

*Client Advisory Board – Tips and recommendations*  
*DMAC Consulting Services – Diane MacPhee*

**Guidelines:**

1. Six to twelve individuals is an ideal number for the board.
2. People outside your clientele can be useful and interesting.
3. Ensure a variety in demographics, age, tenure, planning needs, working versus retired, Corporate employed vs Business owner and a personality comfortable with speaking up and participating.
4. Have 50% be (1) year and 50% (2) year or ... alternatively -2 year and 3 year terms. Make sure you explain this commitment thoroughly. Each person must understand their term of service. All meetings MUST be attended and not missed. There will only be two meetings per year.
5. Once a person comes off the board, if they were exceptional, please ask them if they would agree to be a backup/alternate if needed.
6. If unexpectedly, a client asks to be on the board and you are full up, just explain - all set for now and the process has begun, but you will put them on your roster for a future spot as people come off the board.

Envision the meeting has ended, all is done and wrapped up and everyone has left to go home. What is your wish for the evening? What is your desired outcome? Did you achieve that – if so great, note why, if not – note why not.

It is typical that client advisory boards tend to generate referrals. In the future you can use this same CAB model to create a very similar one for COI (Center of Influence) individuals – my preferred term: Related Professionals. This new board in the future can also serve the purpose of generating referrals. An outside facilitator in this case is advised.

### Recommended Questions:

Let us go around the table. We (the owners) will kick it off and spend 2-3 minutes sharing about ourselves and then each of you will do the same so we can all get to know one another. Share the time is THE theme. Convey very enthusiastically that you do wish to hear from everyone. To that point, if someone genuinely feels they have nothing at that moment and/or their response will be redundant – they are to raise their right hand and pass.

### Move to Questions:

1. What does (Company Name) do for you *and above all else* what is it that we do that you appreciate the most?
2. Is there anything you wonder about, at all, regarding our firm or our services that we could clear up for you?
3. Do you have any helpful ideas or observations for our firm?
4. Were you ever surprised by us (in a positive or negative) fashion?
5. Did we ever do anything that you did not expect?
- 6. Is there anything missing – anything that you wish we could do for you?** (My favorite question)
7. Do you know every one on our team? Do you know what they do?
8. If you met a friend out and about and they expressed a financial concern, would you be comfortable telling them about us? What would you say to describe us?
9. What is your preferred communication and why that particular one?
10. If completely left up to you, how many times would you like to come into our office?

### Other tips:

If you are contemplating a client event, ask your clients – Please take a few moments and share with us what type of event would you like to attend? No boundaries or parameters – no censorship – what would you like to attend in a client gathering? Do not offer examples until you really pushed first for their ideas.

Ask permission and record each meeting, take notes later or take some notes as well to capture real time observations on your part.

Have a token gift to send them home with – if no dessert – your famous bakery with tiny personal desserts could work.

Serve fork and knife food for ease, have salad and vegetarian food available as well. You could have your office double check in advance if anyone has food allergies and/or diet restrictions.

Have additional “back pocket” items available off to the side in a file folder if in fact you are running way ahead of schedule. It is more likely you will lose track of time and you need to be aware of staying on track as closely as possible to your preconceived agenda. It is much more common to run behind schedule.

Do share with everyone what time dinner will be served and you will allow for a quick restroom break. Do ask that they silence their cell phones and yours too. Request that everyone gets back on track promptly.

### **Helpful Phrases:**

Hmmm (that’s it) Nod and acknowledge  
Or Hmmm ... interesting - tell me more  
Would you like to add anything else?

Let’s keep the conversation going ... who has anything to add?

Can you tell me a bit more?

Look at everyone in a sweeping glance as a topic does appear to be fully flushed out and ask:

Did we fully cover that issue – shall we move on?

Thank you – that is very helpful.

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Attempt to accomplish the entire evening ending perhaps 15 to 30 minutes earlier than anticipated. NEVER run late.

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### ***Framework for Meeting***

**Opening Warm Up** – First review the purpose of the evening that the group has been gathered to offer their opinions in the hope that what we share and learn together will serve to improve the firm in a meaningful manner.

We will kick off by sharing a bit about ourselves for 2-3 minutes and then each of you will have the opportunity to do the same in order that we may all get to know one another better.

30:00

**Begin: Inquiry of Clients** - Ask a few strong feedback questions from them

30:00

**Dinner and Restroom** – Light and fun casual conversation – ask who has a great vacation story or a funny predicament story to share.

45:00

Get everyone settled and back on track as swiftly as possible. Playfully put someone in charge of herding the cats and keeping on course including reining in a person who talks far too much. Be prepared to do this graciously.

**Strategy of the Firm** – One owner can share a brief history and the goals and vision going forward.

10:00

**The Team** - The other owner can share the profile of each person in the firm including both owners and the staff and their roles very clearly explained and how each of you relate to the client in each of your respective jobs.

10:00

Continue with the remainder of the most important remaining questions and save others for the next meeting if time is running low. 20:00

**Closing:** Each one shares what was meaningful for them at this meeting  
The owners take a few minutes to thank everyone for their participation and hand out the bakery items. Give them at that time the date of the next CAB meeting on the calendar. 20:00

All future meetings will be much more focused on questions and feedback, helpful dialogue and more honest direction from your people because they got the warm up meeting out of the way. They will understand their role a bit better. You can encourage them a few weeks before the meeting to begin to think about some points they can raise at the upcoming CAB meeting that will help the firm. You can accomplish this gesture with an (easy to send out) email template.

Then toast yourselves for doing a GREAT job of your first Client Advisory Board meeting.

**Yeah ... Happy dance!**