

Me and Mandeep talk about Mentorship on the Subway

A tap on the shoulder on the subway.

"Is that a sales book?" he asked.

I took the subway instead of driving to read. It turned into a 15-minute impromptu business consult with a man named Mandeep.

"It's more about business structure," I said, showing him the cover of *Clockwork: Design Your Business to Run Itself*.

He told me he was a new business owner with an e-commerce store.

"You must be a millionaire"

He said this after I told him how many people work in my business.

He told me his mentor gave him books to read, including *Think and Grow Rich*. Mandeep then asked if I had a mentor.

"Many. Some I've paid for. All I've earned," I said.

Mentorship and coaching are different.

Mentors believe in you, help you grow, and guide you. They've been in your shoes, overcome challenges, accomplished goals, have a roadmap, and help you navigate based on best principles.

Sometimes, you apply for a mentorship, but it's not a blind click on a Facebook ad and hard-sell on the phone. You earn it by showing up with eagerness, willingness, and by virtue of the work you've already put in.

Coaching is different. Coaching is about solving problems. A bad experience with a coach often stems from the client not knowing their goals and signing up for the wrong program.

"Do you wish you hired more mentors or coaches?" Mandeep asked.

"No. I might have achieved some success quicker with a coach but recognized early on that the advantage of a coach is their path and system."

To sell coaching, this person claims the system worked for them and will work for you. Let's assume that's true (a big assumption).

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Success isn't a straight line. Expect bumps and bruises along the way.

During that process, you need to acquire skills and experience. This experience leads to the robustness to withstand setbacks or negative online comments. Hacking that experience by paying for a quick path, even with some success, doesn't provide the skills, knowledge, and experience required for long-term success.

I haven't hired many coaches or mentors, which might surprise people.

When I sign up for a program, I consider myself more than the program. It's less about "is the program or mentorship or coach good?" More, "am I ready to put my all into this. To really apply it. And, do my values align with the person leading it?"

How to choose your learning sources

There are a lot of leaders in the business space flaunting supercars, bragging about insane work schedules or skipping weddings and not seeing friends or whatever. These people rarely have families, too. Which is fine. It's right for them, maybe, I hope. Either way, they've made their decision.

Regardless, their values and my values don't align. I could learn from them but I choose not to. Because where they are in their life is not where I want to go. And, at the end of the day, trajectory is what I'm after, not tactics. Recall that, in aviation, for every 1° you're off course, you'll end up 1 mile off course after travelling 60 miles.

Entrepreneurial burnout and psychological trauma is a big issue these days and it's because running a business is hard.

Many are not suited for it.

The system hasn't been hacked

Some people have figured out a few things that work right now and maybe that's worth paying for. Perhaps it's ill-fated ego but, I've felt selecting a mentorship and committing to it is a better investment than coaching (or bouncing around multiple mentorships).

Maybe others have figured out something magical I don't know. If they did, I'll never know. Regardless, sticking to one well-chosen path and not hopping from tactic to tactic has served me well.

I spend as much time as possible doing the hardest and most important work that seems neglected. I read, try, think, learn, fail, show up the next day, and, if all goes well, I win.

My wins came from deeply understanding and trying things, then separating myself from the internet nonsense to think about what happened and find a creative solution that others missed because they were too busy copying each other.

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The real problem with coaching though . . .

If a coach doesn't deliver you fast results, they get fired.

The model must prioritize getting you a quick win. It's a straight-up incentive/value mismatch—the model's fault, not the coach or client. But the client can bypass the model's core issue by internalizing that anything worth having takes time.

Paul Saffo's a Stanford professor. He said to "Never mistake a clear view for a short distance." That's good advice.

In my book, *[The Obvious Choice](#)*, I wrote that "Superfluous and superficial tactics get undue attention. It's true that success leaves clues. But what's visible is like an iceberg, floating with one-seventh of its bulk above water. The work that really matters is invisible to the eye."

Then added, "Be wary of advice that has the shelf life of a brown banana. Instead, categorize information as either permanent or expiring. Ask yourself, "In five years, will this still work?" Expiring advice isn't necessarily bad. It does, however, tend to distract us."

I don't believe in quick results. I believe in strategy and sustainability. I hope you do, too.

As we reached my stop and I stood to leave, Mandeep and I exchanged emails. "There's no shortcuts, man. And you're on your own. You need to earn support from others," I said. "That was a hard lesson for me to grasp but made all the difference."

-Jon

P.S. The above is why I don't offer coaching, instead, mentorship.

Your success depends on you and the skills you acquire.

It's not easy, and most won't do it. The appeal of quick wins is strong. That's why most struggle.

If you work in online fitness and want a team that (1) shares your family-first values, (2) has the roadmap, and (3) will help you forge your own path, [please apply here](#).

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