

# 2012

## Business Mentoring



*Soft*  *Touch*  
We Touch All  
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## What is mentoring?

### We take a look at the process and what it involves



A mentor is essentially a 'wise or trusted adviser or guide'. The word has its origins in Homer's *The Odyssey*. Before leaving to fight the Trojan war, Odysseus leaves his son and estate in the care of his friend Mentor, who then guides the young Telemachus.

To give it a more modern context, a mentor is someone with more experience or wisdom, sharing and imparting his or her knowledge on to

someone younger or less experienced.

The concept works incredibly well in a business environment where an entrepreneur may have a great idea for a business but needs a bit of guidance turning it into a successful and profitable venture.

Successful entrepreneurs will often attribute much of their achievement to the support and guidance they received from a mentor. Most notably, billionaire airline and entertainment industry mogul Richard Branson was mentored by the British airline entrepreneur Freddie Laker.

Mentoring does not involve employing a consultant or employee to help run your business. It's a relationship between you, the entrepreneur, and someone with business experience that can guide you through tough decisions, point out ways of improving your business and offer general support within a trusted relationship.

It's a two-way communication process which gives more experienced entrepreneurs who have possibly taken a step back, or even retired from their business, the opportunity to share their wealth of skills, experience and expertise with those hungry for knowledge and guidance.

## How does mentoring work?

### An explanation of the way entrepreneurs can work with their mentors



The way you choose to approach mentoring will be dependent on how much involvement you agree to, or request your mentor to have with your business. Some mentors and mentees work extremely close to each other, speaking or meeting most weeks or even days.

However, in most cases a mentor will have less of a day-to-day involvement with the business. Instead they'll provide help every few weeks or months which could take the

form of phone calls, emails, face-to-face meetings or a combination of all of these.

Mentoring can be a very formal and structured process with regular meetings which follow a specific agenda and set of goals. It can also be quite a casual arrangement, where the mentee calls on the mentor as and when problems or questions arise.

The main thing to remember about mentoring is that it's not just a one-off meeting, or opportunity to pick the brain of a more experienced entrepreneur. It's an ongoing relationship where both parties must be committed to achieving certain goals and willing to live up to their end of the bargain.

There are plenty of mentoring organisations where you can request a mentor through formal channels. There is information about some of these organisations, and how to get in touch with them, [here](#).

However, you don't have to go through formal channels to bring a mentor on board to help your business. Friends, contacts and fellow entrepreneurs can end up as informal mentors, sometimes without you even realising.

## Why should I bother?

### A look at what you stand to gain by taking on a mentor



You may be wondering what exactly you stand to gain from a mentor, especially if your business is ticking along nicely with you flying solo at the controls. But do you really have the experience and skill set to deal with everything being an entrepreneur throws at you?

Why not take advantage of the help on offer? Someone that can look at the business with a fresh pair of eyes and an outside perspective may point out issues

you hadn't even considered.

Good mentors will have developed and run successful businesses themselves. During their careers they will have learned how to overcome certain roadblocks and may be able to offer you a way through your problems without the trial and error process you'd go through on your own.

Developing a good relationship with a mentor will give you someone to bounce ideas off. A mentor can help you develop your suggestions for the business as well as provide you with fresh inspiration.

If you've recently made the transition from employee to self-employed you may find your mentor useful to help you set your personal deadlines and goals. Adjusting to being your own boss can be daunting if you don't have a natural instinct for what a reasonable amount of time and effort to spend on the business is. Your mentor can help you assess whether or not you're putting in the necessary time and energy into the project, or conversely, if you're spreading yourself too thin.

Another reason why a mentor could prove invaluable is the access to the networks they're familiar with. Having been in certain industries and business environments longer than you, they're bound to have built up contacts throughout their career that you may be able to call upon when necessary.

This is by no means an extensive list of all the benefits a mentor can bring to your business. Individual entrepreneurs have different requirements and likewise different mentors can bring all kinds of value to a business. Used and maintained appropriately, a relationship with a mentor could really help your business thrive.

## Client Testimony

### Raymond Rampolokeng: "Mr G has helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses"



In 2008, at the age of 32, I set up Bay of Grace Enterprises and Projects. Over the past three years the company has grown beyond recognition and being an entrepreneur has certainly lived up to all my expectations.

I have learnt a huge amount since starting the business and I still feel like there's a lot more for me to learn.

Since joining the Tourism Enterprise Partnership (TEP) I have been given the unique opportunity to receive mentoring from Soft Touch Trading (Pty) Ltd - Chief Strategy Officer Mr Premanandha Gangiah.

It's so refreshing to have a new perspective on my business and how I can take it further – getting advice from such a successful entrepreneur has been an eye-opener to say the least.

Mr G has not only encouraged me to think about strategies to expand and grow Bay of Grace, but he has helped me understand myself and my strengths and weaknesses as a young entrepreneur.

A committed and enthusiastic mentor, Mr G has advised me to take a step back and really think about where I need to focus my energy in order to successfully expand and diversify the business. He recommended that I consider moving the business in a more structured and step-by-step manner and has encouraged me to create a solid business plan to support my ideas.

We have discussed the key ways to drive the business forward, including the importance of delegation and time management. My main struggle at the moment is not having enough time to achieve what I want, so I took the first step to hire an administrative assistant to take the pressure away from the jobs that are time-consuming and distracting. I now have three detailed plans for the different aspects of my business, which has given me a better understanding of where the potential profits in my business lie.

Mr G has also helped me focus on my own personal growth. One of the things he said that really made an impact was to stop saying 'we achieved this', but to instead focus on saying 'I have achieved this'. Yes, I have a fantastic team which has helped me get Bay of Grace to where it is today, but we agreed that for an entrepreneur, it is sometimes difficult to project your personal achievements and take ownership of them.

Another focus of the mentoring sessions has been the relationships with important clients and how I conduct myself and present my business in meetings, which has given me a new perspective on the value of my own self worth.

The mentoring scheme has been hugely beneficial to me personally and to my business and I feel very lucky to have been involved with the TEP – Mentorship Programme. I have received advice that I wouldn't have got elsewhere, that will really help the future development of my business.

Starting up on your own is sometimes scary and often difficult, especially for young entrepreneurs and therefore mentoring schemes like this are invaluable. I would advise anyone who is launching their first venture to consider taking part in such schemes – there is no better source of advice.

**Raymond Rampolokeng**

# Bay of Grace Tours

