



TILLSONBURG DISTRICT
Chamber of Commerce

BUSINESS. VITALITY.

BUSINESS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



Business Mentorship Program

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The mission of the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce Business Mentorship Program is to be the major voice of business in Tillsonburg and area and to provide services and opportunities for members to enhance their ability to do business.

Program Support

The Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce has developed a community based Business Mentorship Program for entrepreneurs. The Business Mentorship Program is designed to help new and existing entrepreneurs succeed through the initial stages of business development.

Mentoring can increase a new or expanding business owner's chances of success in reaching their goals through the sharing of advice, experience and knowledge of a more experienced business person. The new entrepreneurs (Mentees) will receive guidance from more experienced business people (Mentors), who will help them with what can sometimes be difficult business challenges.

Mentors from the local business community provide a supportive and nurturing relationship to new entrepreneurs, thus helping them navigate through some of the pitfalls involved in business start-ups and improving their chances of business and financial success.

The program provides one-on-one mentoring from experienced business owners and senior executives who have owned and/or managed a business.

This program is particularly beneficial to established businesses operating for a minimum of 6 months, entrepreneurs seeking rapid growth, or businesses facing challenging times as it will allow them to learn from the experience gained by those running established, successful companies.

Mentees will be matched with a Mentor by the Program Coordinator and will meet regularly for an agreed period.

The program is designed to provide support in the following areas:

- Entrepreneurship support
- Leadership development
- Access to supportive role models and business resources
- Successful integration into the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce network.

Successful mentorship relationships of this style are most effective in the world of work when the following characteristics are the program drivers:

- Voluntary
- Trust-based
- Mutually productive and beneficial
- Active
- Growth and discovery-oriented
- Focused on defining and achieving the Mentee's personal and/or professional goals
- Mentee-driven and Mentor-supported
- Free of time restrictions and hierarchical reporting structures
- Supported by a program structure and resources

The program requires a mutual understanding by mentorship participants, defining expectations in the following areas:

- Regular communication
- Realistic boundaries
- Support and encouragement of relationship building techniques
- Assistance with achieving business goals
- Effective and personalized information sharing

It is important to establish parameters around the Mentorship Program, formalizing a relationship between a Mentee and Mentor – referred to as *Rules Of Engagement*.

Rules Of Engagement

“A mentor is not someone who walks ahead of you to show you how they did it. A mentor walks alongside you to show you what you can do.”

Confidentiality and privacy

Mentoring relationships are confidential. Information shared within the context of the relationship should be honoured and trusted to stay within the confines of the relationship.

All participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (See Business Mentorship Program Agreement). Before signing, it may be desirable for participants to discuss any concerns or areas of sensitivity to ensure there is a mutual understanding.

Professionalism in behaviour and communication

Mentoring is about relationships, professional attitudes and effective communication. Mentoring is most often used to describe a relationship between a more experienced person and a less experienced one.

Potential conflicts of interest

Efforts will be made by the Program Coordinator to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Participants are encouraged to discuss whether the goals and objectives within their specific mentorship raise any concerns around conflict of interest. In those rare cases when conflicts of interest arise, the conflict must be resolved between/with the individual Mentors and Mentees.

Equality, respect for gender, culture, etc.

Participants are expected to recognize the equality of persons under the law as well as respecting each other in areas of gender, culture, etc.

Communication involving non work-related issues

Participants must recognize that this program is designed to assist Mentees and Mentors specifically, as related to personal and professional development in relation to entrepreneurship and leadership development.

Financial guidelines

Participants (both Mentors and Mentees) are expected to pay for their own expenses as may be incurred. It is considered inappropriate for the Mentor or Mentee to consider, discuss or accept any form of investment in the other's business interests.

Meeting

It is recommended that initial and early meetings are held in public places unless and until both Mentor and Mentee are comfortable meeting at either of their respective workplaces.

Term of mentorship

Mentorship arrangements are intended for periods from 6 months to 24 months. It is important to establish early in the mentorship what the specific goals are and the intended timeframe deemed to be required to achieve them.

The program recognizes that mentors are very busy people. Time is valuable and in order to gain best use of this resource it is expected that each mentor plan to contribute 4 – 6 hours per month, although specific, mutually-agreed arrangements may vary.

Matching process

Effective matching of Mentors and Mentees can be challenging. It must be recognized that with limited knowledge of many of the participants it may be difficult to achieve “perfect” mentorship relationships. It is hoped, however, that the matching process will avoid mismatches and allow participants to succeed in achieving the mutually agreed goals that lead to a sense of satisfaction.

PREPARING MENTEES AND MENTORS

Role of Mentee

- The Mentee must **“own the process”**
- **Take an active role.** Mentoring is mostly about the mentee, so it’s your responsibility to work at the relationship. Be proactive: initiate contact with your Mentor, participate actively in mentoring sessions and follow through on your Mentor’s suggestions.
- **Know yourself.** Before you begin your mentoring partnership, clarify where you are in your career and where you want to be in the near future. Identify what you are capable of and what areas you believe you need mentoring, so you can present your Mentor with a realistic picture of yourself.
- **Share honestly.** Tell your Mentor what’s on your mind and going on in your business. Mentors are best able to help when they understand your environment, your abilities, limitations and dreams.
- **Ask questions and listen carefully to your Mentor’s responses.** Mentoring is your chance to ask everything you ever wanted to know about your business and future growth plans. Ensure that when you ask a question, you really listen to the answer your Mentor provides. Ask questions to clarify your understanding.
- **Be prepared.** Do “your homework” between mentoring sessions. Approach your Mentor with possible solutions to challenges you would like help with.
- **Show appreciation.** Mentors volunteer their time and share their experience freely. Say and show your thanks for the help you receive. Find ways to help your Mentor in return.
- **Follow our program’s code of conduct and ethical guidelines (*Rules of Engagement*).** These guidelines cover confidentiality, privacy, equality, liability, conflict of interest and professionalism.
- **Learn and share your new knowledge.** Teach someone else! Just because you are a Mentee, doesn’t mean you can’t be a Mentor too!
- **Be enthusiastic and have fun!** Mentoring can and should be one of your most enjoyable experiences.

Role of Mentor

- **Listen.** A Mentor's number one role is to act as a sounding board. Listening actively, patiently and empathetically is a Mentor's most important skill.
- **Build trust.** Trust is the cornerstone of a mentoring relationship. Only in an atmosphere of trust will Mentees communicate their true goals, fears, and ideas. As a Mentor, you must maintain your Mentee's confidence and follow through on your promises.
- **Share your experiences, both positive and negative.** Your Mentee will learn as much from your failures as from your successes.
- **Give constructive feedback.** Share what you noticed, not what you thought of it, so your feedback does not become criticism.
- **Offer advice and challenge your Mentee to make decisions.** This is not the same as telling your Mentee what to do. While you want to protect your Mentee from making critical errors, you still want her/him to grow into an independent problem-solver. Effective Mentors ask questions and make suggestions that lead their Mentees to make workable decisions with which they are comfortable.
- **Introduce your Mentee to new situations and experiences.** This should include opportunities to integrate your Mentee in Chamber networking events, introducing them to different work experiences or simply sharing new ways of approaching challenges.
- **Follow our program's code of conduct and ethical guidelines (*Rules of Engagement*).** These guidelines cover confidentiality, privacy, equality, liability, conflict of interest and professionalism.
- **Be enthusiastic and enjoy the experience!** The more you put into your mentoring relationship, the more you and your Mentee will get out of it.

Role of Business Mentorship Program Coordinator

- Recruit, select and match mentors and mentees.
- Lead or participate in mentor and mentee training.
- Maintain ongoing communication with mentoring pairs, offering support, answering questions and facilitating assistance when necessary.
- Stay abreast of mentoring issues.
- Manage program records.
- Help mentoring pairs conclude their relationships appropriately.
- Recognize mentor and mentee participation.
- Facilitate program evaluation and recommendation improvements.

MATCHING PROCESS

The chances of success for the relationship are greater when both parties:

- Appreciate and complement each other. (The Mentor's experience fits well with the skills that the Mentee wishes to develop.)
- Are prepared to invest in and create a beneficial relationship.
- Have a good understanding of their reciprocal responsibilities and have realistic expectations.

Matching is the key, critical phase before starting a rewarding relationship. Successful Mentor/Mentee matches require individuals be well prepared and the process responsive to their needs. The motivation of the participants must be focused on the overall benefits stemming from the process rather than a self-serving motivator, such as financial gain.

The pairing process is important and is a crucial element in the development of the relationship. Participation by both the Mentor and the Mentee is necessary, even though it may be indirect (e.g. indication of preferences and expectations, confirmation of participation, etc.).

Other factors including geographical distance, gender preference of the Mentee, and the Mentor's professional expertise may be considered. Wherever possible, the Mentee's choice will be a leading consideration.

After taking all matching requests into consideration, the mentoring Program Coordinator will consult with the Mentorship Committee to pair individuals based on his or her knowledge of the participants and the needs expressed.

PREPARATION GUIDE TO MATCHING

Before the initial meeting, the Mentee should consider their responses to the following to see if this program will benefit you now or in the future:

What do I expect to gain from the Mentoring program for my business and myself?

What do I consider important in this relationship?

How do I ensure this relationship is a positive one?

What are my limits in this relationship?

What are the boundaries that should not be crossed? eg. (Confidentiality, coordination with support organization, etc.)

What should I do to ensure that the relationship starts on the right foot?

What should the mentor do to ensure that the relationship starts on the right foot?

Orientation Meeting

The orientation meeting is the initial step in the formal mentoring program and should include the mentor, the mentee, the Program Coordinator and committee members when necessary. The intent of this meeting is:

- To make the participants aware of the goals, objectives and operations of the program.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all the participants.
- To anticipate and supply tools to cope with challenges that may arise in the relationship.
- To determine each person's expectations and to acknowledge the criteria for a successful relationship.
- To consider and openly discuss questions such as confidentiality, availability, commitment, respect and the ability to accept criticism, etc.

During this session, discussion will center on the broad parameters of the mentoring relationship:

Trust and respect. Mentoring is a relationship of assistance and learning based on mutual trust and respect. Confidentiality is essential and must be guaranteed; without it, the relationship has less opportunity for success.

Mutually beneficial. Although the most obvious beneficiary is the mentee, the success of the relationship arises from the fact that both parties may benefit.

Reciprocity. Mentoring is a partnership based on a mutual undertaking and reciprocal exchange. It is highly desirable for the two parties to discuss and clarify from the start their respective roles and the precise way in which each of them will help to attain the objectives and expectations.

Gradual approach. Mentoring is dynamic and the content of the relationship (intensity, subject matters, objectives, expectations, knowledge and perception of the other party, etc.) changes, and thus alters, the initial relationship.

Once potential participants have been identified, profiled and accepted into the program, an informal meeting will be planned. This provides an opportunity for potential matches to get to know one another by sharing general business philosophy, experiences, and goals. It will also provide a valuable tool during the formal matching process, whereas either party will indicate their preference to work with each other.

GOAL SETTING

Goal setting is an important part of business, life, and mentoring.

Goals to consider in business:

- **Financial.** These goals cover Balance Sheet and Income Statement items, such as gross revenue, operating expenses, net earnings and financial ratios such as debt/equity and inventory turnover.
- **Marketing.** These goals focus on customer acquisition and customer retention, and involve such activities as networking, presentations, advertising, direct customer contact and other promotional strategies and materials.
- **Operational.** These goals relate directly to process improvements for the business, such as lean production, enhancing service levels or controlling inventory.
- **Developmental.** These goals include human resource issues such as recruitment, training, retention, professional development and benefits both for employees and management.

Goals should be SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-oriented
- Realistic
- Timely

Frequently asked questions

1. Why a mentoring program?

The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for experienced business people to help the local business community by providing advisory support to less experienced business owners.

2. How much time is involved?

This can vary. Initially, there may be more frequent meetings and discussions, but, on average, about 4-6 hours per month is suggested. A 6-24 month commitment is suggested, and, a relationship that continues beyond those time frames is up to the Mentor and Mentee.

3. When/where do we meet?

The timing, frequency and location of meetings should be agreed to by the Mentor and Mentee. It is recommended that meetings be held in the office of the Mentee during regular business hours.

4. What if it doesn't work out?

If after two meetings, the match proves unsustainable for whatever reason, there is a "no faults" opt-out. Efforts will be made to find a more suitable match.

5. What about documentation?

The Mentor and Mentee will enter into a Mentoring Agreement, and sign forms regarding confidentiality and release of liability.

6. What about a conflict of interest or competitive overlap?

We take care in the matching process to avoid potential competitors. Once matched, the parties will complete a confidentiality agreement.

7. Will there be a charge for the service?

No, there is no charge for the service.

Become a Mentee

Starting and managing a business is exciting, but it can present complex issues. Planning is essential. Many small business operators run into difficulties because they have not planned effectively for some of the details related to the market or the competition as well as matters related to finance and taxation. If you have an established business (6 months) and wish to further develop your business, it makes sense to consider the Business Mentorship Program. Thanks to our partners and volunteer Mentors, it's a FREE service that could save you a lot of time, stress and money.

Do you want a Mentor?

- Do you own a small business in Tillsonburg and area?
- Do you want to gain knowledge and suggestions from an experienced mentor?
- Do you want to increase stability in your business?
- Are you facing a significant business issue or challenge?

Benefits of becoming a Mentee:

- There is no charge for this service.
- Allows you to learn and improve on skills while running your business.
- Allows you and your business to grow and expand.
- Increased satisfaction both personally and professionally.
- Test ideas and receive suggestions from a trusted confidant.
- Develop problem-solving strategies to apply to your business.
- Realize you are not alone.

Mentors are volunteering their time for the specific purpose of helping entrepreneurs and small business owners facing a range of skills-related challenges in their business.

The Mentor's role is not to complete work for your business, but to support and provide guidance and suggestions of alternative approaches to business challenges. There are a number of ways this will be done:

- Face-to-face meetings.
- Answering your questions by telephone.
- Responding to questions or requests via email.

Interested in becoming a Mentee?

Complete the Mentee Application Form

OR

Request an Interview with the Business Mentorship Coordinator.

To find out more:

Visit our website: www.tillsonburgchamber.ca
Email us: suzanne@tillsonburgchamber.ca
Call us: (519) 688-3737

Become a Mentor

What is a mentor?

“A mentor is not someone who walks ahead of you to show you how they did it. A mentor walks alongside you to show you what you can do.” Mentoring is a process in which a skilled, experienced individual can help another by sharing knowledge in a confidential environment that empowers the small business entrepreneur (Mentee) to realize their full business potential.

The mentoring relationship nurtures a gratifying alliance and an opportunity to share experience, knowledge, dreams, and successes.

Benefits of supporting a Mentee:

- Help entrepreneurs avoid pitfalls typical of new business owners.
- Make a difference to a person, company and community by sharing your knowledge.
- Meet new people and expand network of contacts.
- Give back to and help build a more prosperous and vibrant community.
- Extend beyond your personal success.
- Enable volunteer Mentors to build and develop effective Mentoring skills.

Small and medium-sized businesses face a range of skills-related challenges. The gap in business and management skills can mean the difference between business success and failure for entrepreneurs.

The ways in which we deal with the unique challenges of our business community can contribute to innovation, opportunity and growth. Mentoring is a creative way to encourage solidarity within the community, keeping our economy strong and localized. Mentoring a small business owner will be done in a number of ways:

- Face-to-face meeting at their business.
- Answering questions by telephone.
- Responding to questions or requests via email.

The Mentor’s role is not to complete work for the Mentee, but to support and provide guidance and suggestions of alternative approaches to business challenges.

To find out more:

Visit our website: www.tillsonburgchamber.ca

Email us: suzanne@tillsonburgchamber.ca

Call us: (519) 688-3737

MENTEE APPLICATION FORM

FOREWORD: The purpose of this information form is to assist the Business Mentorship Program Coordinator in attempting to provide appropriate matches between Mentee and Mentor, as well as providing an overview to your Mentor.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company Name: _____

Company Address: _____

Phone: Bus. _____ Res. _____ Cell. _____

Website: _____ Email: _____

Business Start Date: _____

How much time are you currently able to commit to your business?

How would you classify your business?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agri-Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale Trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Distribution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining |
|
 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Trade | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business or Personal Services | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism/Leisure/Recreation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial/Insurance/Real Estate | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Business Services _____ | |

Please describe the product or service offered by your business. (Attach brochures or a brief business biography, if available)

What are the three (3) most critical business issues you face in growing your business? Provide sufficient information to assist in finding a matching Mentor.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Please state two objectives for your business that you hope to gain from the Business Mentorship Program:

1. _____

2. _____

What skills or knowledge do you hope to gain from your Mentor?

Please identify the type of person that best describes what you are looking for in a Mentor. Or, if you know of an individual you believe would be a good Mentor for you and your business, please identify (it's important to recognize that your preferred Mentor may not be available under the Business Mentorship Program):

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

I certify that the information provided by me in this application is true and complete.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

The information contained in this application will be held in strict confidence by the Business Mentorship Program and the applicant's Mentor unless permission is otherwise obtained from the applicant.

Mail completed form to:

Business Mentorship Program
Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 113
Tillsonburg, ON N4G 4H3
Tel: (519) 688-3737

Appendix 3

MENTOR APPLICATION FORM

FOREWORD: The purpose of this information form is to assist the Business Mentorship Program Coordinator in attempting to provide appropriate matches between Mentee and Mentor, as well as providing an overview to your Mentee.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company Name: _____

Company Address: _____

Phone: Bus. _____ Res. _____ Cell. _____

Website: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate the areas you can provide value:

- q Accounting*
- q Business Planning*
- q Customer Relations*
- q Engineering*
- q Financial*
- q Marketing*
- q Operations*
- q Project Management*
- q Strategic Planning*
- q Other: _____*

Which term best describes your primary business activity? (Select one)

- Agri-Business
- Engineering
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Business or Personal Services
- Tourism/Leisure/Recreation
- Financial/Insurance/Real Estate
- Construction
- Other Business Services _____
- Wholesale Trade
- Entertainment
- Community Services
- Transportation/Distribution
- Communication
- Mining

Why are you interested in becoming a Mentor?

If you have specific educational or business experience, please describe it briefly.

Do you have a strong preference for the type of entrepreneur/business you would like to mentor? (See *Business Activity Categories* above).

Any other considerations?

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

I certify that that information provided by me in this application is true and complete.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

The information contained in this form will be held in strict confidence by the Business to Business Mentorship Program and the applicant's Mentee unless permission is otherwise obtained from the registrant.

Send completed form to:

Business Mentorship Program
Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 113
Tillsonburg, ON N4G 4H3
Tel: (519) 688-3737