

Establishing Your Mastermind Alliance

by Andrea Richards Scott

When you involve other people in your plans, you have instant access to resources, talent, skills and knowledge. You can leverage the experiences and intelligence of others. The combination of two or more people working on a common cause improves the likelihood of success.

The Purpose of the Master Mind Alliance

A master mind alliance encourages brainstorming, sharing of ideas, and allows the individuals to gain information from other people's experiences. When group members share their successes as well as their failures they allow other members to gain valuable insight. A master mind alliance can be formed to go after a single goal and get greater results from coordinated efforts or it can be used to encourage each member to achieve individual goals. The alliance provides encouragement, feedback and insight that can be used to "fast-track" goal achievement.

Through interacting with individuals in a group setting, you are able to get a bigger picture of the world around you. Working with others in a master mind alliance not only allows you to gain valuable insight, but a different perspective and exposure to new approaches. Joining with others in a group that shares common interests provides you with the encouragement to stay on track, keeps you up to date with changes that can affect you, and alerts you to new opportunities.

When you create an effective master mind alliance, you get the benefit of a confidential environment where ideas can be exchanged. The group will provide an outlet for creative problem solving, skill development and personal growth. The members of your alliance can provide advice and support when you face tough decisions. In addition, being part of an alliance allows you to have accountability partners who will ensure that you follow through on your commitments. You are able to achieve more with the group than you would be able to do by yourself.

Instructions for starting your master mind alliance

- 1. Find people who are interested in joining your group.** Think about the qualities and characteristics that you'd like to have in your group. You'll have to be patient when building your group. It is best to have the right chemistry and balance among group members. You want to choose individuals who will help the group to flourish by being caring, sharing and supportive. Consider this a major life decision, the choices you make will dictate the group dynamics and productivity.
- 2. Make a list of people that you would like to be part of the alliance.** They should share your ambitions, beliefs, philosophies and values. Your goal is to select from your peer-group. A healthy alliance consists of between 6 and 12 individuals; any less and you have limited input and insight, any more and the group becomes impersonal and hard to manage. Take into account schedules, unanticipated emergencies or other conflicts.

At any given time a few people are likely to be overcommitted. A larger alliance ensures that you'll have enough participants for a lively conversation.

You can find group members in various places such as:

- Colleagues at work
- Members of your industry or professional associations
- Family, friends and neighbors
- Church members and other civic organizations

- 3. Contact each person on your list and tell them about the master mind alliance that you are forming.** Find out their interest in participating in a group designed to support individual and collective achievement.
- 4. Establish first meeting.** During this meeting you will want to do a number of things to build a solid foundation for your alliance:
 - Determine how frequently you will meet.* Once a week or once every couple of weeks is a good benchmark; any less and you lose momentum, any more and it gets to be too burdensome. Pick a standing

date and time so that everyone is clear about the meeting logistics.

b. *Choose where you will meet.*

You can meet at alliance members' homes, libraries, community centers, coffee shops, churches, restaurants anywhere that you will be uninterrupted for the duration of the meeting. If you choose to meet at the same place and at the same time, members can plan their schedules more effectively.

c. *Select a group leader/facilitator.*

This responsibility can be rotated and assigned at the first meeting or the same person can do it for a period of time before handing it off to someone else. I prefer the latter method because it helps to develop leadership skills. The facilitator will coordinate the meeting agenda, refreshments and communication. In addition, they will ensure that the meeting starts and stops on time, maintain order, lead the group through the agenda, and encourage dialogue.

d. *Develop accountability agreement to be signed by all members.* This agreement sets the ground rules and expectations. It discusses things like punctuality; start and stop time of the

meetings; consistency of participation; how costs will be handled; what you will do about guests, pets, children; how new members are added to the alliance; ground rules for handling conflict and/or dismissal of an alliance member. It is your opportunity to make sure that all alliance members have a common understanding about how the alliance operates, so make sure you address the various situations that may come up in the future. Also determine how the agreement will be amended to account for things you didn't consider.

e. Come up with a shared mission statement for the group

f. Discuss roles and responsibilities of group members.

g. Set the first goal (collective or individual) that you will be discussing and tracking at the next meeting.

When creating your alliance, consider the following:

Have the alliance choose a name for the group. This will help them to have something specific to identify with.

Make sure that each participant understands the group's purpose. You may

want to have a very easy or basic theme or motto that explains your purpose.

- Make sure that confidentiality is one of your highest values and that everyone is on board. Nothing will ruin a group faster than lack of trust.
- Instill a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.
- Create a diverse group.* Make sure that individual group members have different backgrounds; complimentary skills, experiences and talents. Diverse backgrounds and perspectives actually enhance the group dynamics.
- Be picky about who you invite into the group.* You are not looking for quantity, you're looking for quality.
- Look for unique ways to get the group to bond.* Shared experiences such as going to outings, sharing articles or other information or touching bases with each other outside of meeting times helps to develop strong bonds.
- Make sure that you get agreement.* Ensure that everyone is on the same page when you are working towards a common goal. Don't make the assumption that just because no one says anything that everything is okay. Everyone should buy in to the purpose and the goal that the group is working toward. Make sure that in setting the goal, you discuss it, negotiate compromises (give-and-take),

and settle on the outcome with everyone's buy-in.

- Enjoy yourself.* If the group is boring or becomes a chore, people will not want to participate. Find ways to make this the highlight of the week and not just another obligation.

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Some items to consider:

- Each member must attend meeting so that progress can be made on the stated goal(s)
- There has to be an agreement for confidentiality. People must feel comfortable sharing information within the group.
- Commitment to focus, listen and support group members and not be distracted by things going on outside of the group (i.e. at home or work)
- What happens if a person misses several meetings in a row?
- How are drop-ins or people who only come occasionally handled?