

# Could a CEO Roundtable Help Your Small Business?

By Sharon Macaluso

If you are the owner of a business, you are involved in making critical business decisions every day. As an entrepreneur, the buck stops with you. You do not have a manual or a supervisor to go to for advice on issues relating to what new products to introduce, where and how to promote your business, whether you should invest in a new piece of equipment, or what you should do with regard to employee disciplinary issues. More importantly, you do not have anyone above you to decide what strategic direction to take your company. It is all up to you.

So, where do you turn for advice? More and more entrepreneurs are finding support and answers to key questions through CEO Roundtables.

CEO Roundtables give owners, principles, and CEOs the opportunity to draw upon the expertise and experience of other roundtable members to help find solutions to their business problems. A typical roundtable consists of a small, select group (usually 7-12 individuals) of local business owners and executives from non-competing companies.

Participants depend on their peers to be capable, confidential advisors willing to assist with business problems, suggest workable solutions, and offer fresh perspectives.

Typically, CEO Roundtables meet monthly for one to two hours. The format may be highly informal with each member simply bringing specific questions they would like to pose to the group, or they may be more structured, allocating time for outside speakers or assigning each member an allotted time period to discuss a pre-determined issue.

Many Roundtable meetings take place first thing in the morning, between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. A small membership fee is usually required to cover the cost of refreshments, meeting space, outside speakers, and to help ensure commitment by the members.

*What is Required for a Successful CEO Roundtable?* The host or roundtable members generally determine the direction and format for the group, however, for a successful Roundtable and beneficial meetings, participants should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Have final decision-making authority and ultimate responsibility for the direction of the company.
- Attend not only to receive advice, but also be capable and willing to share their expertise and experiences as a company leader with other Roundtable participants.
- Maintain total confidentiality of all information exchanged within the Roundtable.
- Attend meetings regularly as determined by the group. (In most Roundtables, members are required to attend 75-90 percent of all meetings.)
- Exercise openness and active participation.
- Do not treat the group as a leads group to generate sales.

*How Do You Find a CEO Roundtable?* Many business support organizations offer CEO Roundtables as an added service to their members or the local business community. To find a group in your area, you may contact your local Chamber of Commerce or trade association. Your

local Georgia SBDC Network office may also be able to assist you. To find the Georgia SBDC Network office in your area, visit our web site at [www.sbdc.uga.edu](http://www.sbdc.uga.edu).

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*Business Sense*

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