



HARNESS THE POWER of Mentoring

Top TIPS for Solopreneurs



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Harness the Power of Mentoring: Top TIPS for Solopreneurs.

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About Top TIPS for the Solopreneur



Welcome to *Top TIPS for the Solopreneur!* In these pages, you will find excerpts gleaned from each chapter of *Harness the Power of Mentoring: How to Work with the Right Mentor to Save Your Small Business—A Guide for the Solopreneur* (©2018, The Business Mentoring Solution). It's designed to serve as a companion to the longer and larger book.

The idea for a “Top TIPS” booklet to accompany my book on mentoring for the solopreneur came out of a Dale Carnegie course I took in 2017. In addition to the 570-page textbook, we were given a copy of *Dale Carnegie's Golden Book* (©2013, Dale Carnegie and Associates Inc.), a very small format item (3-1/2” X 4-3/4”) that summarized the key points for each section of the big book.

I took to carrying the *Golden Book* in my agenda's fly-pocket and pulled it out for quick reference. What a great idea, I thought!

Obviously, this booklet isn't as tiny as *Dale Carnegie's Golden Book*—being of a certain age, I'm sensitive to very tiny print. But I hope that you will use this booklet in much the same way and that it will become well worn. Heck, my copy of the *Golden Book* even has a few puppy tooth marks and several splashes of coffee.

Connect with me! Would you like to learn more about mentoring? Consider my online course, information products (such as a Planner/Journal), speaking engagements, 1:1 mentoring, workshops, and more.

Go ahead: Change your world!

Yours in Mentoring,

Virginia McGowan

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**The Business Mentoring
Solution**

My Mission Statement

Help solopreneurs rise to new heights and reach their full potential.

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INTERESTED IN MORE ON MENTORING?

For information on more products and services, including print and e-books, information products, online courses, training, mentoring, and consulting, see page 12.

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Full of tips and information on mentoring!

Receive a complimentary 30-minute mentoring consultation.

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Ch.1 - Solopreneurs and Business Mentors: *Why you should consider a mentor*

1. Everyone can benefit from having a mentor, but solopreneurs benefit most of all in the business world. A mentor will help you face the challenges that other types of entrepreneurs don't encounter, at least not to the same degree.
2. Feeling inadequate is a common response to being overwhelmed by all the moving parts you encounter while trying to start or grow or even just maintain a business. Without someone in your corner, there is no counterpoint to the nay-sayers. That's where your mentor comes in.
3. People new to the business world often don't have first-hand experience in entrepreneurship, so they don't really know what business success is supposed to look like. Nor do they have the insight to know whether success is just around the corner (or not).
4. If you don't have an experienced partner or boss to help you work things out, how do you judge what is the right decision or strategy? Many solopreneurs say, "Well, I just make it up as I go along!" Since they haven't SEEN it, they find it challenging to BE it. That's why the support of someone who has 'been there, done it' is so important—crucial—to success.
5. The right mentor won't tell you what to do. They work hard, as do you, to develop a trusting and respectful relationship. They will challenge you, but above all will listen to you. They help you identify what you need to focus on, how to find the best solutions for you, and how to learn from your mistakes.
6. There is no 'right time' to work with a mentor, but a mentor is particularly helpful when you are starting something new, whether that's an entirely new business venture or an expansion of an existing one.
7. The support of a mentor can help you through the dark times when life throws you a curve. Don't be afraid to reach out but remember that it is up to you to persist. Don't get bogged down in 'what if.' You can never have a better past. Look to the future. Never give up.
8. You are likely quite good at what your business produces or provides as a service, otherwise why would you think you could make a living at it? So, you know how to work IN your business. But do you know how to work ON your business, that is, deal with cash flow, suppliers, marketing, etc.? Your mentor can help you identify your blind spots and find out how to fill those gaps to develop the knowledge and skills you need for success.

Ch.2 - Values, Purpose, Vision, and Goals: *What do you want to achieve?*

1. Identify what is most important to you—what you value and why.
2. Discovering your purpose(s) in life can take some work. Remember that you have everything you need within you to discover your purpose in life. It just takes a little effort and courage to pull it out into the light.
3. Start by examining what you love to do and what comes easily to you (even if it's easy because you practiced a lot).
4. What qualities do you love to express daily? How do you express them?
5. What would your perfect world look like? If, on a scale of one to ten, your perfect world is a ten, but you are at three right now, what would it take to be at four? Then five? Then six? And so on?
6. Now combine these three steps into a personal purpose statement that expresses what gives you joy, how you enact those qualities, and what world you will create in the process.
7. Decide what you will achieve over the next 12 months and what you need to do to accomplish that goal. Commit to action. Discourage negative thoughts. Act as if you were already well on your way. Just do it.
8. Write your purpose in living into your business mission and vision statements.

Ch. 3 - Doing an Inventory: *Discover what you need NOW*

1. Conduct an honest inventory of your strengths and limitations.
2. Build on your strengths so that you can concentrate on action rather than on learning too many new things.
3. List your credentials or technical skills. Identify what additional credentials or technical skills you need. List the inroads you already have in the industry or sector.
4. Assess your soft skills. Get out of your office and into the community. Remember that your core messages will only be honed through conversations with others.
5. Ensure that your work, personal, and family times are in harmony.

6. Don't quit your day job until you are certain that you can afford to do so. Set up a system of wealth buckets. Don't risk your savings.
7. Know your personality. How well can you tolerate risk and how do you manage risk? How do you work with others? What's your problem-solving style?
8. Reach out. You can't run the world by yourself.

Ch. 4 - The Right Mentor for You: *Finding the best fit for a solopreneur*

1. Examine why you need a mentor, what you expect, and the role that mentor will play.
2. Ensure that you are ready to be mentored: open, flexible, resilient, ready for change and to be challenged, committed, and eager to learn.
3. Look for a developmental mentoring experience where you will grow as a person and as a solopreneur.
4. Look locally for a mentor. Find someone you admire, respect, and has relevant experience. Do your homework.
5. Reach out gently. Establish a connection before you try to develop a relationship.
6. A mentor should not be looking for either compensation or a stake in your business.

Ch. 5 - Working with Your Mentor: *How to develop and nurture a healthy mentoring relationship*

1. Just as in any healthy relationship, mentoring will take passion, commitment, dedication, and work.
2. Experience on the part of your mentor is essential, but so is your insight into your needs. What do you want to achieve? Develop clear goals and measure your progress.
3. Clear two-way communication is another key factor. Learn to really listen and express yourself clearly.

4. Remember that networking will introduce you to new ways of seeing, new opportunities, and help you to grow as you interact with other, more experienced entrepreneurs you will meet via your mentor.
5. Exercise respect, honesty, and trust. When you are challenged and nudged out of your comfort zone—as you should be—these factors will help you rise to the challenge and become a better person.
6. Treat your mentoring relationship with the commitment and passion it deserves. Nurture it well and it will serve you and your mentor well.
7. Commit to an honest exploration with your mentor about whether entrepreneurship, particularly being a solopreneur, is the best choice for you now or ever.

Ch. 6 - Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail: *Create a strategy for solopreneur success*

1. Revisit your personal and professional inventory. Make a list of what knowledge, skills, or experience you need. Discuss with your mentor how to best fill these gaps and make a plan that includes dates for completion of each step.
2. Structure your mentoring relationship by deciding on an overall SMARTgoal with the support of your mentor. (SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely).
3. How often will you meet with your mentor? For how long? Where?
4. Develop an agenda for each meeting to keep on track. At the end of each meeting, talk with your mentor about how the meeting went, what decisions were made, and recap what you need to accomplish before the next meeting.
5. If you've agreed to meet for 12 months, stop and reflect on your progress at the six-month mark. Is your goal still relevant? Are you on track? Do you need to stay the course or pivot?
6. Write out your plan and keep track of your progress using the templates in the Planner/Journal. Share your goals and the milestones you are working towards with your mentor and others—they will help keep you accountable.
7. At your next-to-last meeting, start preparing for the closing of the mentoring relationship. Tidy up any unfinished business.
8. In your last meeting, take time to review your learning journey, celebrate your successes, thank your mentor, and plan for the next step in your career as a solopreneur.

Ch. 7 - Taking and Giving Feedback: *Even when it's hard to hear or say*

1. We receive and give feedback all the time; it can't be avoided. Learning how to give and receive feedback is an essential skill to help you grow and reach your goals.
2. Feedback is the foundation for constructive dialogue with your mentor.
3. Cultivate a mentoring mindset—courageous, constructive, and accepting of differences and responsibilities—so that you are open to feedback, can filter and sort feedback, and respond to feedback in a productive manner.
4. Feedback should SOAR! Focus on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results.
5. How we receive feedback is strongly influenced by our relationship with the giver, whether we perceive that the feedback is true, and whether it concurs with our sense of ourselves.
6. Feedback can make us feel defensive or even fearful, particularly if we don't feel safe.
7. If you disagree with feedback, think before you speak. Remember to be respectful and friendly and speak from a point of view that is based on evidence.
8. If handling feedback well is a challenge for you, check out some of the resources cited in this chapter.

Ch. 8 - Evaluate Your Progress: *Learn from mistakes, celebrate successes*

1. Evaluation is an essential part of a mentorship and helps you learn from your mistakes and successes.
2. Be clear from the outset what you want and need to achieve in the mentorship but be prepared to change your goals if that seems to be the right thing to do.
3. Review and assess every meeting with your mentor so that you are aware of how you are progressing. You may need to tweak your process.
4. At your final meeting with your mentor, discuss—honestly and openly—how you feel about the experience, what you learned, how that has changed your behaviours, and the impact on your business.

5. Don't be afraid to end the mentorship if it is not working to you or your mentor's satisfaction.

Ch. 9 - How to Say Thanks and Goodbye: *When your mentorship has run its course*

1. Expressing gratitude and appreciation is not just good manners: it's a habit you should carry over into your business relationships. It's an acknowledgement that your mentor has devoted time and energy to helping you succeed.
2. When you express thanks, be specific. Refer to the actions and benefits you are grateful to have received.
3. Whether you feel ready to move upon the completion of your mentorship or feel that you still need a mentor (and not necessarily the same one), think through your decision carefully and discuss this with your current mentor. This is an important decision. Decide in haste, repent at leisure!
4. If the mentorship just isn't working out, you've discovered that your business idea wasn't feasible, another opportunity has come up, you've reached your goals earlier than anticipated, or you've realized you aren't ready to become a solopreneur (now or ever), you have choices. You can decide to close the mentorship, find a new mentor, or continue working with your current mentor on new objectives.
5. Remember that deciding to close a mentorship earlier than anticipated because of incompatibility is not a sign of failure. But consider discussing your situation with your mentor and, if possible, a dispassionate third party.
6. If you are worried about having a potentially difficult conversation, follow the effective communication skills checklist and think through what you need to say and how best to say it. Practice.
7. As Dale Carnegie advises, remind yourself of the worst that could happen. Then prepare yourself to face that possibility and take steps to improve on the worst-case scenario. Don't pay a price with your health by worrying and not acting when you should.
8. Review with your mentor what you achieved, the most important work you did together, lessons learned, what the future holds, and how you will meet that future.

9. Celebrate! You've earned it!
10. Mark your achievements (and those of others) in a special, memorable way. Make a regular habit of being mindful of big and small occasions to celebrate.

Ch. 10 - Next Steps: *Am I ready to be a mentor to a solopreneur?*

1. Mentoring relationships evolve as the mentoring partners grow and change. Don't be surprised if you realize one day that your mentor is your mentor no longer.
2. Think long and hard about whether becoming a mentor is a good idea for you. Is the timing right for you? Do you have a sincere and burning desire to make a positive impact in another's life?
3. Solopreneurs have a lot on their plate, but also much to give back to others like them. If you decide that this is not the right time, don't let the prospect slip off your radar screen. Revisit the idea from time to time.
4. Consider what qualities the most effective mentors possess. Do you also? If not or partially, would being a mentor help you develop these qualities, perhaps to a higher level?
5. Principles-based mentoring is more effective than a simple list of mentoring qualities or skills. The reason is that principles encourage us to work with the whole person to help them develop from the inside out. This approach also helps you develop and grow as a mentor.



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-  Consulting
-  Training (workshops and seminars)
-  Speaking engagements
-  Information Products (Books, Planners/Journals, 'Top TIPS' Booklets)

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