



# Ideal PaC Meeting Agenda and Structure

*This article will explain the structure (the art) behind putting your mastermind group agenda together and will illustrate the strategy (science) along with it.*

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The art and science of moderating a meeting are like a yin and yang—two complementary principles whose interaction is thought to maintain the harmony of the universe and influence everything within it. One doesn't exist alone but both simultaneously together.

The science makes for an extraordinary experience, as it's the why behind the structure. We would all agree that when we know the why behind an action, we learn better and retain and execute better. It's motivational because you feel like you're in the know. It orients you to the theory so you can be consistent and efficient. And you'll be better equipped to handle the unexpected when it occurs.

## Agenda & Structure

For the sake of this article, I'll discuss the structure of peer group meetings. Let us begin by defining structure. It is having a methodology for accomplishing your agenda with your members. It discusses the organization and planning of a meeting.

## Group Meeting Format: Why is Having the Right Structure Important?

Because it is in the top 5 reasons a member will leave if there is no formal meeting structure. Without the proper structure, there will be chaos, a lack of direction, expectations will not be clear, and overall, it will be frustrating for everyone involved. Busy people will not tolerate meetings that waste their time or don't add value. Additionally, they will not waste time in meetings if the right people are absent. As discussed earlier, this is also why having the right peers together is critical to success.

*"The quality of your life is a direct reflection of the expectations of your peer group.  
Choose your peers wisely" - Tony Robbins*



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Your structure will set the stage for the type of meeting you will have. For example: if you are big on [accountability](#), your structure has to have trigger points for accountability. If education is critical to your audience, then how you plan continuous learning or reflection for learning will be a focal point of the structure. If insights and [problem-solving](#) are the primary purposes, then a format to solve problems will be essential.

### The Consequences of No Structure

From a moderator's perspective, if a clear structure is lacking, there won't be a path to follow for the expected outcomes. How will you know you are on the right track for your members' expected results? Peer group meetings are centered around results and insights. They are very intentional. Not wishy-washy outcomes, tangible outcomes.

Productivity is frequently a talked-about subject. Leaders are trying to figure out how to be more productive so that they can do more. Being a peer group member, your peer group should increase productivity for the leader because it will save them time having 10+ smart, unbiased peers around the table vs. just their head. This only happens if there is structure.

#### REAL EXAMPLE

*CEO Martha had a dissatisfying experience as a member of a competing peer group was referred to me. I called her to learn why she was considering leaving her group. Why did she want to speak with me? When I posed the question to her, a lengthy hesitation followed, along with some apparent struggle as she attempted to find the best way to word her response. Finally, she said, "The only way I know to explain this to you, Tina, is that I'm looking for a wow experience."*

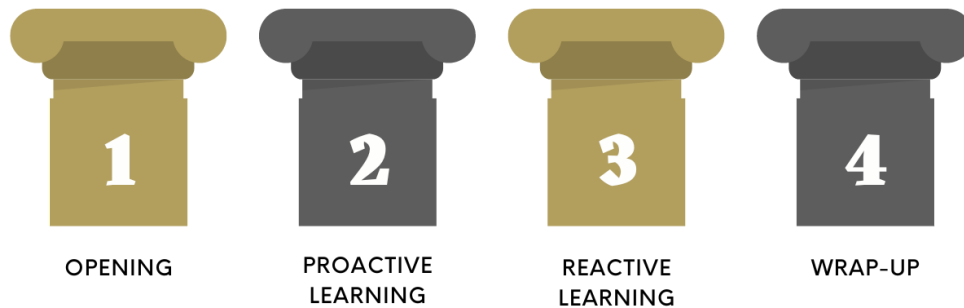
*Without asking her definition of a "wow experience," I got it. I immediately understood what she meant. "What you're saying is that you want to walk out of a meeting and have gained so much value that you say, 'That was worth my time today. Of all the other things I could have done, this was the best use of my time.'"*

*Martha didn't need an experience that knocked her socks off, but she did want to leave her meetings convinced that the time spent was worthwhile.*

Martha became a member of one of my councils and remained one for years. She attributes her rise in satisfaction to the structure of the meetings she attended. The structure is the only way to ensure that members like Martha walk away with valuable insights every time. Without a process, it's always a gamble.



## 4 Key Pillars of the Meeting Structure



### 1 PAC AGENDA PILLAR #1: THE OPENING

The opening of a meeting sets the tone of the whole meeting experience.

For example:

- a dynamic opening sets the tone for a dynamic meeting
- a late opening sets the tone of being behind already, a lackadaisical approach
- an upbeat opening means an upbeat meeting can be expected
- an unorganized opening translates to an unorganized meeting is on the way

While the opening does not automatically mean that is how the meeting will go, it is about perception and setting the tone. That is what we are talking about here. Setting the tone. Set the pace. Set the expectation and control perception.

### 5 Keys to the opening

1. **Set up:** this creates the tone for the meeting and gets everyone settled. For example, how the meeting room is set up, if virtual, then your background is essential, etc.
2. **Announcements:** take care of housekeeping items upfront, such as next month's meeting logistics, the status of missing members that month, upcoming events, etc.
3. **MyTransition™:** transition the mindset of the participants into the purpose of the meeting, so they become present as soon as possible



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4. **Accountability:** get updates from the members in a controlled way by asking about the status of the commitments they made in the previous meeting. Ask for updates from those that processed COPIs (Challenges, Opportunities, Problems, or Ideas) last meeting.
5. **COPIs:** discover and prioritize COPIs that will be processed that day.

### More about MyTransition™

During years of moderating meetings, I've observed that CEOs have sometimes taken twenty, thirty, or even sixty minutes to settle in. Some remained in tactical mode addressing their daily responsibilities, putting out last-minute fires, and even taking one last phone call. Even twenty minutes is too much time to waste within a four-hour meeting. The transition time had to be shortened. It's analogous to going on vacation. How many days does it take before you assume the vacation mindset? Suddenly you only have a few days left. How much better could your experience be if you were in vacation mode on day one?

I've learned that quick adoption of the right mindset positively correlates to a member's overall meeting experience. I call this transition MyTransition™. Members use it to transition quickly from their tactical mindset to a more strategic one they work on rather than in the business. Changing perspectives is difficult when your mind is still on business as usual. CEOs go through a brief, but effective and intentional, exercise before each meeting that transitions them from their roles in their businesses to a strategic one that gives them a quick analysis and dashboard of where they currently are in their business.

Here's how.

**First Question:** *Describe your mindset with one or two words.*

Why? This causes the member to think specifically about how they are feeling or thinking at that moment. It causes them to take stock of what is going on with them and translate it into a few words. You want to know the mindset of your members right out of the gate so you can be prepared for how they are showing up to the meeting and will act during the meeting. Coincidentally, their answers will tell you, as the moderator, what they need that day from the meeting.

A second tactic is to ask a question directly related to the group.

Why? To reveal their answers on a topic that gives insight into their business that you might not otherwise get. This question can also be fun and silly to pose an opportunity for bonding.



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How do you choose the question to ask? Think about what question will give information that the member can use at that moment. For example, if, generally speaking, most of the members are having a hard time retaining talent, you might ask any one of the following relevant questions:

- *What is your best retention tool for employees?*
- *What tactics do you use to create happy, productive employees?*
- *How do you know when an employee is at risk of leaving?*

By asking these questions, you not only cause the member to transition into the meeting in a more profound way but now information is shared among the members that create value immediately from attending the meeting. Second, it causes the member to analyze their practices of how well they are retaining talent and where there might be room for improvement.

## 2 PAC AGENDA PILLAR #2: PROACTIVE LEARNING

A part of your meeting should contain a segment called proactive learning. Proactive learning is where the member gains insights directly related to their business at the right time. Not insights or ideas that are not relevant. Proactive learning uncovers areas in the business they are blinded to. Areas they hadn't thought had opportunities or issues until it was brought to their attention.

How do you bring this to their attention? Have a planned time, usually once a year, when each member presents on the business. So once a month, you will have a member present their strategic plan or an overview of the business. Sometimes this is called a Member Spotlight, but we call it Perspective Report™, their perspective on the business.

### **Speakers or No Speakers?**

Peer advisory meetings should always be geared toward the members, their businesses, and their goals and challenges. Because of possible unnecessary distractions, you must be very careful when inviting guest speakers to meetings. Finding one speaker whose words are relevant and meaningful to every member is rarely easy.

Generally, speakers present a concept or idea trending in the business world. That message rarely relates to an individual business's strategy, culture, or organizational structure at that moment. Usually, a speaker presents a one-size-fits-all idea of the day that a member should adapt to his or her business. More often than not, trendy messages and ideas set back the strategic process instead of moving it forward.



## 3 PAC AGENDA PILLAR #3: REACTIVE LEARNING USING COPI

In each peer advisory meeting, members can present their unique challenges, opportunities, problems, and ideas, which I shorten to COPI. It's a thoughtful process that helps members move beyond obstacles and explore the viability of business opportunities. It is always reactive as it's the member deciding their COPI. It is always something going on that they need help with or to check their thinking on, i.e., reactive learning.

Within the meeting, the members follow a process as they present a COPI. This is an essential process to embrace as a moderator if you want your members to get the best insights possible. Regardless of the topic, members must clearly present and reveal why it's important to them. They also need to reveal what they've done in the past, what they are considering doing, and what they want their peers to address.

It's one way to ensure all members understand the issue and what is being asked of them. It requires thought, consideration, and preparation on the member's part, but it helps to define their needs, which is necessary for gaining the desired type of insights from their peers. The process gives the member clarity about his or her situation. Members learn that the challenge or opportunity is sometimes not what they initially perceived. A member should plan and consider his or her issue for the best results before the meeting.

The COPI process is all about structure, which prevents valuable time from being wasted. Members should spend 20 percent of their time talking and 80 percent listening. Valuable meeting time should not be wasted because a member is unsure what he or she wants from his or her peers. The other members should not waste time asking questions to understand the issue. That is why it is helpful for a member to think beforehand about their COPI that day.

A highly functional peer group is well-organized. While a member is speaking or posing a question, no one should interject or ask questions. These interruptions can pull the member's presentation off course; eventually, the entire meeting can lose its structure.

Once the member has exhausted all points in his or her COPI (challenge, opportunity, problem, or idea) presentation, his or her peers ask questions for clarity. At this stage, members refrain from trying to solve the problem. Solving too early often results in poor advice given because conclusions and assumptions were made before all the data were presented. After all, questions have been asked; the members take a few moments to develop their recommendations quietly.



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Only then do the members share their thoughts. Sometimes recommendations invite further questions. That's perfectly fine: it often raises other considerations that further clarify the issue.

Once the process is complete, the member posing the question considers the feedback and whether he or she wants to use all or part of it or a combination to solve his or her problem or opportunity. They don't need to decide right then, but accountability will happen in the next meeting when they are expected to provide an update.

### 4 PAC AGENDA PILLAR #4: WRAP-UP

Just as how you open the meeting up sets the tone for the meeting, it is the same for how you close it out. How you wrap up the meeting will set the tone for how your members view the time they invested with you.

Wrap-up should contain two essential elements, gain commitment and gain value. Gaining a commitment from the members on what they want to commit to doing as an action to move forward between now and the next meeting. The objective is to allow them to state that one thing above all else to where they want to focus. It will be the one thing that means the most to them to make progress on. The one thing that will give them clarity on what to prioritize.

Capture that commitment to reference in the next meeting for accountability; we call it their unbreakable commitment. Notice the word goal is not used. Asking for a commitment is more binding than requesting a [SMART](#) goal. A commitment is more substantial and alludes to ensuring it is met and achieved. Commitments are rarely missed, but goals are. It's not unusual for leaders to change their goal as they get close to reaching it.

The last element of the Wrap-Up is very important and is done as the last action on the agenda.

Ask the members what the one thing they learned that was an "aha" for them and was the most valuable to them as their takeaway was. You ask the member what their takeaway thought is from the time they just spent in the meeting. The answer is the value they received from the meeting.

After the meeting, hearing every member's answer validates in the member's minds that it was worth the time they spent and what they learned. It solidifies why they are a member. What a powerful tool for you as a moderator to know what was considered a valuable part of the meeting and what your members thought was most valuable. It is great learning for you.

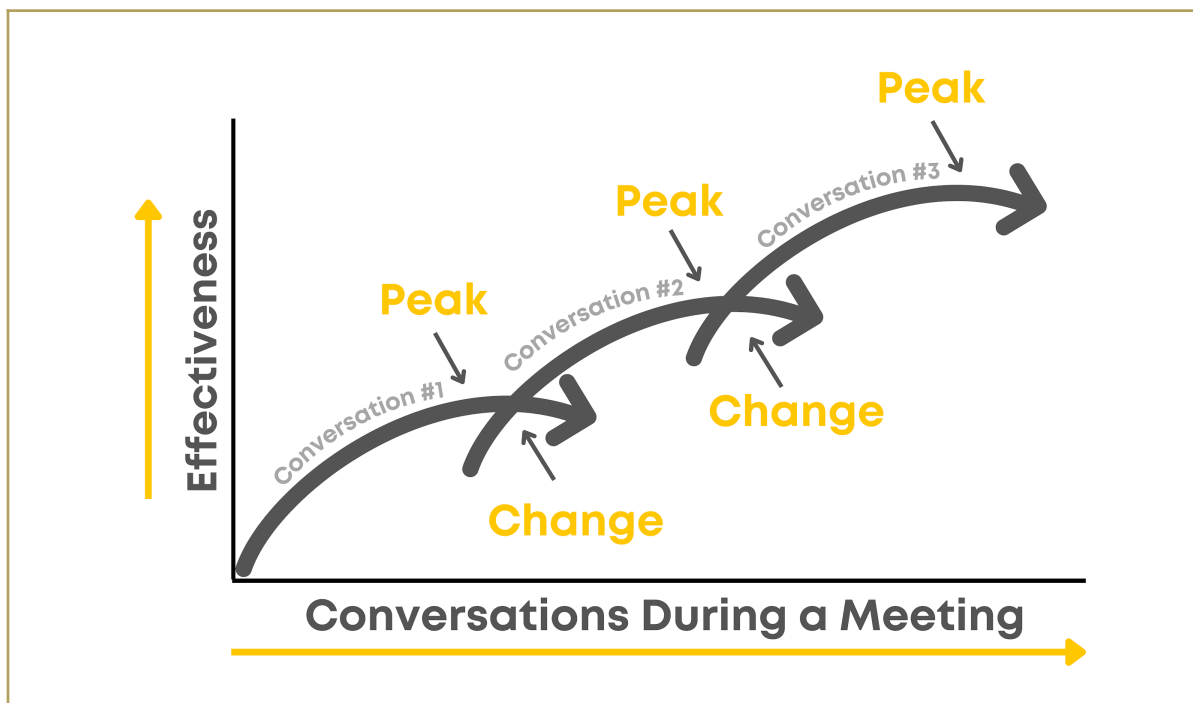


## Aligning Your Agenda with the Meeting Structure

By having an agenda and format to follow, you practically guarantee a successful meeting for you and your members.

Success comes from having a standard agenda that lets your members know what to expect during the meeting and how to behave. You will maximize your time on only the most valuable discussions versus on whatever discussions surface.

I like to say that the goal of a meeting is to constantly move from one discussion to the next as the pinnacle of the discussion begins to wane. When you pivot to the following discussion at the right time, you avoid that point of diminishing return.



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