist, SEE

I mentioned the idea of peer circles to a friend of mine in the spring of 2017. She became the champion of this idea and organized the first meeting in June 2017. We have been a consistent group of 7 ever since, meeting at her house once a month for an informal lunch potluck followed by a catch up and then exploring an area of interest that each of us leads on a rotating basis. Our members include multiple generations and areas of expertise with our shared interest being loosely around sustainability and empowerment. At the end of each meeting we discuss the area of focus for the next month and who will lead it. It started with the seed of an idea, nurtured by a champion and we continue to reap the benefits 18 months later.

Getting Started is Easy

- ✓ **Be the Champion**
- ✓ **Reach Out**
- ✓ **Hold your first meeting**
- ✓ **Decide on some key parameters**
- ✓ **Meet again! And again!**
- ✓ **Reap the benefits**

For additional information please watch the short Peer Mentoring Circle Webinar at:
www.seethechange.ca

If you do form a social enterprise peer mentoring circle we would love to hear from you at:
info@seethechange.ca

