

## **SAMPLE FORUM CONSTITUTION OR NORMS**

### **SAMPLE Member Forum Mission**

Our mission is to become better people by sharing our business, family and personal lives in an atmosphere of confidentiality, trust, respect and intimacy. We commit to ourselves and each other the time, resources and opportunity to achieve the personal, professional and spiritual growth we desire.

### **OR SAMPLE Spouse Forum Mission**

Our mission is to create a safe haven where we can seek to understand and to be understood. We want to challenge ourselves and each other to grow as individuals so that we may serve our families, our friends and our communities with wisdom and with love. We commit to ourselves and to each other the time, the resources and the opportunity to achieve the personal and spiritual growth we all desire.

### **Confidentiality**

- Confidentiality is the first among the critical principles of Forum success. Every member may be assured that nothing said in Forum will ever be repeated by another member outside the group.
- Forum business is discussed outside the meeting only in private and only with other Forum members. However, a member may request a higher level of confidentiality beyond this norm. Nothing is discussed with outsiders, except with the permission of the information holder.
- Confidentiality is absolute, in all ways and forever. A member who leaves the Forum is not free to discuss what was learned about other members while in Forum. New members to the Forum are not privileged to the history of former members of the group.
- If a member believes he/she has been breached, the breaching member will contact the breaching member (if known) to discuss the situation; the breached member will also contact the moderator, who will investigate the incident (as necessary). If it is verified that a breach has occurred, the breaching member will submit his/her resignation.
- If a member realizes he/she has breached another member, the breaching member will contact the breached member to advise him/her of the incident and to apologize. The breaching member will then contact the moderator to submit his/her resignation.
- All breaches or suspected breaches are Forum business and will be brought to the Forum for discussion and resolution. Because trust has been broken, most Forums will accept the member's resignation.
- The law takes precedence over the pledge of confidentiality. If a member is subpoenaed by a court of law, that member must testify.

- ***Levels of Confidentiality***

- Level 1 — This level of confidentiality is the norm that is always operational within the Forum. It means that nothing may ever be shared with anyone outside of the Forum. The only exception would be if the members receive specific permission from the member who is the information holder. Additionally, members of the Forum should not discuss the issue outside his/her presence.
- Level 2 — This level of confidentiality can be called for by any member who is willing to share something one time, but does not want it to be referred to ever again. This often would pertain to some issue or experience from the past, which is too sensitive or painful to revisit, but which is an important part of that member's history.

**Commitment**

- We will meet 10 times per year. We will not meet in July, August or December.
- We will make Forum a priority in our lives. While 100% attendance is expected, we will allow 2 absences in a year. The 3rd absence in a year will require resignation from the Forum.
- We will advise the moderator prior to an absence. We will start and end our meetings on time.
- We will assess ½ absence for each late arrival and early departure.
- We will turn off electronic devices during the meeting. All other distractions and interruptions will be kept to a minimum.
- We invite any member to call an emergency meeting of the Forum. Attendance at an emergency meeting is voluntary.
- We will go on an annual retreat, and attendance at the retreat is mandatory.
- We will conduct an annual survey and diagnosis of the Forum's health.
- Meeting schedule: Meetings will be held from (time), on (date), at (location). Example: Meetings will be held from noon to 5 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Athletic Club. The meeting starts with lunch and is considered part of the meeting.

**Membership**

- Our Forum will consist of 8 to 12 members who have no conflicts of interest.
- New members agree to attend Forum Fundamentals prior to integration.
- In an effort to avoid potential conflicts of interest, any plans by members to establish relationships outside the Forum (i.e., sitting on a member's board) will be disclosed to the Forum and put on the agenda for discussion.
- If a conflict develops, the member whose circumstances created the conflict will resign from the Forum.

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- Diversity provides the opportunity for different perspectives. We will seek and honor diversity including gender, race, expertise, industry or experience.
- When possible, we will add at least 2 members at a time, no more than once every 2 years, and 1 to 2 meetings prior to the retreat.
- A Forum mentor will be assigned to each new member to help with indoctrination and integration into the group.
- Members who no longer qualify for (organization) will leave the Forum within 12 months of losing their status. (i.e., the member loses his/her (organization's) status due to the age requirement, if the business no longer qualifies or the spouse loses his/her status because of divorce.)
- Each member of the group is responsible for the Forum experience.

## Leadership

- The moderator will be selected by the Forum.
- The moderator will serve a one- to two-year term.
- The incoming moderator will attend a Moderator Training Program prior to the beginning of the moderator term.
- An assistant moderator will be selected as a successor to the moderator and to help the moderator as needed. (optional)
- Moderator responsibilities:
  - *Direction:* Forums look to moderators for direction
  - *Demonstrate:* Forums look to moderators to model behaviors of openness
  - *Draw out:* Forums look to moderators to encourage quieter members
  - *Discipline:* Forums look to moderators to keep discussions focused and to enforce agreed-upon norms
  - *Discuss differences:* Forums look to moderators to bring up issues for discussion and resolution
  - *Details:* Forums look to moderators for organization, and to develop meaningful agendas which are distributed one week in advance
  - *Delegate:* Forums look to moderators to delegate meeting/retreat details to the members
  - *Decide:* Forums look to moderators to make a decision when consensus is not necessary or possible

**Participation**

- Members agree to treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Members agree to practice Forum protocol.
- Members agree to participate by: presenting their unresolved issues, acting as a coach for other members, developing topics for discussion, sharing their own experiences, and hosting meetings, planning the retreat, selecting and briefing SME's and helping to integrate new members.
- Members aspire to have lunch with one other member of the group each month.

**Forum Treasury**

- A checking account in the name of "Forum \_\_\_\_\_" will be established to efficiently accommodate the operation of the business of the Forum and the conduct of its meetings or activities. Such account will require only one signature for all disbursements.
- The Forum will elect a treasurer who will be responsible for the collection of Forum dues, penalties, reimbursements from the chapter, if any, and all other receipts, the payment of all appropriate and reasonable Forum expenses, and providing an appropriate accounting to the Forum on a regular basis, which shall be decided upon by the Forum.
- New members to the Forum will be required to make initial dues payments of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Members will be assessed regular and special dues periodically throughout the course of the year, as needs may dictate. Members are apprised of assessments in advance. Prompt payment of all Forum dues and penalties is expected.
- If a meeting, retreat, or overnight is scheduled to be held at a hotel, it will normally be required that all meeting attendees charge the cost of their hotel rooms and expenses to their personal credit cards, rather than to the Forum.
- Expenses incurred by any member of the Forum for appropriate Forum expenses shall be submitted directly to the treasurer for reimbursement. The treasurer shall make payments for all appropriate expenses. The Forum at its next meeting shall address disputed items, if any.