

How to Be a Sales Mentor

By Chip Eichelberger



Almost every successful sales person I know can point to one or a few people who were instrumental to their success. They can name the mentors who encouraged them, showed them the error of their ways and helped them over the humps. I began my sales career with Jantzen Sportswear. I had an apprenticeship with one of their top reps, Kent McCreight in Minneapolis for ten months before taking over my first sales territory. That experience with Kent was invaluable. He was a seasoned pro who took the time with me and served as an excellent role model. My next mentor Tom Hopkins, was a virtual mentor. I purchased two of his tape series on sales and success and listened over and over while driving thousands of miles in my territory.

I began working for Tony Robbins in September of 1988. The manager of the sales team was Michael "Hutch" Hutchison. Almost twenty years later, he is still a mentor and one of my closest friends. Here are a few ideas to make a difference in your role as a mentor. If you choose to become a one, the first question you will ask yourself is why?

Usually a mentor has achieved great success and is a role model other look up to. Sometimes the mentor is in later career stages and can sometimes become disengaged and switched off. Mentoring provides a way to reengage the mentor and get them switched back on. For example, in the act of teaching someone else, the mentor may begin to see a new role for contributing to the firm he or she may "catch" some of the protégé's enthusiasm, and be reenergized him/herself. They will be motivated to set a strong example and challenge themselves to get back to executing the disciplines that got them to the top in the first place.

A good mentor should put their new protégé at ease and let them know they did not learn the business overnight. Anything worth doing well, is also worth doing poorly. You do not master anything worthwhile quickly. They must know you do not expect perfection. Your expectation should be consistent progress. They must be allowed to learn by doing and doing means making mistakes and learning from that experience.

1. Often the protégé is in the *enthusiastic beginner* stage where they can be easily crushed with too much criticism. Look out for areas of specific improvement and praise them. Find the right opportunities to tell them you see greatness in them. Instead of always telling them what they should do differently, **ask them** how they could have improved in a given situation.
2. Keep them focused with a specific plan of attack. Explain the three to five key daily activities that will drive their performance and **create a scorecard** for a goal to attain and their actual results. You can track their progress daily or weekly, but stay in touch. As a mentor, you can not coach them on what you can not measure.

3. Get them a **Journal** as a gift. Encourage them to not trust their memory and to write down what they are learning and enjoying. Tony gave me my first Journal and I now have 18 valuable editions. It is a great way to capture moments that you would normally forget. You can use it as a scrapbook of accomplishments and lessons

4. How they “**tell the story**” of what you and your firm does for clients is critical. For a mentor to conduct role modeling on a sales call, the protégé must be invited to watch as often as possible. Get permission to record the sales call from the client or prospect and tell them you would like to use it for training purposes for your protégé. Repeatedly listening to you and others at their best will cut the learning curve dramatically.

5. It is **tempting to solve their problems**. This is not mentoring. By solving their problems you take away their opportunity to become educated, and their ability to solve problems for themselves. People learn best when they face new challenges, in addition, they gain the skills to solve other, more difficult, problems. It builds self esteem and the belief they can handle any situation once they are on their own.

Being a successful mentor is a tremendous experience and delivers a great feeling of satisfaction. Being able to drastically cut the learning curve for someone is a great gift and of course a cost savings. You get the person up to speed quicker and cut the failure rate too. It can even be an informal relationship over the phone. Keep these five points in mind to make you even more successful.

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