



together we thrive

November, 2011

Be Local Northern Colorado Peer Advisory Group

Objective:

Small businesses today operate in a complex environment. To achieve true success, we need business support, entrepreneurial advice and the best business ideas.

The objective of the **Be Local NC Peer Advisory Groups** is to offer mutual support and guidance on a local level with fellow businesspeople. The groups will be comprised of 6-8 local business owners who will share their issues, solutions and experiences in a confidential manner designed to help each other to grow their businesses.

Each month, the **Peer Advisory Group** will meet in one members' place of business. These "think-tank" meetings provide you the opportunity to share insights and thoughts, learn about ideas for small business success and receive one-on-one small business support from people who understand the unique perspective of an owner – because they are owners. They are people like you who have made mistakes and can offer business advice and the best business ideas – because they learned first-hand through trial and error. They intuitively know how you feel running your business – and they can provide the emotional and small business support you need.

Structure of the Meetings

Each **Be Local Peer Advisory Group** will be comprised of a small number of local business owner members, who run non-competing businesses. Each month, members meet to share their business expertise, solve business challenges, and help each other seize new opportunities to achieve enhanced profitable growth and success.

Each monthly meeting will be scheduled for 3-4 hours to discuss business concerns. Each group member will have a chance to "host" one of the monthly meetings to discuss topics that are related to their business and to request assistance and advice from the other group members. The "host" member will be responsible for the following:

- Finding a meeting place for the event
- Supplying of meals, snacks, and beverages for the event
- Communicating to the other group members at least 5 business days in advance a short write-up of the issues they want to address at the meeting

Each group member will come to the meeting prepared to help the "host" work on their business issues via constructive assistance and ideas. They will come prepared with the following:

- Questions that will assist the group to help the "host" work clarify issues
- Personal experiences that will show effective ways to work through the issues
- References to other professionals and resources that may help the "host" company with finding resolutions to their issues

Once the group has met once or twice, the first 30-45 minutes of the meeting should be reserved for a **check-in** by members who have already hosted. This is an opportunity for those members to say something about how they may have acted on recommendations made to them by the group. This check-in can also function as an **accountability structure**: if you make a commitment to do something, having to report in to the group may help you take action that otherwise you may be tempted to put off.

In addition, at each meeting one group member will serve as **facilitator**, whose job is primarily to be sure the discussion stays on track, that the meeting format is followed, and that everyone has a chance to be heard.

Expectations

In order for the Peer Advisory Group meetings to be effective, each member is expected to make the following commitments:

- To attend all meetings consistently, unless prevented by a genuine emergency.
- To notify group members in advance, as soon as possible, if an emergency prevents your attendance.
- To maintain complete confidentiality about the discussion at all meetings, including both information learned about other businesses and also your observations and thoughts about “how someone is doing” or other subjective judgments. The purpose of the confidentiality agreement is to foster real trust between the members of the group, so that discussion may be carried out in enough depth to address real issues.
- To respect other group members and offer your advice and observations without negative judgments or disapproval.

Group of this kind can be highly effective, **provided that** members make the substantial commitment of time and effort that’s needed. Accordingly, they are not suited to everyone’s needs and schedule. Please give careful consideration to whether this sort of opportunity is one you can truly commit to.

Application

The program in 2011 was, frankly, an experiment. We had two groups: one succeeded well, and most members found it extremely helpful. The second group did not succeed as well, apparently because there was not consistent attendance and participation.

There is no financial cost – Be Local NC is providing this opportunity to our member businesses for free.

But there is a significant cost in terms of the time and effort needed from each group member to make it work.

If you would like to be a member of the Be Local Peer Advisory Group program, go to BeLocalNC.org > For Businesses > Peer Advisory Group

Application deadline has been extended to January 15, 2012. The kick-off meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24, 8-9:30 AM (location TBA)..

The length of the group’s life is up to members: If there are 8 members and you agree to meet once a month, that’s 8 months. You may certainly choose to meet more frequently.