

Virtual Mentor Circles Guide

Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Brunei Mentors for Entrepreneurs Network (BMEN) is introducing the “Virtual Mentor Circles” which is an online group mentoring programme designed to help business who are affected by the pandemic to share and discuss problems faced in a specific area of business, set goals and build competence and confidence in working individually on goals with the resources, guidance, support, and motivation of BMEN mentors.

Difference between Mentor Circles and Classroom Training

According to research, group mentoring provides a safe venue for mentees who are uncomfortable meeting one-to-one with a more experienced person. It may look similar to classroom training but group mentoring share many similarities to one-to-one mentoring:

- Each mentee can have their own unique learning objective
- The relationship that forms between mentors and mentees goes beyond that of teacher-student
- The group is a safe and confidential environment for both mentees and mentors to explore and share personal challenges
- Mentors guide rather than train
- Topics dealt with generally fall outside the realm of classroom training
- Both mentors and mentees benefit from participation

Logistics/ Event Details

Location/medium of meeting: Zoom

Duration of circle meeting: 1 - 1.5 hours per session

Commitment & Frequency of Meetings

BMEN is setting the period of a Mentor Circle to 3 months so that we can measure the impact and effectiveness of the programme. Mentors must commit to attending a meeting once a month for 3 months but are more than welcome to meet more frequently within the 3 months.

Circle Structure

Every circle will focus on a specific topic or theme related to business and consist of:

- 1 or 2 mentors,
- maximum of 5 mentees
- facilitator from BMEN.

Expectations

Mentors

- Information of the mentees will be shared prior to the meetings to help the mentors prepare in the discussions.
- As some circles may have 2 mentors, it is important for the mentors to discuss how they would like to lead the circle prior to the meetings to ensure the discussion runs smoothly.
- After the meetings, mentors are expected to provide feedback and recommendations on improving the Mentor Circle as well as how DARE could assist the businesses

Mentees

- Before the first meeting commences, Mentees must share details of their business what they would like to achieve from participating in the circle.
- Mentees are expected to provide feedback when requested by DARE

Please refer to the BMEN Handbook for other expectations when joining BMEN.

Confidentiality

All information shall be confidential and only discussed within the circles. Each person must enter with a willingness to share openly and honestly. Conversation will flow more freely if everyone is able to trust each other

Personal Commitment

Commitment to the success of the connection includes attending all meetings, preparing for the meetings, completing action items identified by the group, and actively participating in conversations. Personal commitment is needed to keep a connection sustained and beneficial for all

Good Communication

The quality of conversation and communication will determine the success of each meeting. Conversations need to be open, in depth, and inclusive in order to be beneficial. Building trust and commonality will help with communication barriers that may exist.

Meeting Flow

Below is a guideline on how a typical Mentor Circle meeting would run.

Action	Person	Description	Duration
Introduction (first meeting only)	BMEN facilitator	Everyone will give a brief introduction of their business	≈10 minutes
setting ground rules (first meeting only)	BMEN facilitator	The circle will start with the facilitator setting the ground rules. BMEN will be present to ensure timeliness and focus of the circle.	≈10 minutes

Session starts	Mentors	The mentors will give a brief introduction and talk about information shared by mentees prior to the meeting and decide what topics or areas will be discussed	≈20 mins
Group discussion	Group led by mentors	This gives an opportunity for mentees to share their challenges and other participants can take turns sharing their views and possible solutions. Mentor will share feedback and guide mentees based on experience.	≈40 minutes
Closing – key takeaways	Group led by mentors	Key takeaways from participants and next meeting	≈10 minutes

BMEN Support (Facilitation)

BMEN as the facilitator will be to support and ensure that the Mentor Circle is run smoothly and that the meetings are productive and valuable. Facilitation is used to help Mentor Circle get off to a good start and to stay focused during the early stages of the mentoring. The facilitator’s role involves introducing the group, moderating introductions, encouraging participation, ensure timeliness of the meetings and clarifying expectations. BMEN will be responsible for scheduling and coordinating meetings. BMEN will also collect feedback to ensure continuous improvement.

Presence of DARE

From time to time, DARE representatives may be present to observe and provide feedback if there are possible ways for DARE to assist in the relevant topics discussed.

Disclaimer

The information in this document is subject to change without notice and should not be construed as a commitment by Darussalam Enterprise.

Resources

- BMEN Handbook - <https://www.bruneimentors.com/about/handbook>
- How To Lead A Mentoring Circle - <https://www.transformleaders.tv/how-to-lead-a-mentoring-circle/>
- Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing – Understanding the Stages of Team Formation
- https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm
- Want To Be A Great Mentor? Here’s How - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joyceearussell/2020/01/28/so-you-want-to-be-a-great-mentor-heres-how/#1d4e9ae62569>