



Why will I use a mentor to start my business as a young entrepreneur?

Business counseling is a proven practice, worldwide, whereby business problems are diagnosed, expertise shared, solutions sought and guidance given. The ongoing process of business counseling, focused on support, guidance, mutual exchange, coaching and role modeling is encompassed in the term “mentoring”.

Mentoring provides a wealth of experiences, environments, people and places. The variety of work provides excitement, challenge and interest and the opportunity to extend oneself beyond one’s personal success through the assisting of other business people. Exposure to a large variety of clients offers a fresh perspective on business and the potential to develop new and long lasting friendships.

Inexperienced entrepreneurs and new businesses need mentors. Most entrepreneurs start their new businesses with an idea and a dream (goal, vision, and plan), a lot of determination (ambition, perseverance) and very little experience. The difference between success or failure can often be bridged by obtaining the assistance, experience, skills and wisdom of a mentor.

Different roles of the mentor

Mentoring is a conscious deliberate relationship where personal skills and attributes are required to impart knowledge and experience in such a way that the maximum benefit can be derived by all parties concerned. In order to achieve these goals, the mentor may have to fulfill various roles, depending on the requirements and needs at hand.

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Analyst

A mentor will collate and study as much information about the business as possible in the shortest period of time and will have to be able to determine relevance, interpret facts and identify trends.

Assessor

Personalities, information and operations in the business needs to be objectively and thoroughly assessed in order to come to meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

Advisor

A mentor must be able to provide balanced and objective advice, sincere opinions and unique insights in a timely manner based on his/her personal experiences.

Supporter/Nurturer

Sometimes the client might just be feeling down and need moral support (building self confidence) or may have a need to discuss his problems with a mentor.

Tutor/Coach

A mentor must be able to pass on his skills and knowledge through tutoring/coaching. A Coach must have the ability to awaken in you your challenges and desired goals, help you to formalize these and then coax / coach you into achieving this.

Psychologist

A mentor might often be called upon to use his interpersonal and psychological skills and calming influence to develop positive behaviours.

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Diplomat/Advocate

Dealing with different personalities and levels of expertise can require a lot of diplomacy. A mentor will often have to search for ways to enable the clients to become aware of their own limitations and how to improve their own self esteem.

Rainmaker/Matchmaker

A mentor will inevitably share his network to benefit his client by connecting him/her with other professionals, avenues and opportunities.

Mentoring Styles

There is no single formula for good mentoring - mentoring styles and activities are as varied as human relationships. The ideal mentoring style is the one that achieves its objectives in a particular situation. Different businesses/clients will require different amounts and kinds of attention, advice, information and encouragement. Effective mentoring is characterised by mutual respect, trust, understanding and empathy.

The particular style of a mentor will, to a great extent be determined by his experience and background and the industry and environment that he has been exposed to. Successful mentors will however understand that mentoring is as much a “people” business as it is a “knowledge” business.

The nature of the mentorship varies with the level and activities of both the client and the mentor. However in general each relationship must be based on a common goal. This common goal will be established at the initial interview but a mentor must be able to read the signs if things have changed and be able to adapt to change and reset the mutual parameters originally agreed upon.

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