

# FORUM

## WHAT IS FORUM?

By definition, a YPO Forum is a small group of peers who meet regularly to exchange ideas, thoughts and experiences on the issues that matter most to them. However, in the more than 30 years since its inception, Forum has come to mean much more.

Today in YPO, Forum is a universal language spoken by nearly 19,000 YPO-WPO members worldwide. This language enables meaningful, instant connections among members, their partners and their young adult children, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Forum is so intrinsic to the member's YPO experience that its key elements have been codified, and the Forum Code is an integral part of YPO events and education programs, encouraging peer exchange, community building and a deeper exploration of members' most pressing issues.

Forum is also a set of essential skills including active listening, coaching, small group leadership, and conflict resolution that, when practiced regularly, enhance members' effectiveness in their personal and professional lives.

Forums have assembled in boardrooms and living rooms, on mountaintops and manufacturing plant floors, in hospitals and churches, supporting members in their darkest hours and celebrating with them in their brightest moments.

For these reasons and more, Forum is widely considered the most valuable experience offered to YPO members, their spouse/partners and young adult children.

More YPOers and their spouses participate in Forum than any other single YPO activity. Ask any YPO member what Forum has done for them, and he or she will likely tell you that Forum has made them a better president, partner, parent and person.

### What Does a Forum Meeting Look Like?

A typical Chapter Forum meets once each month, for four hours, with one annual retreat. Each meeting follows a standard agenda designed to maximize the value of each member's time and participation.

Unlike other business-oriented personal advisory groups whose meetings are run by an external paid resource, all YPO Forums are peer-moderated. Each Forum selects its own Moderator, who prepares for the role by attending a Forum Moderator Development workshop. This role rotates annually to another member, with all members sharing ongoing responsibility for the Forum's overall health, relevance and value.

### What does "Forum Confidential" mean?

Each Forum meeting is a sealed discussion – what is said in the room, stays in the room – and it is in this confidential environment that members are empowered to openly share, celebrate and discuss their best and most difficult experiences.

*Forum provides the single most important experience that is lacking in the upper echelon of management: a completely confidential exchange from which you obtain unbiased, caring and insightful knowledge that you can never get from your in-house management team, board of directors or business partners.*

– Member, YPO Bahamas



*Forum is very special ... it's when you rush to the hospital emergency room in the middle of the night for your son, and you look up at a sea of strange doctors' faces ... and then you notice a YPO Forum member quietly standing in a corner ... and you never called him.*

– YPO Member



### Before You Join a Forum

If you are a new or prospective YPO member or spouse, you may already have participated in a Forum orientation program such as [A Taste of Forum](#), which is commonly a featured part of the [New Member and Spouse Orientation](#). A Taste of Forum is designed to whet your appetite for Forum, and to highlight its significance as a core benefit of YPO membership. Before you join a Forum though, you'll need to savor the full four-course meal: [Forum Fundamentals](#).

[Forum Fundamentals](#) is the pre-requisite for Forum participation, and is essential to maximizing the value of your YPO Forum experience. In Forum Fundamentals, you will gain a solid understanding of basic Forum principles and protocol, meeting structure and roles and responsibilities. This 8-hour workshop features an actual Forum meeting that prepares participants to launch a new Forum or to join an existing Forum. If your chapter does not have a critical mass of new members and spouses to hold its own Forum Fundamentals, you may be eligible to attend a workshop in another YPO Region. Available workshops are listed in the Forum section of [ypowpo.org](#) and on the YPO Events Calendar.

When a group of new members or spouses is using Forum Fundamentals to launch a new Forum, the Moderator should also attend a [Forum Moderator Development \(FMD\)](#) program. The FMD prepares incoming Moderators for their role as meeting leaders, and provides additional skills and tools not included in Forum Fundamentals. YPO members and spouses who have not completed Forum Fundamentals are not eligible to attend Forum Moderator Development.

### How to Join a Forum

Each YPO chapter selects a [Forum Officer](#) (for Member Forums) and [Spouse Forum Coordinator](#) (for Spouse Forums) to oversee Forum training and placement, to provide support and to serve as the liaison between the chapter's Forums, executive leadership, and the Region. Once you have completed Forum Fundamentals, your chapter Forum Officer or Spouse Forum Coordinator will assign you to an existing Forum, taking into account potential conflicts of interest with existing Forum members and any other special considerations. Each chapter's Forum placement policy is unique, so it is best to check with your Forum Officer or Spouse Forum Coordinator for specific details.



### Who Will Lead My Forum Training?

Forum Fundamentals and Forum Moderator Development are designed to be led by an independent, [Certified Forum Facilitator \(CFF\)](#) who has completed a rigorous application and certification process led by members of the YPO International Forum Committee and management team. CFF bios, ratings and information are available on [ypowpo.org](#). More than 80 facilitators worldwide are certified to deliver Forum education programs, in more than 13 languages to meet the needs of YPO's diverse global membership.



*I was astounded by how powerful and emotional the day was, and it got me beyond excited to get my real Forum started!*

– FF participant



## What If I Can't Join a Chapter Forum?

In some small chapters, members may know each other through professional or personal contacts outside of YPO-WPO, thereby creating conflicts of interest with members already in Forum. In other instances, the chapter's existing Forum(s) do not have room for new members, and the pool of new members is not large enough to reach the minimum number necessary to start a new Forum. Your Forum Officer/Spouse Forum Coordinator will place you on a waiting list until a critical mass to start a new Forum is reached, or space becomes available in an existing Forum.



*Perhaps one of the most eye-opening experiences in my life was the participation in the Peace Action Network's Arab/Israeli Middle East Peace Forum, where six members of the Israeli Chapter and six Arab YPOers joined the Forum. From total distrust, anxiety, and perhaps even resentment between the two sides, we built a new and strong foundation of friendship and teamwork toward better understanding and a common future.*

– Member, YPO Jeddah

## Are There Other Types of Forums in YPO?

Yes! YPO offers an array of Innovative Forum experiences designed to challenge, inform, and support you on your YPO journey. These Forums are formed on a regional or global basis and can be an excellent alternative for YPO Members and Spouses who are unable to join a Forum in their local chapter.

### International and Regional Forums

International and Regional Forums appeal to Members and Spouses seeking a Forum experience that is culturally diverse, expands their "O" network and exists outside their local chapter. These Forums meet less frequently than chapter Forums, but for a longer duration.

### Network Forums

Formed within Networks, members of these Forums share a common professional focus or personal interest, while taking careful steps to avoid conflicts of interest. Network Forums can be formed at the Regional or International level.



## What Forums Exist for My Spouse and Family?

### Spouse/Partner Forums

Spouse Forums enable YPO Spouse/Partners to reap the benefits of the Forum experience, and engage in a rich exchange of ideas and experiences. Some chapters offer Forums specifically for Spouse/Partners who are working parents and are not able to participate in a traditional chapter Spouse Forum. Most YPO chapters have a volunteer Spouse Forum Coordinator who can answer specific questions about Spouse/Partner Forum opportunities in their chapter.

### Couples Forums

Formed at the Regional and International level, Couples Forums bring 6-8 couples together 2-3 times annually. Although each meeting is unique, Couples Forums typically build in time for both serious discussions and fun. Meeting locations are chosen by the members and may require significant travel time, depending on the group's geographic diversity.

### Youth and Young Adult Forums

Youth and Young Adult Forums extend the benefit of the Forum experience to members' young adult children, keeping them connected through YPO long after they have left your nest. Youth Forums are designed for students ages 18-22, and Young Adult Forums are open to working professionals between the ages of 23-39. Additional eligibility requirements may apply.

*We have three children and I work full time, time is very precious to me. What I have found is that Forum is an investment of time in me. The unique structure provides me with a personal resource that is fully confidential and supports me in a way that friends, family and partners cannot do.*

– Spouse, YPO Golden Gate



*“Our Couples Forum experience has become a meaningful, essential element in our lives. We wouldn't miss a single meeting.”*

– Members, WPO Pennine



### How Does YPO-WPO International Support Forums?

- Certified Forum Facilitator database and referrals
- Placement assistance for International and Regional Forums
- Regional and chapter Forum Officer and Spouse Forum Coordinator training and support
- Forum tools and exercises on ypowpo.org
- Dedicated Forum Management Team and Helpdesk (Email: Forumhelp@ypowpo.org)
- International Forum Committee composed of YPO-WPO Members and Spouses with a passion for Forum

### Ready To Get Started?

To begin your Forum experience, contact your Forum Officer or Spouse Forum Coordinator and request information on upcoming Forum Fundamentals programs in your area. For additional assistance, please visit ypowpo.org or contact a member of the YPO-WPO International Forum Management Team at Forumhelp@ypowpo.org.



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