



THE FLYING SOLO GUIDE TO Meetups

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MICRO BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Meetups – solo, but not alone!

While working alone has many benefits, nothing beats connecting with other like-minded people. After all, it's what Flying Solo is all about!

Small, informal face-to-face get-togethers, where members build relationships and support one another have long been popular amongst members of the Flying Solo community...and it's little wonder.

Meetup group sizes vary from as few as 3-4 people, up to as many as a dozen plus. These groups typically meet in cafés, pubs, libraries or other public spaces. Flying Solo proudly supports its community's meetups by promoting them across our social media channels, forums and newsletters.

A meetup is an opportunity to:

- Connect with people who share your passion for running your own show and appreciate the joys and hardships involved
- Get to know other business owners within your local area
- Openly share experiences and tips
- Explore individual challenges
- Maintain a strong sense of group and individual accountability
- Contribute ideas and solutions to a greater knowledge pool

If you'd like to harness the power of meetups – whether as an organiser or an attendee – this guide will give you an outline of the benefits, answer some common questions and give you the tips you'll need to get started.

Enjoy your meetups!

The Flying Solo crew

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1. Meetup formats, frequency and duration

Choosing the best time to meet

In our experience, mornings tend to work best. We're all running our own businesses and once the day starts, it starts! Meetups scheduled at the start of the day enjoy regular attendees who are alert and ready to connect.

That said, if your group includes those involved in school runs or who have to travel a distance, it's best to avoid peak hour. We also find it's best to avoid weekends and public and school holidays.

Duration can be as short as an hour ('An hour of power' is a theme we've seen) or run up to two hours or even longer.

A possible proposition is 'meet for an hour, hang around longer to chat if you feel like it'. This gives the meetup a core focus, while indicating a relaxed approach for those who wish to linger a while.

Selecting the right location

Most meetups occur in cafés, as this helps the slightly informal feel and allows attendees to select and pay for their own refreshments.

Just be sure to select a venue that:

- can regularly and reliably accommodate your meetup
- is easy to find (the premises AND the table!)
- has convenient parking
- is quiet and has a nice ambience and a positive atmosphere
- has friendly, supportive staff

...and if it's a café, make sure it serves decent coffee!

Frequency of get-togethers

This can be suggested by the organiser when establishing the group or may be determined in consultation with a group in its early days.

Many meetups gather on a monthly basis, some fortnightly, and others weekly.

Start by getting to know each other

Always welcome new guests and start by inviting each to make a very short intro. Remember, not everyone enjoys public speaking (indeed for many it's right up there with root canal treatment), so keep it relaxed.

Just sharing your name, the nature of your business and a challenge you may be facing currently is a good place to start.

If you'd like to loosen it up more, throw in something like:

"Which actor would play you in a movie of your life?"

"What's the last thing that made you laugh out loud?"

Getting into a pattern and following an agenda

Over the years we've observed and attended a number of meetups. The ones that are the most effective and beneficial are those that have structure.

This is best achieved by having the organiser develop and run a simple agenda, perhaps along these lines:

9.00 – 9.15 Round the table intros and share 'greatest current challenge'.

9.15 – 9.45 Discuss challenges and share ideas.

9.45 – 10.00 Agree individual actions and take-outs and confirm next meeting date.

Alternatively, the meetup can be run as more of a 'goals group' – where at the outset each attendee shares his/her goals for a given period and each meeting is a chance to 'report back' and support others on their path.

Yet another effective way to generate, lively, helpful conversation is to discuss [one of the latest expert articles published on Flying Solo](#). Always, short and sharp, an article can easily be printed and circulated at the meetup or more ideally sent around the group in advance.

Regardless of the nature of your meetup, 'actions and take-outs' are perhaps the most overlooked and yet the most important.

Taking a few moments at the close of a meetup to discuss what attendees have learned and the actions they will take as a result reinforces the value of the event and helps overall commitment to the meetup. You might even decide to record everyone's action items so they can be held accountable at the next meetup.

2. Culture, commitment and costs

Meetups are informal events with no rigid right or wrong way to do things. It's up to the crowd – the little crowd – to determine how each meetup looks and operates.

But as we've found with our online discussion forums, guidelines are helpful. For the most part, the guidelines used in the forums are equally appropriate for meetups. Here are two key points, adapted from [our full forum guidelines](#), that we consider particularly relevant:

Flying Solo forum community guidelines...applied to meetups

The Golden Rule: Respect: We pride ourselves on being the friendliest, most helpful community around, so please treat your fellow community members with courtesy and respect. While we welcome robust debate and contrary opinions, if a person behaves in a negative, unhelpful and detrimental way we prefer they no longer participate.

Don't contribute for the purposes of advertising or promoting

A short overview of your business is fine, but the community will not tolerate newcomers getting involved purely to advertise and promote. Remember, first impressions count!

Flying Solo's role in meetups

The team at Flying Solo established the meetup program to help facilitate the groups spontaneously occurring within our community.

Our role is to set up and administer the process at www.flying-solo.meetup.com, having identified Meetup.com as the best tool for helping get groups organised. We will do all we reasonably can to help promote each meetup and generally support all involved.

However, Flying Solo does not organise any individual meetups, can take no responsibility for the effectiveness, professionalism or administration of any individual meetup and will not get involved in any personal disagreements.

Where necessary will take steps to disassociate our name with any individual or group who operate in a way that is outside our community guidelines.

Read more regarding Flying Solo's general [Terms & Conditions](#).

Turn up and tune in

While it sounds pretty basic, the most important ingredient of a successful meetup is that each individual turns up on time, ready and willing to fully participate.

If you've said you'll attend a meetup and for some reason can no longer make it, please do the organiser the courtesy of letting them know beforehand.

And while we all have commitments and distractions outside our business, try to put these to one side for the duration of the meetup and instead focus on the needs of the group.

For many soloists, a meetup is the one time in their day when they truly work 'on' their business – the support you give to others will pay off in spades when it's your turn to ask the group for input!

You could even suggest everyone turns off their phone for the hour! At the very least, phones should be turned to silent and you need to all agree not to take calls unless they're super-urgent.

Respect others' time and support their goals and they will do the same for you!

Covering costs vs making a profit

In the same way that meetups are not a place to blatantly promote, nor are they intended as money-spinners.

In the event that a venue levies a small charge, or the organiser has other fair and reasonable organisational costs including the small fee that Meetup.com levies, then sure, it's fine to contribute. These costs aside, meetups are not a 'paid-for' event.

Conversely, some organisers have found that a small charge of \$5-10 per person, per meetup has reinforced commitment and attendance and the money has then gone into a kitty for a quarterly lunch or similar group treat.

By all means experiment. Just don't exploit others.

3. Let's do it!

Four steps to setting up or joining a meetup

Over at Flying Solo's [dedicated page on meetup.com](#) you'll find the process to get started is super-easy. Just follow the four steps below:

i. Search for a meetup near you

Head over to www.flying-solo.meetup.com where you'll be find a list of Flying Solo meetups.

Find the one that suits you best, click on its name and join up. If you don't already have a meetup.com log in, you can either create one, or log in via Facebook (your personal account, not your business one).

ii. No meetup groups nearby? Create your own

If you can't find an existing Flying Solo Meetup in your immediate area, we encourage you to start your own.

Just follow the "Start a Meetup Group" links at Meetup.com **and be sure to put *Flying Solo* as one of your topics. This will ensure your Meetup shows up on our page.**

iii. Schedule your first meetup event

Once up and running, you can schedule a meetup, post comments, and invite people via Facebook.

Organisers can edit the meetup details and confirm the event time, venue etc. Each time the meetup is updated, everyone who has shown an interest in attending will be notified.

iv. Spread the word

Meetup.com does a great job helping people find relevant meetups. You can help by:

- Inviting Facebook friends to attend.
- Tagging your tweets and Facebook posts with #FlyingSoloMeetup. We'll be doing the same for you on our Facebook and Twitter posts to help spread the word.
- Heading back to the [Flying Solo forums](#) to add a post announcing your meetup.
- Sharing your meetup photos with us on [Facebook](#), again using #FlyingSoloMeetup.

...and, if you're technically minded, it's easy to add a meetup.com widget to your site listing meetups that are up and running.

Thanks for being part of the Flying Solo community. We wish your business and meetup every success!

The Flying Solo crew

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Run your own business? Join the FREE Flying Solo community for support, exposure & how-to guides. Visit www.flyingsolo.com.au