



**The Association of
Learning Providers**

RAFT Group Quick
Start Guide

What is a RAFT Group?

A RAFT Group as a team of trusted ISA members that help you navigate the white waters that come continuously as you build and grow your business. RAFT members are individuals who understand the pressures and goals you're working towards and are there to help you be successful. A RAFT Group may form for a period of time and specific purpose and then disband; or they could stay together for a number of years.

Assemble Your RAFT Group

Ideal Size:

5-6 people is the ideal size of a Raft group. This number of members is large enough to get diversity of thought and small enough to ensure all voices are heard (and coordinate calendars).

Suggested Frequency for Meetings:

How often your RAFT group meets is up to you. During the global pandemic, ISAers in RAFT Groups met on a weekly basis for the first few months! Typically, groups will choose a cadence and a structure that works best for group members. Monthly, every two months or once a quarter can all be effective cadences.



Time Required:

If you're meeting more regularly, then shorter meetings can be effective. 90 minutes for 6 people is a good ratio. If you meet less frequently, you may wish to extend your sessions to 2 hours or even a half day. We don't recommend longer than that (unless you're in person).

Who & How to Recruit for your Raft Group:

- **First:** determine what you want the focus of your RAFT Group to be about. Do you want to grow your business? Are you interested in looking for people to partner with? Are you keen to expand your knowledge in a particular area? The key to successful RAFT Groups is that there is a common goal shared by group members but the members of the group themselves bring diverse perspectives so that you will expand your learning.
- Once you're clear on your PRIMARY purpose for your group, it's time to recruit members. Here are a few ideas to get you started:
 - Participate in an ISA sponsored C-Level Forum. Follow up with members of the group that you 'clicked' with and gauge their interest in participating (this is how many ISA groups initiated)
 - Reach out to Deborah at ISA and see who's on the RAFT Group Interest List. Reach out to members who have similar goals and invite them to participate in your group.

- At the ABR, participate in the various affinity group activities to meet other members and recruit group members.

Running Your RAFT Group

Suggested Formats:

There are many ways you can structure your RAFT Group but our Pro-Tip is to spend your very first meeting getting to know each other. Have group members share create a personal collage as a way to introduce themselves; or try the Lifeline exercise where members talk through the highs and lows of their life to-date. This build connection within your group and sets the stage for psychological safety and trust.



In addition to a ‘get to know you’ activity, take some time for each member to share their hopes and wishes for the RAFT Group experience. Wrap up that first meeting with some agreements around ground rules for participating (eg: timeliness, confidentiality, commitment); cadence/timing of your meetings; and the roles needed (eg: facilitator, timekeeper). As a group, also determine which format (or combo) you want to follow for your initial meetings and get started.

Here are two simple options for your RAFT Group. Experiment and see what works best for your group:

Option 1 – Needs & Leads

Format:

- Each group member has a designated amount of time to share:
 - Start with a ‘lead’ that might benefit the group. For example: a new book they’ve read, learning they had recently, success to share etc. Something that would benefit other group members. This should take 5 minutes per person (unless the group agrees they want more info and it’s a broader learning share opportunity).
 - Follow on with a ‘need’ that group members have. Needs could be challenges being faced in their business or resources (eg: vendor recommendations) that they are looking for. Determine how much time is required per person. Ideally, have people share their ‘needs’ in advance.

Option 2 – MasterMind

Format:

- Members are given 20 minutes to share an issue (adjust time depending on the amount of people in the group who have something to share)
- Member has 5 minutes to overview their issue (or use the ISA C-Level format to gather information in advance)
- Group members then have 10 minutes to ask clarifying questions
- Group members then provide experience share / insights based on what they've heard that might be useful
- Depending on the number of group members and the time you allocate to your overall meeting, you may only have time for up to 2 MasterMind sessions each time you get together, so plan accordingly.

Pro Tips

- Regardless of which format you use, provide all group members with a 2 minute opportunity to provide an update on how things are going. Members can share a win, a learning or a proud moment. This is an important element to build connection and hear how each group member is doing.
- For the MasterMind, use the ISA C-level template to help members complete their thinking in advance and circulate to group members so that time isn't wasted on clarifying questions.
- Have a timekeeper keep things on track. It's very easy to lose focus and track of time, especially when the topic is a juicy one
- Even informal groups need a leader. If you've pulled together a Raft Group, know that there will be some work to set up meetings, reminders and manage the agenda
- Revisit your own commitment to your RAFT Group and the overall groups commitment on a regular basis. Consider 6 month or 12 month terms for membership so that people know the commitment and you can re-evaluate whether your group stays together or disbands on a more formal basis vs. letting it all just slowly peter out.

Need more tips? Reach out to Glain Roberts-McCabe, ISA Programming Chair on ways to get your RAFT Group launched.