

Executive Advisory Support Options

A Selection Guide For Founders,
CEOs, And Senior Executives With
Significant Growth Goals

How do I decide between a networking group, peer advisory group, or coaching as a CEO support option?

Many studies have focused on the negative impacts of feeling lonely. In fact, much of the brain science research agrees that feelings of loneliness cause us to make worse decisions. In one National Institutes of Health (NIH) study¹, the researchers concluded that loneliness can cause our brain chemistry to lead us into a “vicious cycle”.

Nowhere are feelings of loneliness - and the vicious cycle that comes with them - felt more acutely than at the top of a growing company. Being a founder, CEO, executive director, or other senior leader increases the weight of expectation in our own mind as well as in the minds of those we lead.

- What happens if we're wrong about the most critical needs of our business?
- How do we manage our feelings of impostor syndrome when someone questions us and we don't have a good answer - or worse, a clear path to finding a useful answer?



In spite of questions like these, there's good news for leaders!

In the past decade, the number of available advisory support options has grown significantly for founders, CEOs, and senior executives. This guide will explain the differences between various options you have for support in your very unique role. If you're a faith-driven leader, it's also critical that you have counsel from people with industry expertise as well as a faith aligned world view.

We'll explore these 6 executive leadership advisory support categories:

- [Professional Mastermind Group](#)
- [Private Network](#)
- [Mentoring](#)
- [Peer & Advisory Group](#)
- [Group Coaching](#)
- [Individual Coaching](#)

We'll close out the guide with some helpful [criteria for choosing a CEO support option](#) based on what's right for you.

¹Finley, Anna J. And Schaefer, Stacey M. Affective Neuroscience of Loneliness: Potential Mechanisms underlying the Association between Perceived Social Isolation, Health, and Well-Being. National Library of Medicine National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9910279/>

Professional Mastermind Group

A Professional Mastermind Group is a small, intentionally curated group of people who are committed to working together and finding solutions to a set of shared challenges.

These groups are often organized by a single member who wants to be an equal part of the group (rather than unilaterally setting the agenda for the group). In many cases, a subset of members work together to schedule speakers and events for the wider group.

Membership in a professional mastermind group is usually by invitation only. There is typically no membership fee and incidental costs are borne by the organizer's company, a sponsor, or on a donation basis.

Members of a professional mastermind group often have specific skills and the group provides an opportunity for them to share that experience and help everyone in the group improve. Regular meetings provide opportunities for this knowledge sharing or to learn from external, invited guests and speakers.



Benefits of a Mastermind Group for CEO Support

- No or very low cost membership
- Monthly meetings can be in person or virtual
- Focused on skills development and education
- Membership is curated around complimentary skills and views

Drawbacks of a Mastermind Group

- An invitation is usually required
- Sometimes topics are not relevant to your immediate needs
- You may be required to invest additional planning time to help lead
- The group's lifespan can often be short-lived

When a Mastermind Group makes sense

A professional leadership mastermind can be a great CEO and executive support option when you find a group of people who are all working through similar challenges and want to help one another.

This approach to shared experience and learning can be a low-cost way to learn from others without having to attend a lot of classes, webinars, or events. It can also provide a tight-knit professional network in which you can be challenged in your thinking and experiment with sharing new ideas.

Creating a mastermind group can also be a way to test out what it could be like to work with a person or group more deeply as a co-founder, business partner, or channel partner.

Private Network

Online private networks date all the way back to the advent of the internet. Chat rooms and message boards were common forms of private communities. Modern private networks got their start as closed groups on platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn. Initially, they were free services and enjoyed wider audiences than in-person meetups because of their virtual nature.

As new technologies like Slack and Circle emerged, it became easier for private network creators to charge a membership fee. Existing product and service companies found themselves with additional, value-adding resources to add to their courses and clients.

Membership in a private network group is almost always curated by a group of organizers. Ongoing participation is usually moderated at varying levels. Depending on the organizer's approach, the network may be managed by the company, self-managed by volunteers, or a combination of the two.



Benefits of Private Networks

Well established private networks can be very powerful support tools for self directed leaders. They offer many benefits including:

- Easy to access at your convenience
- Vetted community members
- Engagement on your terms - as much or little as you need or want
- Opportunities for networking with geographically dispersed leaders
- Industry specific or cross-industry membership depending on the group's focus

Drawbacks of Private Networks for CEO Support

- Not always active or robust

- Easy to get overwhelmed with high amounts of user generated content
- Many networks lack controls against sales and spammy behavior
- Learning opportunities can be limited
- Deep relationships take longer to identify and more effort to develop

When a Private Network makes sense

Private networks can be extremely valuable for people in the early stages of business creation. If your schedule is irregular and attending standing meetings isn't possible, dipping into and out of a private networking group allows you to build relationships with minimal calendar disruption.

They are also typically free or low cost options for building skills and community. Where the community is part of a learning experience (e.g., follow-up to a completed course), they can provide valuable skills reinforcement. In some cases, private networks lead to new opportunities for partnerships.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a formal relationship with a person (the mentor) who has experience, tools, and - most importantly - influence which the person being mentored (the mentee) does not have.

It's a powerful CEO and executive support tool for early stage leaders who want a focused knowledge transfer from a recognized expert. Because of the one-on-one nature of mentoring, it is often confused with coaching. One of the critical differences between mentoring and coaching is that the mentor actively creates opportunities for the mentee to gain experience. For example, the mentor may:

- assign specific educational tasks (e.g., take a specific course to learn a skill and then discuss key observations at completion),
- set up key meetings with influential people that are outside the mentee's network and with whom they would be less likely to have access,
- create unique work assignments designed to build the mentee's work experience in preparation for a longer-term goal the mentor is assisting the mentee to achieve.



Throughout the mentoring relationship, the mentor and mentee meet regularly - though they may not occur on a fixed-schedule. The frequency, duration, and content focus will vary widely based on the mentoring goals. Mentoring relationships can last a few months to several years.

Benefits of Mentoring

- Accelerated learning focused on unique industry or discipline specific insights
- Access to people and resources otherwise off limits
- Personalized experiences tailored to the needs of the mentee
- Status from affiliation with recognized leaders in a particular field

Drawbacks of Mentoring

- Securing a qualified mentor can be difficult
- Mentees are responsible to be clear about what they want from a mentor
- Compensation (sometimes significant) is usually required to the mentor for time and expertise
- Time required to complete mentoring assignments can be substantial
- May involve travel for in person meetings

When Mentoring makes sense for CEO or Executive Support

Mentoring engagements can last for months or years and can be a significant shortcut to gain targeted expertise tailored to the mentee's specific needs. If you want access into networks where you'd otherwise have difficulty making connections, mentorship may be a strong leadership support option.

You can be most successful if you know the specific type of experience you want to gain and the right person who is open to providing mentorship. To be successful, you'll need to have time to complete lengthy activities. You'll also need to have financial resources sufficient to pay the mentor and to acquire the resources necessary to gain the knowledge and experiences they recommend.

Peer & Advisory Groups

CEO peer groups are a hybrid solution that blends parts of several different CEO and executive leadership support options.

Most groups are private networks that have a local small group component and a wider, cross-group network made up of participants in other local groups. They are typically organized around a particular focus like entrepreneurship, integrating faith and business, leadership development, or industry competencies.

In most cases, the community aspects of CEO Peer and Advisory groups are augmented with specific training. A peer group typically meets for an extended period - a half or full day - each month. Members learn from a pre-set curriculum, hear individual presentations from peer business leaders, and include collaborative discussions. They generally require a minimum 12-month commitment and are non-competitive (only one "seat" per company type, per group).

Some peer and advisory groups have different tiers depending on a person's role. For example, some providers offer separate groups for CEOs than for high potential staff who are critical to their company's operational success.

Similarly, other peer groups provide options that include one-on-one coaching for the most senior leaders. This coaching often centers on the peer group's topic for the month but may also branch out into other areas where the leader values insights from the peer group facilitator.



Benefits of Peer & Advisory Groups For Executive Support

- Curated group of leaders with a similar mindset and goals
- Opportunities to develop deep and supportive relationships
- Training materials are focused on key topics of interest to the group
- Time away from the office to focus "on" the business rather than "in" it

Drawbacks of Peer & Advisory Groups

- Firms must often meet minimum revenue and staffing requirements in order to participate in the group
- Standard formats can limit help for specific issues
- Small numbers in a group can reduce potential networking options
- Limited options for rescheduling participation based on calendar conflicts

When Peer & Advisory Groups make sense

A CEO Peer Group or Advisory Group can be a great choice for a leader who wants to focus their professional development into a single day each month. It's also a great choice if you are looking for a blend of training, small group relationships, and coaching elements.

There is an increasingly broad range of CEO peer group options from which you can choose based on alignment with your company and growth goals. If the option you choose doesn't work well for you, you can apply to an alternative group once your commitment is over.

Business Leader Group Coaching

Business Leader Group Coaching is usually a lower cost alternative to one-on-one coaching. Group coaching can be structured around an internal company team or a set of otherwise unrelated individuals. Like [Private Networks](#) and [CEO Peer & Advisory Groups](#), there are also structural differences within Group Coaching. For example:

- A training program may include group coaching around the curriculum. Once the course is over, a "coach" may continue with a group to facilitate deeper learning in a community of practice.
- When group coaching is oriented around internal team performance, there are usually specific issues the company hires the coach to help address. This type of group coaching is often short-term and highly focused.
- When Group Coaching includes a set of independent individuals, group sizes may range from 4 to 8 people - sometimes as many as 10 or 12.



While there are notable differences, in most cases Group Coaching is more aligned with the style of [Individual Coaching](#) than a [Mastermind Group](#). The specific format is determined by the coach's preferred approach.

In either case, a small group gathers for a regularly scheduled meeting. Each member has a certain amount of timed opportunities to share the issue they want to work through. While the remaining group members observe, the coach works with the person in the spotlight. In most cases, an hour-long group coaching session will cover between 2 and 4 "issues".

Benefits of Business Leader Group Coaching

- Often less expensive than one-on-one executive coaching
- Status from working with a high profile coach without the (sometimes significant) investment required for one-on-one coaching from that person
- Opportunity for close connection with people in the group

- Inclusion in a [Private Network](#) when one is available

Drawbacks of Business Leader Group Coaching for CEO Support

- Coaching topics may not always be relevant to your specific needs
- Confidentiality and vulnerability may be too uncomfortable with people you don't already know and trust
- Small time blocks for coaching may not be adequate to help resolve complex issues
- Low continuity from session to session - especially in a larger group where you may not have an opportunity to speak at every meeting

When Business Leader Group Coaching makes sense

Group coaching can be a great choice for CEOs and executives who want to manage their financial investment or work with a high profile coach who might otherwise not be available. It can also be a strong option if you want a semi-confidential space to learn about (and from) a variety of different businesses and situations.

With the right group, you can accelerate your learning while getting incremental support for challenges along the way. Group coaching can also be a strong support option if you aren't ready to dig in with a significant time and mindset investment.

Individual Executive Coaching for CEO Support

Individual executive coaching is an intensive, one-on-one, confidential engagement with a qualified expert in helping leaders work through mindset and operational leadership challenges so they can discover new paths forward.

Executive coaching is not the same as training or consulting - though, an individual coach may also choose to include elements of those practices. Executive coaching programs that have a preset agenda are usually training programs with a limited coaching scope.

In it's most true form, an executive coach creates a safe space for a leader to identify areas of difficulty and challenge. This safe space includes the opportunity for respectful challenge, idea exploration, and service-minded accountability that helps the coaching client get past obstacles and take action.



All individual executive coaching options focus on reserved time for one-on-one meetings. Meetings can be in-person or virtual and the schedule is usually flexible on a weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis.

Many executive coaches integrate tools like personality assessments, skills inventories, 360 degree leadership surveys, and others. These tools provide insights to help the executive client have increased awareness about mindsets, preferences, and behaviors that contribute to - or inhibit - growth and leadership success. In some cases, an executive coaching program may also come with limited access to the coach (e.g., email, text, or off-cycle phone calls) for support in between regularly scheduled sessions.

Benefits of Individual Executive Coaching

- Highly personalized and focused on your needs
- Flexible topics based on current business needs
- Completely confidential and safe space to explore sensitive challenges
- Respectful challenges can help unlock new thinking
- Accountability for moving from thoughts to actions

Drawbacks of Individual Executive Coaching

- A client-driven agenda can feel unsettling
- Trust can take time to develop
- Progress requires vulnerability and extreme ownership
- Time and financial investment can be significant

When Individual Executive Coaching makes sense

Individual executive coaching can be a game-changing choice for leaders who are curious and willing to reflect deeply on areas that reduce their effectiveness.

Individual executive coaching works best for leaders who recognize there are areas of their personal and professional life that are not typically easy to see and who value input from others that helps them uncover new ways of thinking.

When personal or company resources allow you to invest time and financial resources, individual coaching can help walk through operational challenges as well as mindset limitations. This support can have a direct and significantly positive influence on the speed at which you can grow your business.

This CEO support option is extremely powerful for leaders who are committed to thinking deeply in new ways and then taking incremental actions based on their own observations and discoveries.

Criteria for Choosing a CEO Support Option

You can use these questions to help guide your selection of an effective CEO support option:

- Do I need training, education, and practice in a specific skill I already know about?
- How much time and attention am I able to dedicate?
- What financial resources am I willing to invest into my personal and professional development?
- Am I prepared to organize and lead a group or would I prefer to be a participant?
- How prepared am I to be transparent in order to be respectfully challenged?
- What financial resources am I willing to invest into my personal and professional development?

The support option you need now might serve you well for the near future. Over time, you may find that a different support option becomes more appropriate. You have the freedom to decide which option will work best and for how long.

You may also decide that more than one option during the same timeframe will help you accomplish specific goals you set for yourself. This will require a higher investment of time and attention but the combination can provide a significant advantage when it is tuned to your specific goals.

The most important criteria is to understand what you want the support option to help you accomplish. Once you know the goal, you can more easily select the leadership support option that will work for you.

Alignment With a Faith-Driven Purpose

Failing to choose appropriate counsel can lead to frustration and, in some cases, increase your risk.

If you are a faith-driven founder, CEO, or executive looking for support, you'll also want to consider options that are also aligned with your faith. This can be a critical component because the role an advisor occupies can have long reaching benefits or consequences.

Instead of spending time trying to educate your advisor(s) on what it means to be faith-driven and integrate your faith with your work, you can select a group, mentor, coach, or other advisor who is already faith aligned. This criteria is easily overlooked

and, sometimes, minimized. If you are a faith-driven leader, this criteria should carry equal weight along with your commitment levels and the advisor's non-faith based qualifications.

Conclusion

The goal of most executive leaders is to operate at the highest levels of performance.

The benefits of executive advisory services can be significant for founders, CEOs, executive directors, and other senior leaders. When you have big growth goals but feel like you're alone, investing in a support option can reduce anxiety and frustration. This can create a positive alternative to the vicious cycle and re-align your mindset around taking specific action steps that lead to increasingly positive outcomes.

About Paravelle

velle is latin for "to want" and *para* is greek for "alongside".

Paravelle is for growth-minded founders and executives who want someone to walk with them in order to avoid the bad outcomes that come with being lonely at the top.

If you'd like to learn more about coaching, Paravelle offers options for traditional and faith-based one-on-one executive coaching as well as [faith-driven peer advisory groups](#). Custom, team-based coaching options are also available.



Visit one of our websites for more information:

- www.paravelle.com
- www.christianexecutivecoaching.net