

**The Boston Coaching Company  
The PaperRoom™**

**From *Choice Points*** : Navigate Your Career Using the Unique PaperRoom™ Process

**Appendix B**

**Guidelines for Starting a Book Group**

**The Setup:**

***How big should the group be?*** A group of three to five people is a good size. You will want to have enough people to get a few other perspectives about the material being discussed. Some chapters will generate a fair amount of discussion material so you want to keep the group to a size that can accommodate this.

***Is it okay to mix the ages and sex of the group?*** It is fine to mix ages and that can add an interesting other dimension, but make sure that you have a balance between Q2 and Q3 people. You may want different sexes, or not. For a group as small as this, there is nowhere to “hide,” so safety and comfort are paramount.

***Who should be in the group?*** Friends that you know well, or would like to know well. My own group 2 of us invited 3 people who were not known to each other. This way everyone knew someone and there was the fun and advantage of the perspectives of those you didn't already have a history with. Other ideas are parent groups, church, temple, existing book groups or groups from an organization you belong to. To ensure the comfort level and freedom of speech that will be necessary for this work, you may want to consider *not* meeting with people who are part of your immediate work community.

***How often should we meet?*** You probably want to meet on a regular basis. You will be having a minimum of 10 meetings and it is generally easier to remember meetings and not accidentally schedule things for meeting times, when there is a routine – once a week, twice a month, monthly. This is something that should be decided when the group gets together so that you can accommodate reading speed preferences as well as scheduling constraints.

***When is it best to meet?*** If at all possible select a meeting time that has some flexibility with the ending time. All chapters are not the same, and some will generate more

discussion than others. Also as the group gets to know one another, discussion time seems to extend.

***I have never done anything like this before ... anything you can tell me that might be helpful?*** Two things for now, and maybe as these groups get started others can add their experiences.

1) There is a group dynamic for beginning groups called “Forming, Storming, Norming.” When groups first get together things often seem to unfold rather easily – people are being polite - and often hold back on some of their concerns if they have any. The group is “Forming.” Usually by the third meeting or so, some differences have become apparent and things may not be as smooth. Questions, clarifications, minor (or major) annoyances become apparent. A couple of good rules here are, a.) *When you have a complaint, come armed with a couple of possible solutions*, and b.) *only complain to the person who can do something about it*.

2) The second suggestion is to take a look at the Partnership PACK on the Coaching Company’s website,  
<[http://www.bostoncoachingco.com/coachco/coach\\_part.html](http://www.bostoncoachingco.com/coachco/coach_part.html)>[http://www.bostoncoachingco.com/coachco/coach\\_part.html](http://www.bostoncoachingco.com/coachco/coach_part.html) . Groups begin to fray when there is a lack of alignment about what the goal is or how things are supposed to function; when others have doubts about another’s ability to grasp the situation or task, or when a basic trust is not present that will allow for the freedom to share one’s thoughts and/or feelings. When any one of these things is missing it will cause the other two to weaken as well. Locate the care problem and discuss it. The other two things will begin to clear up as well.

### **Prior to Your First Meeting:**

To get off to the best possible start, before your first meeting all group members should read the following:

The Introduction to Choice Points

Chapter I, The PaperRoom and the first Personal Inquiry, (p.22), Knowing What Stopped You

These meeting guidelines pages

### **Materials Needed**

***Notebook*** – You will each need a notebook to answer the Personal Inquiry questions in each chapter, and you might want to leave room for taking notes at your meetings (by chapter) as well

## **Copy of Choice Points: Navigate Your Career Using the Unique PaperRoom Process**

### **First Meeting: Suggested Guidelines to preserve Personal Comfort of Members**

In many ways your first meeting will set the context or tone for your future meetings and it will be important to start off on the right foot. In your first meeting you will create the structure to support your success in future meetings. The following are of suggestions you may find helpful.

⊙ Design a Meeting Agenda format. You will need time to catch up on things that were left open from the last meeting, make any adjustments to this meetings agenda depending on the material to be discussed and/or the number of you attending this meeting. You will want some balance between time for individual's discoveries, concerns, and questions, as well as time to discuss the current topic as a group.

⊙ Designate a Time-Keeper In the beginning it will be useful to have a "timekeeper: to help keep you on track. Later it may not be as necessary as you fall into a workable pattern of giving everyone time to speak.

⊙ Confidentiality Agreement: "Confidentiality" is one of those words that we all think we know the meaning of, but often discover that we have different understandings about what exactly it means. Please have this discussion in the group and make sure that you are all aligned about what is, and is not acceptable, so that all feel that their privacy is maintained within the group. Like many personal discovery processes, the more honest you can be, the better results you can get, so it is important to feel as safe as possible with your group members.

⊙ Speaking: The value and purpose of sharing your thoughts and discoveries with a group is to get their perspective and feedback about the situation you are discussing. Often others can see or hear things differently than we can. The groups "job" is to reflect back any insights or questions they may have about the material you are discussing to give you new ways you might see the information and expand your perspective. Here are some good basic "rules"

- 1) Speak from the first person using "I" statements, i.e. "What I hear you saying is.....", "I'm noticing that ...." Etc.
- 2) Listen respectfully and non-judgmentally.
- 3) Nothing spoken of in the group will be brought up outside the group without permission.
- 4) One person speaks at a time only at their designated time or during group chats

5) Working with a timer is not a bad idea in the beginning. It levels the playing field - those who tend to speak less will be assured equal time - and it gets everyone used to the flow. Later you will most likely fall into your own pattern that uses your time to the best advantage for all.

**Suggested First Meeting Agenda** : (Based on a 5 person 2 hour group meeting)

This is a general outline for an agenda that should work for you to start with. *It is by no means "carved in stone."* Each of our test groups for the book ultimately designed some variation on this theme for their permanent agenda. This is just to help you get started.

I. Allow each person time to share their thoughts:

*Why I wanted to be in this group* and

*What results I want from this experience* (3 min. each) 15 min

II. Decide on timekeeper(s) for future meetings

Who will be responsible for moving the group along. (Note to Timekeeper: Five and two minute "warnings" are often useful until each gets used to about how long they can speak. 5 min

III. Confidentiality discussion and agreement. 30 min

IV. Share Reactions to Chapter(s). 25 min

V. Share answers to Personal Inquiry "homework" – (5 min each) 25 min

VI. Set up future meeting times and date(s). Open chats 20 min

Note: It is useful to decide how you want to handle attendance. It is predictable that from time to time someone will not be able to make a meeting. Like everything else in life – take your best shot at what you think will work best and be flexible.