

The Power of Mentors

To better paint the picture of just how profound and far-reaching the effects of coaching can be, I have outlined (with feedback from top persuaders) some specific ways coaches and mentors work and enhance performance:

A great coach or mentor can:

- Role-play.
- Listen to your presentation.
- Raise your self-esteem.
- Evaluate and offer feedback.
- Hold you accountable.
- Offer support.
- Help you develop new skills.
- Encourage and motivate you.
- Help you overcome fears.
- Teach self-confidence.
- Offer encouragement
- Give personal attention.
- Help you adapt to new conditions.
- Prepare you for the future.
- Help in negotiations.
- Assist with account planning.

Working with a great coach or mentor can result in:

- Increased revenue.
- Increased productivity.
- Accountability.
- Ego not being an issue.
- Improved self.
- Improved customer retention.

- Improved employee retention.
- Improved communication.
- Improved morale.
- Lower turnover.
- Increased confidence.
- Increased technical knowledge.
- Enhanced team synergy.
- Reinforcement of other training.

There is one last thing to keep in mind when it comes to mentors: mentors will rarely come to you and ask if you want to be mentored or coached. It's like a junior high school dance where everyone sits against the walls hoping to be asked to dance. You have to find the courage and inspiration to do the asking. You must be proactive and understand that mentorship will cost you time or money or both. All successful people talk of someone who mentored them and changed their life. The individuals that we look up to often intimidate us, but very often you'll find that they are actually quite open to sharing their thoughts and ideas, if only you would ask them. I have found that top producers are more than willing to share their secrets of success, but no one asks. Have you ever asked? You will be surprised by how willing people are to give, teach, and help take you to the next level. Just remember that they rarely will ask you if you need help. Take a top producer to lunch, pick up the tab, and pick his or her brain. People are usually quite surprised by how easy and profitable it is to learn from the best. Average persuaders tend to resent the successful while great persuaders become great by associating with great persuaders.

A single conversation with a wise man is worth a month's study of books.

—CHINESE PROVERB

Top management and sales trainer Brian Tracy says, "The fact is that the best companies have the best-trained salespeople. The second best companies have the

second-best trained salespeople. The third-best companies have the worst salespeople and are on their way out of business."

The Return Is Greater Than the Cost

With all of this talk about the importance of implementing a personal development program, you might say, how is this possible? How do these people have time or resources for reading books and listening to CDs? How am I going to afford a three-day intensive workshop, or scarier yet, long-term one-on-one coaching? And if this kind of training has such an impact, not only on the individual but also on the companies they represent, why don't employers make this training easier to pursue?

Unfortunately, all too many people don't get past these questions and end up doing nothing to enhance their personal development, even on a basic level. As I mentioned earlier, most people will never even pick up a book again after graduating from high school. At the Persuasion Institute, we found that less than 5 percent of the population will ever attend a seminar in their lifetime unless it is required by the job, and even among rookie persuaders, most will attend only one.

Further aggravating the issue is that those we'd hoped would support and advocate such training do not. Many bosses and managers are so busy that they don't invest in training, even for themselves. And if they don't see the value in getting it for themselves, they most assuredly won't see the value in investing in it for employees. Often they don't believe that training will truly enhance performance, or they need assurance of a guaranteed outcome.

It is amazing to hear average persuaders say, "I already know all this stuff," or "I heard that before." Then you ask them why they are not more successful. You'd better duck as the rationalization, excuses, and blame come out. You will never hear a top persuader say, "I've heard that before." They always say, "I appreciate the review." There is always something to work on, a skill to fine-tune, or a fundamental to practice. Can you imagine a professional basketball player refusing to constantly and consistently

practice the fundamentals? You will never hear, "I'm doing OK at shooting free throws—I don't need to practice anymore. I already know how to do it." Do you think there are any concert pianists who don't practice every day?

Men hate most what they cannot understand.

—MOSES EZRA

Great persuaders, on average, set aside 5 to 10 percent of their annual income for personal development. If you're skeptical about incorporating a personal development program into your own life or into your workplace, remember that personal development is a good investment—just like a great tax accountant. Great tax accountants always pay for themselves and then some. So it is with personal development. The return on investment dramatically outweighs any financial pinch you may feel up front. The Persuasion Institute found that average persuaders spend one to five hours a week on personal development. And what do they get? Average results. Guess how much time top persuaders spend on personal development? Five to ten hours per week—and it shows. In another study, we found that only 5 percent of active full-time persuaders ever invest in their own personal growth. And you guessed it—they earn the top 5 percent of income.

Master Your Product

There is no doubt that great persuaders know their product, service, or business. I have found that great persuaders use their own product or service. Through this use, they have experienced what their audience will experience. You must know every possible thing about your industry. Nothing is going to surprise a great persuader. They are up to speed on the economy, the industry, the company, and the competition. The time and energy you invest to get to this level will define your position with respect to top persuaders. Persuasion Institute statistics tell us that only 22 percent of persuaders feel they have great product knowledge. How well do you know these important aspects of your business?

- Customers

- Industry
- Trade journals and magazines
- Trade shows
- Current advertising campaigns
- Installation protocol
- Annual report
- Demonstrations
- Credit risks
- Training available
- Market trends
- Business news
- Market conditions

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