



Direct Selling Success

Lesson Seven Building Your Support System

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Finding Your Mentors

Support and encouragement during the early launch of your new venture is vital. Successful business builders find one or two mentors to provide this support. These mentors might be family members, friends, up-line leaders, partners, teachers or neighbors. Strong mentors can influence our aspirations, motivation, values, activities and work ethic. Sometimes these mentors are the only ray of light in a sea of naysayers. Most of the successful direct sellers we interview say that mentors have been critical to their success.

The most helpful mentors have certain qualifications. First, they should know you fairly well. Obviously, mentors who understand your strengths and weaknesses are in the best position to help. You may be pushed in ways that are not appropriate for you if your mentors do not understand you. Also, you don't want to miss out on opportunities because your mentors have not seen your skills and abilities.

Second, your mentors need to be enthusiastic about your business opportunity. They should be excited about your products, your corporate partner, and your ability to build the business. Ideally, your mentors should feel the same degree of passion for your opportunity that you do. This enthusiasm is important when times get tough, which they always do. As you struggle to grow your business, you need mentors who will cheer you on.

Third, the best mentors have a basic understanding of business principles. They don't need extensive knowledge of your particular industry, although this helps. More important, they need to know about planning, goal setting, prospecting, selling, follow up, customer service and basic accounting. The best business mentors are often people who have built a successful organization of their own.

Fourth, your mentors should have as many contacts as possible: potential customers, potential partners, leaders in the industry, people with similar interests, and so on. Business is all about relationships, so the more your mentors can link you with people who can help you develop your business, the better off you will be.

Think of people who might be willing to serve as your primary mentor or mentors. These are people you can call when you need ideas, feedback and encouragement. The exercise below asks you to identify potential mentors, and then indicate how well they meet the four criteria outlined above. After making your list, contact these people to see which ones are the most enthusiastic about your opportunity, and also willing to support the growth of your business.

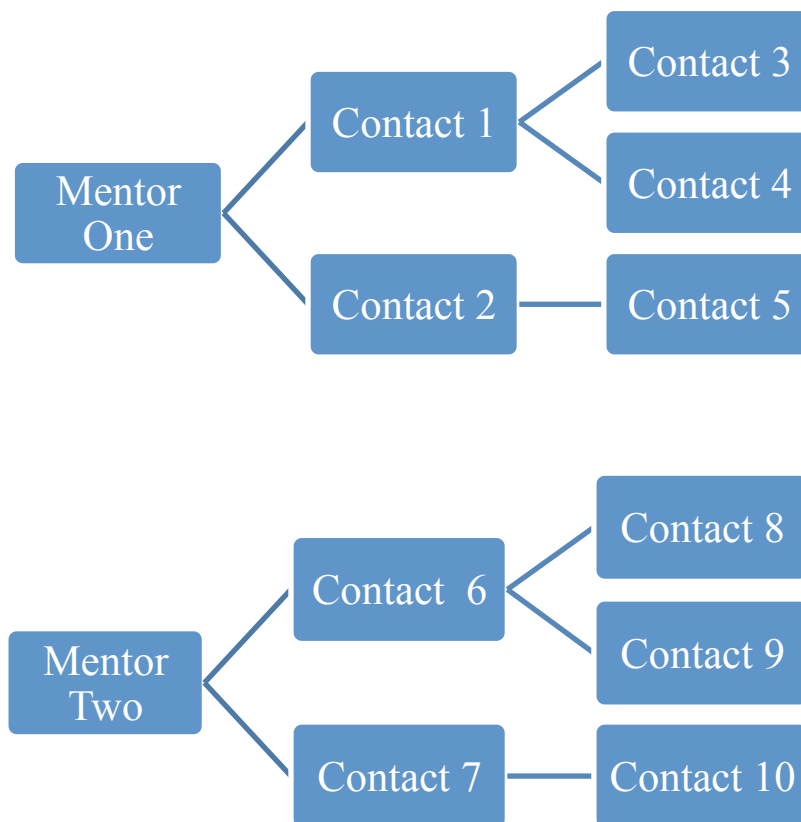
| Potential Mentor | How well does this person know me? | How enthused will this person be about my opportunity? | Describe this person's business knowledge, skills and experience. | What contacts does this person have to help me grow my business? |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
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Finding Your Business Advisors

In addition to mentors, successful business builders find advisors with specific skills and knowledge to help them launch and grow their enterprise. These advisors are not as readily available as your mentors, but they can help with very specific issues: finding customers who are predisposed to buying your products, getting into certain organizations, presentational skills, training partners, compensation plans, accounting practices, etc. These advisors constitute the “Brain Trust” of your business. The more active you are in building your “Brain Trust,” the greater your chances for success. One of the thriving business builders we interviewed described her experience with advisors as follows:

I do a lot of networking and get advice from mentors and other entrepreneurs. I think that is a key if you want to be successful. I'll just call up or email anyone, and a lot of people are willing to talk and share their experiences. It is kind of human nature to want to educate other people. You have to be open to contacting people out of the blue and not be afraid of that.

So how do you identify advisors with the experience, skills and abilities you need? The best place to start is with your primary mentors. Discuss the information and expertise you need and see if they know people who might help. Ask if they will contact these people for you – or at least allow you to use their name. Meet with these contacts, explain your opportunity and needs, and ask if you can call them occasionally for information and input on ideas. Also ask if they will refer you to other potential advisors who might help. If you meet with two primary mentors and they each give you two contacts, and these people give you additional contacts, you may have 10 potential advisors. This process is depicted in the diagram below.



The exercise that follows helps you identify your potential advisors. First, list the various skills, abilities and experience that will be helpful to you. These should be areas of expertise that are necessary to success, but that you may not possess yourself. Next, with input from your mentors, write down the names of people who may have skills in each of these areas. Finally, contact these people and enlist their support.

| Needed Areas of Expertise | People Who May Have This Expertise |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
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Creating a Work Activity Group

In addition to mentors and advisors, successful direct sellers create a “Work Activity Group.” This group may consist of people in your up-line, people in your down-line, direct sellers in other companies, your mentors, etc. The objective is to organize a group of 5 or 6 committed people to meet every week to discuss each others’ business, review goals, and report on outcomes. The important thing is to hold each other accountable for the key results you commit to produce each week. If you have super mentors and advisors, but no one holds you accountable on a regular basis, your business will struggle to survive. So use the exercise below to create your group and get started. This group will be a huge key to your success.

| Member of Group | Why This Person Will Be a Strong Member |
|-----------------|---|
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Utilizing Company Resources

Your corporate partner invests a great deal of time and money creating resources to help you be successful: workshops, conferences, weekly calls, websites, training courses, books, brochures, marketing materials, etc. Thriving direct sellers take advantage of every resource available to them. So call members of your up-line, your customer service representative, and leaders in your company to find out all you can about the tools they offer. List these resources below and commit to use them in building your business. These tools can be an important key to your success. It's foolish not to use them.

| Company Resources I Will Utilize | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |
| 7. | |
| 8. | |

In summary, successful direct sellers build a strong support system early on to ensure their new business first survives, and then thrives. Don't take this important key to success lightly. Your mentors will provide encouragement and support; your advisors will provide input on critical business issues; your work activity group will hold you accountable for key results; and your corporate partner will provide specific tools to educate you and develop your skills. Together these resources will significantly increase your odds for success.