

Use the EXPERT™ to solve your problems

In business we all have to solve challenges whatever our level and it can be useful to have an expert to help. But who are the experts and how do you know which ones to choose?

Many of the people who are expert at your business are already in your business – or it might be just you in your business. So how do you get help from outside?

One way is to start a Mastermind group. Napoleon Hill defined a Mastermind group as: 'An alliance of two or more minds blended in a spirit of perfect harmony and co-operating for the attainment of a definite purpose.'

We believe the minds don't even have to be in perfect harmony because often diversity of thought leads to better solutions.

So how do you set up a Mastermind group?

Sound out 3 or 4 other people who you think are successful in their own field, that you are comfortable working with, and who may have different ideas to yours. Block out a couple of hours, agree some ground rules about sharing ideas, confidentiality, openness and collaboration. Work on one challenge at a time and talk, listen, share and experiment with suggestions.

You may be worried about competitors who will steal your ideas but most successful businesses acknowledge that great things come from collaboration and partnerships.

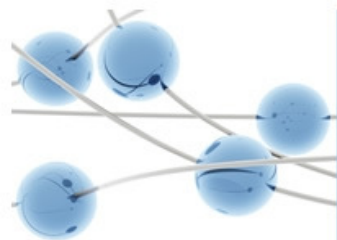
We use this concept in our 'clinic sessions' at the [Brain Friendly Learning Group](#) and have generated some novel, realistic and constructive answers for puzzles and challenges with no obvious or immediate resolution.

One of the difficulties in jointly coming up with answers can sometimes be not having a robust process for how to go about it, so we've created the **EXPERT™** process based on our experience of what works.

EXPERT™ is a mnemonic for a set of steps that you take to guide your Mastermind group through the process.

E for Elicit Issues – decide on the outcome you're looking for. Make it as concise and precise as possible as well as focusing on feeling inspired by the outcome. Don't be tempted into describing the problem in detail at this point – concentrate on what you want people to be doing, feeling, saying or the results you expect when it's achieved. Ask the rest of the group to help you clarify the outcome and then write it down so everyone can see it.

For a FREE 15-minute consultation on introducing brain friendly ideas to your business, call Stella or Ann.



X for eXpert Identification – everyone in your Mastermind group has some kind of expertise they bring, even if it's not immediately apparent how it will be applied. Expertise will range from industry specific knowledge to generic skills like listening, asking questions, or coming up with crazy, off the wall notions. Make sure everyone clearly states their expertise to the rest of the group – this will give everyone a reason to be there and is often a fantastic confidence boost as you discover you have a talent that everyone else values.

P for Probe the issue – the group asks open questions to really delve into the problem; use questions beginning with who, why, what, where, when, and how, to elicit comprehensive answers. Encourage the group to ask tough, non-critical questions. It may be you don't have all the answers at this point which is fine so long as it stimulates you to go back and find the answers later.

E for Exhibit expertise – based on the information they now have your Mastermind group of experts start to suggest solutions. Accept them all at this point rather than find reasons why they won't work. The more possible solutions you have available the more likely you are to find the right one.

Reveal more – the person with the challenge can choose to reveal any number of things at this point; which is the preferred solution, more about the challenge, other ideas that have occurred. You may choose to quickly go through parts of the process again if that will help. However, research demonstrates that sleeping on an idea really does make things become clearer, so avoid getting stuck in the process. It's far better to move on for now and if you still need ideas the next time you meet, then start the process again as you will already have moved on if you've completed the final step.

Take action – commit publicly in the group to what you are going to do to tackle the challenge and then go and do it!

Finally, take the time to thank your Mastermind group for their help and do update them on progress.

For more ideas about how to set up a Mastermind group or implement **EXPERT™**, call **Stella** at **Brain in Business™** on **01189 836 339** or **Ann** on **01380 850 192**.



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