



Finding Good Mentors and Business Advice

Most business owners receive plenty of well-intentioned advice and ‘helpful opinion’ from family and friends. However, good business advice spoken from commercial experience is another matter entirely.

That’s not to say it’s hard to find, but finding a reputable source in the Internet age is sometimes less than straightforward – especially if you have specific problem to solve and time is limited.

This is why, for good times or bad, developing a network of peers or seeking out a business mentor can be a great idea.

Networking

Businesses owners shouldn’t feel they need to operate in isolation. Developing a network of peers and colleagues is a good way to keep in touch with new developments, and you’ll have a great resource to access when you need input and advice. There are a number of options to consider and you’re not limited to only one or a few.

Your local chamber of commerce

Your local Chamber of Commerce is likely to be a useful resource. They should be able to put you in touch with industry bodies and refer you to people who will be able to give you professional advice. In addition, they might also have information and resources to help you deal with the issues you are facing. Attending meetings and events is also a good way to brush up on skills, and meet and network with other business people operating in your area.

Your industry body

Most industry sectors have some sort of organization representing the collective interests of businesses operating in the sector; some will have more than one. They will be able to give you industry-specific advice and put you in touch with other people in your line of business for input.

These sources should also be able to refer you to reputable outside professionals if you need the help of an accountant or a lawyer, for example. They will generally also hold regular meetings where you can meet and get to know other small business owners.

Once you've met or made contact with a business peer or business professional, swap business cards and keep their details on file. While you can do this manually, it would be more effective to include their details in your contacts on your computer and mobile, and to connect with them through other networks like the business-focused LinkedIn or even Twitter. If you keep people's contact details, you can give them a call whenever you need assistance. Even if they are not able to help you, they might be able to suggest someone who can.

LinkedIn is a great networking resource for business people. There are a number of online groups you can join where you can ask relevant questions and get good advice. If you can't find a forum to suit your needs, you can also create your own.

Credible online sources of advice

For financial or legal advice, it would probably be best to meet face to face with you banker, accountant, or lawyer, depending on the sort of advice you need. But there are a number of additional resources you can turn to for assistance.

- Community Futures Development Corporation www.cfdcco.com, designed to help small owners and aspiring entrepreneurs access to services tailored to individual needs....from financing to training programs.
- Kelowna BDC Business Centre, www.bdc.ca, small business loans or financing for a larger project, you can also access their network of experienced business consultants in Kelowna to provide you with practical advice.
- Canadian Grants Business Center, www.canadiangrantsbusinesscentre.com, you could be eligible for \$5,000 - \$750,000 in Government grants, government secured loans or government subsidies.
- Women's Enterprise Centre – www.womensenterprise.ca, they assist women in starting and growing businesses in BC with free Business Advisory Services, Business loans of up to \$150,000, real world training and workshops, networking, Business Resource Library and events
- For the answers to a number of employment or employee questions check out www.labour.gc.ca
- For Health and Safety issues go to <https://www.worksafebc.com>

