

The Whetstone Growth Academy (WGA)

Career-Spanning Business Development Training



The Whetstone Group

Growth Tools for a Competitive Edge

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Objective

The Whetstone Group, Inc.'s Career-Spanning Business Development Training Program has the following objectives:

- To help professionals of all levels in CPA firms understand their roles in business development for the firm and build the skills necessary to fulfill their roles.
- To prepare professionals in CPA firms to become effective partners by building their ability to develop new business with both existing and prospective clients.
- To give CPA firms an option for providing their staff with “soft-skill” CPE in a convenient manner at a reasonable rate.

General Description

Business development training sessions are offered via interactive Webinars. The training modules qualify in most states for CPE credit (subject to specific state rules) and are divided into levels that align with the various career points of professionals in CPA firms:

- New Staff (1-2 years with the firm)
- Senior Staff (3-5 years with the firm)
- Managers (5-8 years with the firm, includes any professionals with responsibility for managing client engagements)
- Partners and Partners-in-Training (>8 years with the firm, including all partners and those who are on track to be partner in the next couple of years)

The sessions last either one or two hours and include a combination of presentation, practical examples and exercises. Some two-part classes include homework assignments given at the end of part I to be reviewed at the scheduled follow-up session (part II).

Each “module” of the program will be offered a minimum of two times throughout a 12-month period to accommodate varying schedules and new hires.



How It Works

Following are the key logistics elements of the program:

- **Length:** Firms will purchase a one-year subscription for the program. The annual subscription will be divided into three equal invoices – one at the time the subscription is purchased, and two successive invoices four months apart after the initial invoice.
- **Fee:** The subscription fee is based on the number of professionals the firm registers. If a firm wants to add registrants during the subscription period, the fee will be prorated for the months remaining in the period. When the subscription is renewed each year, the firm can add or remove registrants if so desired.
- **Access:** Once a subscription is purchased, the purchasing firm will be provided with the schedule of courses, log-in information and a password. The subscribing firm will then have access to all sessions and the ability to have an unlimited number of their registered professionals at each session. Individuals will also be able to repeat sessions as often as needed for practice and review.
- **Contact:** The firm will designate one person as the contact with Whetstone and all program communication will go through this contact person – invoices, session handouts, CPE evaluations and certificates, etc.

Why This Program

There are several advantages to this business development CPE program over other options available in the market:

- **Concepts that work:** Because the program was developed by a former practicing CPA working with business development professionals and experienced trainers/educators, the concepts in each session have been proven effective in actual practice.
- **Partners ready from day one:** No need for a “crash course” in responsibilities once an individual makes partner. The career-spanning approach develops future partners who understand their role in business development and have developed the skills, networks and relationships to be effective, contributing partners.
- **New talent orientation:** New employees at every level can be brought up to speed with immediate access to the entire program. Whether they are first-year staff or senior managers, this training program will provide the common vocabulary and tools they need to quickly identify their role in the firm and contribute to business development.
- **More staff participation in business development:** This unique program is offered for all levels of staff with modules targeted for each level’s appropriate role in growth – this gets more staff involved in business development and allows them all to start contributing to firm growth immediately upon completing their first session.
- **Opportunities to practice and review:** The annual subscription, unlimited access and continuous class offerings allow participants to repeat sessions at no additional charge so they can review concepts after practical application and fully master the skills.
- **Better client retention and satisfaction:** The consultative selling concepts featured in this program will help firms solve more of their clients’ problems. This will improve their overall client service, increasing both client satisfaction and longevity.



- **Easy, convenient, affordable:** There is not a large investment in fees, travel or time to implement the program. The cost is reasonable, and the classes are taught in short, manageable sessions that participants can attend right in their own offices.

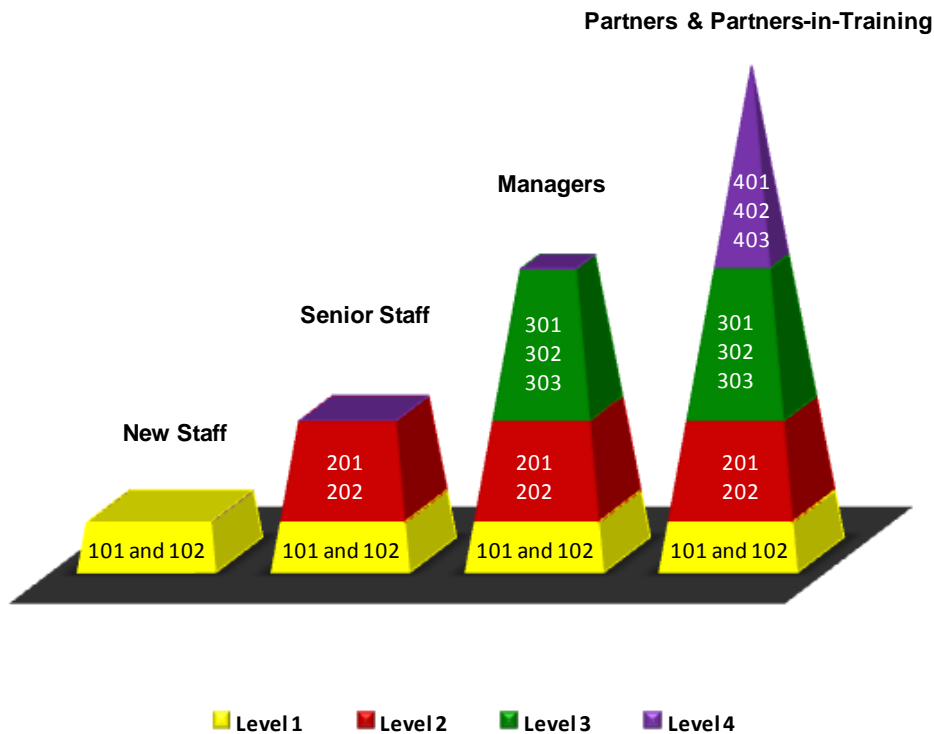
Fee

The annual subscription fee will be based on how many professionals a firm registers, as follows:

Number of registered participants:	Subscription fee per professional:
<100	\$200
100-249	\$175
250-499	\$150
500+	\$125

The Program – Sessions, Hours and Course Descriptions

The image below is a graphic illustration of how the program builds over the professional’s career. The table on the following page summarizes the recommended modules by level of staff for the program. The modules are listed in the recommended chronological order in which they should be taken and include four bonus specialty sessions for experienced partners (Level 5). Complete course descriptions, including learning objectives and format details start on page 5.



Career-Spanning Program Modules

New Staff	Senior Staff	Managers	Partners/P.I.T.	Specialty Sessions
101: Basic Business Development Concepts and Your Role (2 hours)				
102: Business Communication Skills (1 hour)				
	201: Basic Client Marketing (2 hours)			
	202: Working Events (1 hour)			
		301:A: Client Cross-Selling I (2 hours)		
		301:B: Client Cross-Selling II (2 hours)		
		302: Generating Effective Referrals (1 hour)		
		303: Personal Marketing Strategies (1 hour)		
			401:A: Working the Sales Cycle I (2 hours)	
			401:B: Working the Sales Cycle II (2 hours)	
			402: Mastering the Proposal Process (2 hours)	
			403: Determining Goals and ROI for Your Book of Business (2 hours)	
				501:A: Sales Management Concepts (2 hours)
				501:B: Sales Management Concepts (2 hours)
				502: Advanced Prospecting Strategies (2 hours)
				503: Moving Clients from Satisfied to Loyal (2 hours)
3 CPE hours	3 CPE hours	6 CPE hours	8 CPE hours	8 CPE hours

Level 1: New Staff (1-2 years with firm)

101: Basic Business Development Concepts and Your Role

Description: Setting a foundation for business development efforts, this session establishes a common approach and language within a firm. The session explains how business development works in an accounting firm and how each individual can effectively play a role in growth. Participants will be introduced to the concepts of brand, market focus and strategic growth alternatives. They will also understand how business development responsibilities will build throughout their careers and why it is important to prepare for their future roles. This perspective can help reduce the anxiety new staff feels toward business development.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the difference between marketing and sales activities and understand how to balance the two
- Define the strategic growth alternatives and realize their importance in setting goals and identifying appropriate activities
- Identify several “soft” skills and explain how they apply to specific business development roles
- Understand the importance of becoming known in their communities and the need for focus in building individual networks
- Inventory their personal business development strengths and weaknesses
- Estimate what skills will help them fulfill their business development responsibilities as they progress to senior staff

Format: 2-hour interactive webinar with a guided exercise

CPE: 2 credit hours

102: Business Communication Skills

Description: Effective communication skills are essential in the increasingly technical accounting profession. Staff who can fully understand AND clearly communicate complex accounting and tax issues will prove themselves valuable as they advance within their firms. This session illustrates the elements of successful business writing, public speaking and one-on-one conversations. Participants will learn how to select the most effective form of communication for a given audience and develop a straightforward message to avoid misunderstandings or complications.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Assess their audience and respond in the appropriate medium accordingly (e-mail, written report, phone, etc.)
- Practice proper email etiquette to favorably represent themselves and their firm
- Employ active verbs and eliminate unnecessary details for clearer written communication
- Anticipate questions and prepare responses to improve the efficiency of their communication
- Apply public speaking tips to make speaking less intimidating and more effective

Format: 1-hour interactive webinar with a guided exercise

CPE: 1 credit hour



Level 2: Senior Staff (2-5 years)

201: Basic Client Marketing

Description: Identifying client needs is the first step to cross-selling firm services. Since senior staff often spends the most time in the field with client employees, they are well positioned to recognize signs of frustration or inefficiency in an organization. This session will train participants to listen and observe while working on an engagement, develop and maintain beneficial relationships with client personnel and start conversations regarding additional solutions their firms can provide. Participants will also learn how to talk “benefits” instead of “features” and how to report observations to supervisors who can best follow-up with a client.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify key information needed for marketing a service
- Differentiate between service features and client benefits
- Develop and ask clients open-ended, high gain questions to explore needs
- Report observations regarding potential cross-selling opportunity to appropriate firm contact
- Identify with whom in the client organization they need to network to be effective

Format: 2-hour interactive webinar with guided exercises

CPE: 2 credit hours

202: Working Events (Making Events Work for You)

Description: This session will help participants become professional representatives of their firms at community and industry networking events. Senior staff will learn how to prepare for a potential networking opportunity and receive tips to make them more comfortable and effective during an event. The session will also illustrate how to maximize the value of each event through effective follow-up activities with new contacts.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Determine event objectives based on knowledge of typical attendees
- Prepare an accurate, brief response to the question: “What does your firm do?” and/or “What do you do?”
- Initiate conversations and effectively circulate throughout an event
- Report the results of an event internally to their superiors
- Plan external follow-up activities with supervisor direction

Format: 1-hour interactive webinar with a guided exercise

CPE: 1 credit hour



Level 3: Managers (5-8 years)

301:A&B: Client Cross-Selling I & II

Description: With a consistent cross-selling strategy, CPA firms can not only develop new business but also improve client service. This session illustrates how to view a client roster as a valuable asset and source of continuous revenues. Participants will learn ways to increase awareness of client needs throughout their firm, approach clients regarding specific services and employ follow-up activities that solve client needs and expand their relationship with the firm.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Utilize provided tools to evaluate clients for potential cross-selling opportunities
- Implement a standard process to train staff and colleagues to more effectively position firm services during regular client interaction
- Compose more effective management letters
- Initiate high gain, benefit-oriented conversations with clients
- Quantify the value proposition for clients to purchase additional services
- Plan appropriate follow-up activities to continue sales cycle with clients

Format: Divided into two sequential sessions (Part I and Part II), this module consists of two 2-hour interactive webinars with guided exercises and homework (participants will receive homework feedback in Part II)

CPE: 4 CPE credit hours

302: Generating Effective Referrals

Description: Even with a variety of marketing opportunities at a CPA firm's disposal, a significant amount of new business can be traced back to positive referrals. This session will help firms save time and money by focusing on the right Centers of Influence (COIs) and communicating a clear value proposition for potential referral sources. Participants will learn tips for getting client referrals as well, including which clients to ask, and how to approach them and when to make the requests. The session will also provide strategies for managing and evaluating existing referral sources.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify promising referral sources within their communities and targeted industries
- Assess the value of a COI relationship and determine objectives
- Develop a communications plan to build mutually beneficial COI relationships
- Apply techniques to effectively request referrals from clients
- Track the progress of referrals and measure the overall ROI of a referral program

Format: 1-hour interactive webinar with guided exercises

CPE: 1 credit hour



303: Personal Marketing Strategies

Description: Everyone has a role to play in growth. Individuals can maximize their contributions to a firm's business development efforts by selecting activities that best match their professional strengths. This session will explore a variety of techniques, including article writing, speaking engagements, group memberships and high-level client relationships, that can be employed to advance the image of the individuals and their firms. Participants will learn how to choose methods that best fit their personalities, how to allot the right amount of time to business development efforts and how to transition from marketing to sales when necessary.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Transition effectively between marketing and sales activities
- Enhance firm visibility and level of involvement in their community and/or targeted industry
- Estimate potential ROI of individual business development efforts
- Maximize personality traits and professional strengths to attract new clients

Format: 1-hour interactive webinar with guided exercises

CPE: 1 credit hour

Level 4: Partners and Partners-in-Training (>8 years)

401:A&B: Working the Sales Cycle I & II

Description: A firm-wide culture of growth and accountability depends on a shared approach to business development. This session will provide techniques to help partners more effectively work the sales cycle, such as preparing for the first sales meeting, speaking to client/prospect needs, creating urgency and working through objections. Participants will also receive tools to advance prospects through the sales cycle and track their firm's progress.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand the steps and length of a typical sales cycle
- Identify a prospect's decision-making process and adjust messages accordingly
- Differentiate their firm from the competition
- Convey urgency by communicating risk and opportunities
- Anticipate and effectively respond to prospect objections
- Manage leads and track results with tools provided

Format: Divided into two sequential sessions (Part I and Part II), this module consists of two 2-hour interactive webinars with guided exercises and homework (participants will receive homework feedback in Part II)

CPE: 4 credit hours



402: Mastering the Proposal Process

Description: Whether responding to an RFP or working with an internally generated lead, a CPA firm must take the time to understand the situation before producing a winning proposal. This session will illustrate how to evaluate the merit of an opportunity, assemble an appropriate sales team and assess the needs of the prospect. Participants will receive tips for key aspects of the document, including effective organization, firm differentiation, fee presentation and the use of pre-set copy blocks. They will also learn ways to effectively deliver the proposal, follow-up with the prospect and adjust their process for the best results.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Streamline their proposal process to improve quality and efficiency
- Acquire valuable insight into a prospect's decision process with a needs assessment meeting
- Anticipate the competition (or other obstacles) and positively position their firm
- Apply effective interview techniques when they deliver proposals
- Utilize provided tools to evaluate the success of their firm's process

Format: 2-hour interactive webinar with guided exercise (materials will be provided to participants prior to session)

CPE: 2 credit hours

403: Determining Goals and ROI for Your Book of Business

Description: Partners can maximize their contributions to firm growth by effectively managing their own books of business. This session takes planning to the micro level and illustrates how individuals can identify growth opportunities, set effective revenue goals and plan specific activities customized to their area(s) of concentration. Participants will receive tools to set a growth goal (net and gross), measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Select strategic growth alternatives with the most opportunity for growth
- Set realistic growth goals for their book of business
- Align business development activities to accomplish established goals
- Track individual progress with the tools provided
- Calculate overall ROI of their business development efforts

Format: 2-hour interactive webinar with guided exercises

CPE: 2 credit hours



Level 5: Specialty Modules ***(Bonus Sessions for Experienced Partners)****

501:A&B Sales Management Concepts I & II

Description: Ideal for managing partners and/or business development partners, this session illustrates how to build a sales culture to realize a firm's growth potential. Participants will receive strategies for holding partners accountable, coaching staff in their business development roles and evaluating the ROI of their efforts. The session will also explore ways to effectively organizing for growth, develop strategic alliances and address merger opportunities.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand key elements of a successful sales culture
- Evaluate the pros and cons of different organizational structures
- Coach partners and staff to improve their business development skills
- Employ tools provided to hold partners accountable
- Improve efficiency of sales team by tracking return on time invested in business development
- Assess the merit of merger candidates and potential strategic partners

Format: Divided into two sequential sessions (Part I and Part II), this module consists of two 2-hour interactive webinars with guided exercises and homework (participants will receive homework feedback in Part II)

CPE: 4 credit hours

502: Advanced Prospecting Strategies

Description: Ideal for partners who want more in-depth business development training, this session provides techniques for targeting specific prospects. Participants will learn how to identify promising entities, focus their business development efforts and read decision-makers' motivations—Are they moved by threats or opportunities? Price or prestige?

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify steps for successfully pursuing targeted prospects
- Formulate a list of entities worth the investment of targeted prospecting
- Recognize prospects' motivations and adjust messages accordingly
- Apply tips for effectively engaging large account opportunities

Format: 2-hour interactive webinar with a guided exercise

CPE: 2 credit hours



503: Moving Clients from Satisfied to Loyal

Description: Ideal for partners who want more in-depth business development training, this session provides strategies for managing client relationships and raising their firms' client service standards. Participants will learn how to develop firm-wide processes to continuously measure client satisfaction, assess client needs and make their firms indispensable through value-added services and frequent communication.

Learning objectives: Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

- Measure client satisfaction with a variety of techniques
- Lead an internal discussion regarding their firm's relationship with a client
- Plan an agenda for a needs assessment meeting with a client
- Develop a client service plan to increase loyalty and provide added value to clients

Format: 2-hour interactive webinar with a guided exercise

CPE: 2 credit hours



Whetstone Growth Academy 2012 Calendar

Date	Module	Time (Central)
APRIL 2012		
April 24, 2012	101	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
April 26, 2012	501a	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
MAY 2012		
May 1, 2012	201	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
May 3, 2012	301a	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
May 8, 2012	401a	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
May 17, 2012	501b	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
May 22, 2012	301b	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
May 24, 2012	401b	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
JUNE, 2012		
June 5, 2012	102	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
June 12, 2012	202	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
June 21, 2012	402	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
June 28, 2012	302	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
JULY, 2012		
July 10, 2012	502	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
July 17, 2012	303	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
July 26, 2012	403	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
AUGUST, 2012		
August 2, 2012	503	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
SEPTEMBER, 2012		
September 6, 2012	101	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
September 18, 2012	501a	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
September 25, 2012	201	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
September 27, 2012	301a	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
October, 2012		
October 2, 2012	401a	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
October 4, 2012	501b	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
October 16, 2012	301b	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
October 18, 2012	401b	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
October 23, 2012	102	3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
October 30, 2012	202	3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
NOVEMBER, 2012		
November 1, 2012	502	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
November 6, 2012	302	3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
November 13, 2012	402	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
DECEMBER, 2012		
December 4, 2012	303	3:00 PM - 4:00 PM
December 11, 2012	403	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
JANUARY, 2013		
January 8, 2013	503	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM