

Benefits of Having a Mentor

Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan, arguably the two best basketball players ever, always had a coach/mentor. So did Babe Ruth in baseball. Joe Montana in football. Tiger Woods in golf. Most actors have someone else who directs the movie or play. The point is that the best almost always have a mentor to help them get to the top and keep them there.

Whatever area of your life you want to develop in, it is important that you have a mentor. Whether this is in your career, your personal life, your business or your hobbies, a mentor can speed up the learning process and help you to become the expert and success you want to be.

For a very long time I did not understand and underestimated the importance and value of having a mentor. I always figured I could search the Internet, turn to my parents, colleagues, multiple social networks, friends, or public forums whenever I needed advice and/or moral support. If you are like most people you may be wondering why anyone would want or need a mentor. Following are some excellent reasons for having one:

Thinking Bigger

We think the way we think because it is the way we have always thought. What we see as possible for ourselves is a combination of past experiences and what we observe in those who we surround ourselves with. Generally speaking, each area of our life, our finances for example, will be the average of the five people we hang out with the most. For almost all of us the future looks very much like our present circumstances give or take 12%. There are several reasons for this: it is all that we know, it is all we think is possible, our friends hold us back, not out of maliciousness, but so they feel comfortable around us, or maybe it is all we have given ourselves permission to want. Having a coach on your side gives you the opportunity to grow and experience many things you may not believe are possible. The new realm of possibility can be anything you want it to be, such as more time, more money, more satisfaction, more meaning. It can also be more of that intangible spark that makes your passion and purpose be expressed in the world in a way that only you can deliver. A good coach will hold you in that highest vision of yourself even when you feel like crap or when your outer results aren't yet what you want to see. This isn't about denial or wishful thinking. This is about making a powerful shift into the role of creating that vision you most want for your life personally and professionally. Even if you don't yet know what that vision is, the coach can help you discover it, claim it, and create it.

Accountability

The truth is, without someone for us to be accountable to, most of us will skip all of the uncomfortable stuff and keep doing what we already know because it is already familiar. Most of us do not want to take the risk of taking a stand, being seen, making a mistake or failing at something. Many people are even more concerned with the consequences if they succeed. Left alone we procrastinate even when we vow that we'll keep ourselves on track. Have you ever pledged to read some book and do all the exercises in it? If you did, what did you do with that information? Did it bring measurable results into your life? Once in a while you can have a mini-breakthrough this way. However, with the support of a highly trained coach you will achieve lasting, sustainable results far faster and easier.

Hearing and Speaking The Truth

All of us have blind spots. A good coach will help you see these and tell you the truth about them, unattached to any specific outcome. You can also speak your truth. Working with a coach affords you the opportunity to give voice to your authentic self and to what is really going on in your world, and to what you really want to create in your world. Loved ones, friends and colleagues inevitably are biased. A good coach will help you set and enforce healthy boundaries and take good care of yourself so you can create the present and future you most desire without being subject to distraction and competing agendas that leave you feeling conflicted and guilty.

Shortcuts

It is important to know where you are right now and where you want to go. Without knowing exactly where you are you have no idea how to get where you want to go. A good coach will help you get clear on both these points so you can start moving in the right direction now, not someday in the future. Coaching usually does not get you results overnight, but it is designed to increase the velocity at which you achieve your goals and move forward because you will learn techniques and shortcuts to get you where you want to go faster.

Significant Benefits

Following are seven significant benefits of coaching/mentoring:

1. Valuable experience.

Most of us like to think that we are smart and we can handle everything. At some time in our life we usually run into a problem bigger than we can handle. Hopefully you would never consider using a trial and error method to neutralize a bomb. I would hope you would not try to perform brain surgery on someone for the first time without having proper instruction. There are many times in life where it is infinitely more complicated than brain surgery, plane flying or neutralizing a bomb. There are some situations in life when there is much too much at stake and guesswork is definitely not a reasonable option. In these situations a mentor who is knowledgeable and experienced enough to help you make the right decision is probably the optimum choice.

2. Clarification.

As much as we would like to live according to our own conscience, it is not always easy to do so. Often there is a big grey area that separates "right" from "wrong" and "good" from "bad". Many times it is tempting to make the easy or convenient choice rather than the "right" one. Sometimes our heart is telling us to do one thing while our mind is telling us to do something else. Often with one simple question a good mentor is able to clear your doubts and confusion allowing you to move in the direction that is in your highest interest.

3. Encouragement.

We all have days when everything appears to go wrong and make us feel tired, frustrated and alone. Friends may tell us to "Cheer up!" or that "It is going to be ok" - sometimes this is helpful and other times it has the opposite effect, especially if the friend or acquaintance has never been in our situation or has no idea what we are really going through. A mentor, however, can provide additional information, give you another way to look at things, reassure you of your capabilities, and give you encouragement to keep you going forward.

4. Honesty.

The three conditions that wise men of ancient times believed made a person qualified to give a good advice are:

1. The advice giver should not be emotionally attached to you in any way, because otherwise they will not be unbiased. When there is an emotional attachment their emotions will usually interfere with their judgment.
2. The advice giver should not expect to be paid for their advice and should not depend on your income, because otherwise s/he will be conditioned to tell you what s/he thinks you like to hear.
3. And finally, the advice giver must practice what s/he preaches.

You can always find plenty of people who will readily give you advice. It is important for the advice giver to enough wisdom and inner strength to tell you what you need to hear and not what s/he thinks you want to hear. A good mentor is trained to do this.

5. Achieve success faster.

We have all heard there are two ways to gain wisdom in life: the hard way is to learn from your own mistakes and the easy way is to learn from the mistakes of other people. The first way is often more painful and more time consuming. The second way sometimes requires a mentor who will share their experience with you and help you to avoid mistakes that you might otherwise make. Clearly any experience holds valuable lessons that will help you to improve your performance in the future. However, it is not necessary to fail frequently. Finding a good mentor will help you to achieve success faster and with less effort.

6. Motivation.

There are many things we know we can do to improve our health and improve the quality of our life: exercise regularly, eat more fruits and vegetables, eat less fried and greasy foods, be more patient with our children, be kind to our neighbors, get enough sleep, blah, blah, blah. Most of us, however, do very few, if any, of these things. The reason for this is that there is a big difference between being aware of something and really understanding it. Sometimes we are aware of something for years, and then one day we suddenly have an "Aha" moment and it just makes sense. A good mentor frequently has the rare ability to explain to you, in a way that makes sense, what and why you need to do something to get optimum results. Often such conversations with a mentor often become a major turning point in many people's life.

7. Fewer excuses.

Most of us have a built-in self-defense mechanism that allows us to quickly justify things and come up with half-truths and excuses. The purpose of this mechanism is to protect our sense of self and ultimately our ego. Excuses allow us to procrastinate, become lazy, give up on our dreams, avoid helping others when we do not feel like it, or blame our failures on someone or something else. Many of us have gotten so good at this that they can do it all without any unpleasant feelings such as shame, embarrassment, fear, or guilt.

By far the biggest problem with this excuse mechanism is that it makes it nigh impossible to succeed at anything. A good mentor will be able to easily see through all of your carefully fabricated excuses and will not let you get away with them. Remember, the purpose of a mentor is to bring out the best in you.

Conclusion

Mentors provide real support and do not just cheer you on. Mentoring will energize and inspire you. It's not a strategy that you can get from a book or a CD or a class or advice you can get from your colleagues/friends. If you don't feel energized or challenged or inspired by your coach, he or she is most likely not the right coach for you. With a good mentor you will experience real, tangible results in your life, your career, your business, and all facets of your life. It is an investment with an exponential return on your investment that will only appreciate in value. You will reap the benefits for years from life-changing inner-shifts and the outer results that align with what you most want to be experiencing.

Mentoring clients gain invaluable insight well beyond their own education and experience. Using the guidance and support of a mentor will give you an edge in life. A mentor can guide you to achieve the results you have always dreamed of.