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Spotlight

Top 10 Reasons to Join a CEO Peer Group

A great way to become a better leader -- fast.

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Serving as the leader or CEO of an organization of any size can be a difficult and lonely job. Fortunately, there are many tools available to help you become a better leader—including things like going back to school to get your MBA, reading books, and, of course, learning on the job.

But there is also another way to accelerate your learning curve on your way to becoming a better leader: by joining a CEO peer group.

A CEO peer group is a made up of a group of CEOs, ideally who run companies of similar sizes and complexity, that meet regularly to work through business-related issues. These groups are either facilitated by member of the group or by an outside professional who has deep business expertise.

Peer groups are different than networking groups, which are informal meetings typically sponsored by a local business or organization. What makes a peer group different, especially the best ones, is that you have to pay to join one—especially one that is facilitated by a professional. The smaller and more specialized the peer group is, and the more experienced its facilitator, the more expensive it can be.

But given all the other things you could invest your time and money in, why would you want to join one of these groups? Here are 10 reasons why it's worth joining a CEO peer group.

- 1. Accountability.** It's hard to be held accountable when you're running your own company. And research proves that we perform better when we are measured and held accountable. Most of us in smaller companies don't have an effective board or someone to motivate you to increase your performance. A peer group can serve this role for you.
- 2. Fast-tracked Learning.** We all know the value of on-the-job learning. But one of the best values of joining a CEO peer group is that you get to learn from 8 or 9 other CEOs as they work through the issues in running their businesses. This multi-tracked experience will only help accelerate the pace of your own understanding of running a business effectively.
- 3. Been There; Done That.** There's an old saying that wisdom comes from making mistakes. No matter what challenges or opportunities you may be facing in your business, someone else has seen it before—especially if the other members of your group run companies similarly sized to yours. That means that by listening and learning from them, you can avoid making the errors they did while increasing the chance that you will make the most of the opportunities ahead of you.
- 4. Look Ahead.** The beauty of joining a peer group is that by listening to your peers, you will see them dealing with problems and opportunities that your business has yet to encounter. It's like looking into the future. The value of this is that when you get to that point in your own business, you will know what to look for because you can lean on the knowledge you learned from how your peers dealt with that same issue.





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Top 10 Reasons to Join a CEO Peer Group, continued

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5. A Safe Zone. When you're a CEO, it can be difficult or impossible to admit to your management team or board that you don't know something or that you made a mistake because everyone is counting on you. But a peer group is a safe zone, where you get the chance to talk things through in a confidential way where you don't have to look smart all the time.

6. Motivation. We all remember those times in college when we had a paper due and how we rallied at the last minute with incredible energy and focus to get it done by the due date. A similar thing happens when you know you have a peer group meeting coming up and you haven't yet dealt with an issue you discussed in your prior meeting. You will tackle things you **might have been avoiding because you know the group will hold you accountable. It forces you to act.**

7. Emotional Support. Being CEO is a lonely job and sometimes it helps being around people who understand what you are going through. It can be incredibly important to have a place where you can get the emotional support you need to help refill your tank. A peer group can provide that.

8. Work On The Business—Rather Than In It. It can be extremely difficult to keep your eye on the big picture of your business. It's so easy to get sucked into the day-to-day challenges and tasks. But with a peer group, it gives you the chance to disconnect for a while by attending an offsite event—or even traveling somewhere—and change your mindset. It gives you the chance to focus on how to improve your business by looking to the future and the long-term growth of your business. That's especially true if your peer group has an experienced facilitator who can help guide you to tackling the issues that will drive the greatest economic impact in your business—even if you have been avoiding them.

9. Network Value. There is incredible value created when you put a group of CEOs together in terms of the shared connections you can tap into. No matter what kind of resource you might need access to—from a recruiter or lawyer to a wealth manager—chances are your peer network will know who to put you in touch with.

10. Scaling. One of if not the most challenging aspect of running a business is scaling: which is learning how to grow the business by getting more out of your people and resources by employing better systems and methodologies. A peer group gives you insider access to insights learned from other business leaders that you can go to school on and use for your own benefit. As a result, you will be able to scale your business faster and more effectively than you could have ever hoped to do on your own.

So if you haven't joined a CEO peer group, I'd urge you to think about these 10 reasons why you should—today. You and your business will grow exponentially as a result.

