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### Bi-Weekly Facilitated Peer Group Sessions Propel Accountability

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## Bi-Weekly Facilitated Peer Group Sessions Propel Accountability

### Abstract

Most business plans fail. The research and evidence are overwhelming. Try a Google search on business execution or implementation and you will find hundreds of thousands or more results describing this doom. There are many reasons for this, and they include factors such as inappropriate or overly ambitious plans, and not providing a laundry list of needed resources such as experts and funding. So, what can NSRA business owners do to lessen the chance they become a statistic? Consider joining a facilitated peer group.

### Disciplines

Business

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# Bi-Weekly Facilitated Peer Group Sessions Propel Accountability

CAROL WITTMAYER, ED.D.

Most business plans fail. The research and evidence are overwhelming. Try a Google search on business execution or implementation and you will find hundreds of thousands or more results describing this doom. There are many reasons for this, and they include factors such as inappropriate or overly ambitious plans, and not providing a laundry list of needed resources such as experts and funding. So, what can NSRA business owners do to lessen the chance they become a statistic? Consider joining a facilitated peer group.

NSRA offers many valuable education opportunities for retailers. Now, one of the association's most beneficial strategies that has been in place for the last two years is now expanding to supplement the NextGen program – regular, facilitated coaching sessions for peer groups. It is a small group (6-10 peers) that meets every other week and is scheduled and noted on everyone's Outlook calendar well in advance. These meetings build trust, confidentiality and sharing among peers that have so much in common. Members are from the U.S. and Canada, and offer diverse perspectives on a variety of topics.

The coach and facilitator for the virtual, hour-long sessions with the NextGen group is Pete Mohr, a long-time NSRA member, shoe retailer, and a certified expert facilitator on motivation and

entrepreneurship. He is well versed in shoe retailing challenges and opportunities. Pete is a lifelong entrepreneur –



**Dr. Carol Wittmeyer**

usually having two businesses running at the same time. In 1994, he bought a bathroom renovation franchise that he owned through 2009. He also owned a cleaning franchise that he built and sold. In 2010 he branched out to footwear retailing with the purchase of the Shoetopia store in Fergus, Ontario. Pete currently owns two Shoetopia locations.

With his extensive background spanning almost three decades, Pete leverages his expertise to embody his overarching philosophy of “accountability” to integrate with established practices of planning, implementation, and efficacy. While NSRA conferences, seminars, and workshops offer insightful

ideas and valuable networking opportunities, the actualization of these take-aways can often become challenging, especially when the next gathering is scheduled a year later. To address this issue, peer group sessions are facilitated to enable NSRA members to sustain their progress, fostering a culture of collaboration and accountability, empowering them to fulfill their goals and elevate their businesses to greater heights.

## Session Overview

Although content for each peer group session varies, they are all based on a standard format:

**Pre-Work.** Participants complete a form (power up) ahead of time documenting what are the three prime priorities they are working on currently. Pete calls these “accelerators”, the bigger items to bring to the group. Not surprisingly, these topics are usually applicable to most of the peers.

**Biggest Wins.** This is a round-robin sharing format on what were the biggest wins since last meeting – what's working and why. NextGen peer group member Mark Wagner from Shoe Fly in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, said, “We get together and talk about the biggest wins for the business and that part of the conversation is uplifting. In a two-week period, you get caught up in the stresses. There are good things happening in business and I am lucky to be in the role I am. It's a good way to reflect.”

**What Are the Issues.** The “5P” framework that Pete has coined in his tagline, “Frustration to Freedoms” includes Promise, Product, Process, People, and Profit. Pete states that “when we align

NowGen counterparts, many of their challenges have to do with the transference of power. Pete calls this “power accountability”. In the peer group sessions, NextGens discuss transition top-

is active in NSRA, he is well-equipped to keep the conference learnings and group accountability focused into the peer group sessions.

Mark values the open dialogue adding, “I am in HR in Shoe Fly and I can open up about my problems and concerns and I know I am talking to others in independent brick-and-mortar shoe retail, and I can ask questions and get their perspective. They understand what I am going through and I also think I can help answer some of their questions. We’re all living in the same world. It’s great to get perspective on issues.

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### **A Final Thought on Accountability**

Mark said that “One of Pete’s messages is that ultimately the buck stops with us and when talking about the business, we are accountable for everything. It’s a great opportunity to be in our roles and it’s a lot of responsibility and accountability. We’re not really insulated. Ultimately if something goes awry in the business, it’s a reflection on us. Stakes are high and we need to take charge. Pete motivates us to put into practice the things we are talking about. He follows up with us. He will say, ‘Last time, you brought up an issue, how have you responded.’” Mark smiled and said, “I look like a jerk if I don’t have answers”.

Mark recommends the coaching group to his peers, saying that the group would love to get more perspective and more insight from others who are living in our world. He said that what is learned in the hour-long calls is invaluable. ■

*If you are interested in joining the NextGen program or starting a peer group, contact Mark Denkler at [Mark@nsra.org](mailto:Mark@nsra.org) or 520-209-1718.*

promise, product and people to the process, you can obtain the right amount of profit”. During this segment, participants dig into each other’s experiences and share their feedback. In sum, the group problem-solves together.

### **NextGen Transitions**

Why is this peer group coaching initiative so appropriate for the NextGen program? Although the NextGens share having a place in their business, their experience and roles vary. What they do share is:

- > They are the children of the owners, or potential successors of the business.
- > There is a plan for them to increase responsibilities, succeed and be owners.
- > The plan is not always clear, which is a problem. There can be a lack of clarity in accountability of decision making and forward-looking strategy for their business. Who is accountable for what is a big concern that is often not clear. That includes what is communicated between parents/children and also between the rest of the organization.

For all of the NextGens and their

ics, which include becoming accountable for marketing, operations and human resources – that are oftentimes growing and innovating. They also talk about a favorite NextGen topic – how to transition from manager to owner. In order to do that successfully, important peer group discussions are planned around what Pete calls the CPA – Communication, Process and Accountability. These discussions help NextGens think about how they want transitions to go, who needs to be involved and how to communicate plans. Not surprisingly, NextGen transition planning processes and desired outcomes may be vastly different than what happened and even worked well for their parents – the NowGen group.

### **Added Value**

Mark Wagner appreciates the benefit of being in a group led by Pete. The group enjoys the emerging topics he presents, such as ChatGPT artificial intelligence, to encourage the NextGens to learn and discuss how innovations and trends will affect them. Because Pete