Mentoring Young Entrepreneurs: What Leads to Success?

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Abstract

Youth Business International (YBI) has helped a significant number of young entrepreneurs through its network of business programmes worldwide. It provides young people, who have little more than a bright idea and the determination to succeed, with a start-up loan and the services of a volunteer mentor. However, what is less well known is the true nature of the mentor-client relationship and the impact this has on a young person's personal and business success. This study takes as its sample two distinct groups of mentors, young entrepreneurs and programme managers from two different countries and using a case study method explores what leads to success. The emerging themes show the nature of the relationship is affected at three critical phases: start-up, midpoint and end-point. The results also show that mentors are required to use an approach towards entrepreneurs that reduces dependency and increases self-confidence. The findings indicate a style of mentoring which is less directive and more empowering as the client's business starts to grow.

Key Words: Young entrepreneurs, mentoring, Princes Trust, success factors

Introduction

This research study investigates the qualitative nature of the mentor-client relationship within two of YBI's accredited business programmes: Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF) and the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust (PSYBT). The study identifies the key aspects of the relationship between the organisation, the mentor and the young entrepreneur. The aim of the study therefore, is to determine what factors create productive and positive results between mentors and clients.

Canadian Youth Business Foundation
CYBF's vision is to drive Canada's business success by helping youth help themselves. Since starting its operation, CYBT has assisted over 1400 new business owners across Canada. Nearly 900 volunteers are engaged to help deliver the programme in 62 locations, which in turn reaches out to 970 local communities. As result, CYBF claims to be the national leader in youth entrepreneurship through mentorship and financial support resulting in sustainable economic development. Central to this claim is the current success rate of the CYBF programme: 87.5% of businesses succeed in paying back their loan. At the heart of the CYBF programme is *Entre Nous* ('Between Us'), a web based support system for participants in the face-to-face mentoring programme (Canadian Youth Business Foundation, 2003).

Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust
PSYBT was set up along similar lines to The Prince's Trust in England, providing a unique package of support to young people as a lender of last resort. PSYBT was launched in 1989 and has invested £23 million, enabling 7,800 young people to start their own business in Scotland (PSYBT Annual Report, 2004). A recent innovation has been the introduction of the Growth Fund with an investment of over £475,000 in 37 businesses since its launch two years ago. Volunteers number around 600. Their duties fall into two key areas: panel members who assess business plans and aftercare advisors who mentor businesses.

Indicators show that 100% of clients have an aftercare advisor, with 62% receiving visits and 80% of the loans repaid.

Factors in entrepreneurship

Robshaw (2001) argues that the most important decision for any entrepreneur is choosing what sort of business he or she wants, yet most entrepreneurs give little thought to this aspect. As Robshaw points out, businesses fall into three categories, depending on the entrepreneur's motivation: the job option/survival business, the lifestyle business, or the growth business. For an entrepreneur, recognition and a sense of achievement are fundamental motivators which have significant consequences in the way entrepreneurs approach and manage their businesses. Entrepreneurs need to align their personal goals with their business goals. Hopson and Scally (1991) offer the notion that individuals have the choice of either pinball living or self-empowerment. Balls in a pinball machine have no life of their own; while self-empowerment, on the other hand, is a process by which individuals increasingly take greater charge of themselves and their lives.

Thompson (1999) states that entrepreneurs can be found in many walks of life, not just business, and explains that they are responsible for creating social and artistic capital as well as financial wealth. This challenges the simplistic caricature of the entrepreneur who is seen as a buccaneering, egotistical businessman (rather than woman) driven by profit. Generating financial capital is important, but so is social capital and artistic or aesthetic capital. Not every entrepreneur fits the pattern of a ruthless, hard nosed, achievement-orientated person in search of a deal. Some present a softer image. They operate in a more informal manner, they are strong on communication and they sell their vision in order to engage and motivate others.

Mentoring entrepreneurs

A mentor or advisor is an essential asset to a growing company. They can warn of problems on the horizon, help craft solutions to problems and be a sounding board for the entrepreneur. A mentor's many years of experience can save a business from major errors and costly mistakes with just a few words. From the available literature it can be argued that intervention at pre-start and start-up stages of a business is beneficial in reducing the known high failure rates (Deakins et al, 1997). One of the problems in the UK has not been *when* interventions have taken place, but *how* those interventions have taken place. The impact on the small firm and the ability of the entrepreneur to learn from mistakes is poorly understood. Yet, theoretically, in the early stages of business development, such interventions should have a major impact. Deakins, comments that the entrepreneur, through experience, acquires the ability to learn. Rarely is this learning process planned, but it is the result of a series of reactions to critical events in which the entrepreneur learns to process information, adjust strategy and take decisions.

Beresford and Saunders (2003), who evaluated MBA graduates in their role as mentors to small business projects, found that whilst academic skills were initially identified as essential requirements, it was the inter-personal skills, such as listening, which were considered to be more important. The balance of a head and heart approach to mentoring is described by Pegg (1999) in the application of his mentoring model which helps people to focus on the challenges, choices, consequences, creative solutions and conclusions. In discussions between mentor and mentee, two main methods are used: 'pulling' and 'pushing'. Pulling calls on the ability to offer a sanctuary; to offer a safe place where the mentee feels able to share their agenda, interests and goals and to offer support by listening, asking the right questions and drawing out the mentee's own answers to problems. Pushing, on the other hand, calls on the ability to offer stimulation; to offer

creative ideas, challenges, knowledge, success stories, models and tools, leading-edge thinking and wisdom.

Factors in mentoring success

Hall (2003) argues that successful mentoring requires the following key features: screening of prospective mentors; matching of mentors and youth on relevant criteria; pre-match and on-going training, and frequency of contact. By contrast, mentoring is in danger of being unsuccessful when any of the following conditions apply: social distance and mismatch between the values and mentor and mentee; inexpert or untrained mentors; mismatch between the aims of the mentoring scheme and the needs of the person being mentored and a conflict of roles so that it is not clear whether the mentor is to act on behalf of the person being mentored or is present as an 'authority'. The dilemma is whether the relationship between mentor and mentee should be formal or informal. Cox (2005) suggests that the rapport between mentors and mentees in informal mentoring relationships frequently challenges the organisers of many formal mentoring schemes. Clutterbuck (2004) identified the problem that in most cases when people come together without guidance and without clarity about the mentoring role it becomes a hit or miss affair. Not only is the quality of the relationship highly variable, but the pairings tend to exclude people who don't fit the mould, by virtue of their gender, race, culture or some other differentiating factor. It is the view of Clutterbuck that such an environment would contain some elements of structure and concludes that the mentoring "package" that will give organisations the greatest value is one that integrates formal and informal mentoring.

Barrera Associates (2003) found that organisations engaged in mentor-protégé programmes repeatedly cited as critical, the time required for relationship-building. Notably, they reported that more time invested in the mentoring relationship contributes to the relationship's growth, but a long mentoring programme is not required for achieving results if the mentor and protégé are focused on a goal or a business issue. The pairing of mentor and client in a formal relationship is an important issue and has a substantial bearing on the success of the relationship. A mismatch can cause discomfort for the mentor, but more importantly for the mentee this can be disastrous. Cox (2005) suggests that compatibility can only be developed from within a relationship, it cannot be anticipated beforehand.

Role modelling is another factor in mentoring success. McVey (1997) studied the impact of role models within mentoring relationships and suggested that the presence of an entrepreneurial role model can positively affect the level of entrepreneurial success. A role model can also help entrepreneurs who may rely too much on personal experience to guide decision making. Although taking risks is important, the presence of role models, mentors and networks can provide a moderating effect on the overconfidence of entrepreneurs.

Methodology

Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 68) refer to a case study as a research study which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting: it involves data gathering around a unit of analysis with a view to obtaining in-depth knowledge. By studying CYBF and PSYBT in this way, the purpose is not to make a direct comparison, but to identify common themes.

The case study approach has a number of main stages (Collis and Hussey, 2003, p. 69-70). First, the selection of a *critical case* which encompasses the issues of most interested. The reason for my interest in this area is because the current method of collecting data tends to be of a quantitative nature i.e. the frequency of meetings, regularity

of reports and payment schedules adhered to. The analysis of such data, and its comparisons with performance targets, is then used to inform the organisations about the degree to which their programmes are seen as successful. I want to know what goes on 'under the skin' of the mentor-client relationship in order to verify those factors that work and those that do not. Within the two programmes there is a common area of interest i.e. *a single case* where volunteer mentors are matched, one on one, with young entrepreneurs for a specified period of time. As a result, the case study approach should lead to a greater understanding of what happens inside the mentor-client relationship.

Secondly, I needed to undertake *preliminary investigations* and become familiar with the research context. On one hand, I approached the study with some definite theories in mind, while on the other I knew it was best to keep an open mind, and learn from the naturalistic evidence gained. I decided to acknowledge where bias might become an issue and followed the naturalistic route.

The next stage is the *data stage*. I decided that data should be collected using a combination of methods i.e. archive searching and structured interviews using a questionnaire format. As suggested by Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 70), I had a choice between within-case analysis and cross-case analysis at the *analysis stage*. Although studying the nature of the mentor-client relationship within two separate environments, I chose cross-case analysis in order to identify the similarities and differences which would help to identify common patterns. At the final *report stage* I needed to determine an appropriate structure to demonstrate that the analysis and conclusions can be linked to the mass of data.

Yin (1994) argues that one of the benefits of the case study inquiry is that it relies on multi sources of evidence. The research plan, agreed with both organisations, meant conducting 26 face-to-face interviews. I also asked that mentors and clients be selected as representative of different stages of the mentoring relationship i.e. start-up, mid-point and end-point. This would give me a wider spread of data and minimise drawing conclusions based only one aspect of the mentor-client relationship. Overall, 22 structured interviews were completed; one each for the programme managers' eleven for mentors, and nine for young entrepreneurs. Before the main data gathering phase, I conducted a pilot to check the validity of the questions for all three groups. This is seen as essential by Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 175) who suggest testing a questionnaire out on people who are similar to those in the sample. Interviews were held over a period of two months in Glasgow and Toronto. Unique to the research in Canada was the fact that the mentors and clients were matched in a relationship, whereas in Scotland they had been selected at random. Although this was not an exact 'like-for-like' comparison, using a combination of different methods ensured data gathering was subjected to tests of validity.

During the study I spent time negotiating access to the two organisations in order to conduct my research. Prior to conducting the interviews, copies of the interview questionnaire were sent to the programme managers and their comments were sought before any interview was carried out. In addition, a statement of confidentiality offered anonymity to the participants and this was explained at the outset of each interview. Robson (2002, p. 66) comments, 'ethical dilemmas lurk in *any* research involving people especially as there is the intention or possibility of change associated with the study.' A qualitative study from a relatively small sample and where the findings are likely to be widely read needs to ensure the results are discussed with great sensitivity; a point emphasised by Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 39).

Findings

The data has been analysed and five themes have emerged: success factors, relationships, challenges, mentor competencies, and support. Each theme is illustrated with quotes from the data.

1. Success factors

Young entrepreneurs (YEs) felt that recognition was important. This might be having a recognisable brand or getting tangible benefits for energies put into the business. It is also important that YEs know how to be adaptable to whatever change might happen.

"When SARS hit Toronto we said to ourselves this is the new reality. The question we asked ourselves was: how do we operate in this new scenario"?
<div align="right">CYBF Young Entrepreneur</div>

Ridderstrale and Nordstrum (2002) said that one of the many benefits of being self employed was independence and the freedom to be your own boss. However, they also argued that with choice comes responsibility and that the decisions and choices of today are made in a climate of all-embracing uncertainty and that one-off events will test the entrepreneur's ability to cope. YEs also felt that meeting financial goals is important. They want enough money to live on comfortably and to run a business that is well respected. One YE talked about the need to be a positive role model by helping and inspiring others to become entrepreneurs.

"I meet lots of people who want to start their own business but don't have the opportunity. By doing the best job I can, by being a good example, I am adding to the community where I live and work".
<div align="right">PSYBT Client</div>

In contrast, mentors suggested that their clients would measure success through their ability to grow and sustain the business and ultimately, create the possibility to sell their business to a bigger firm. It is important to have a plan and to work towards implementing that plan. Hashemi and Hashemi (2002) support the importance of having a business plan and suggest that not to do so would be like building a house without a blueprint. Furthermore, they argue, if two out of three businesses start without a business plan and two out of three businesses fail within five years, then that is not coincidental. A business idea doesn't have to be new, original or revolutionary, but it does need to have a USP, a unique selling point that distinguishes it in the marketplace.

2. Relationships

Mentors and clients felt that honesty was important in the relationship i.e. being able to tell it as it is. YEs felt that it is important to listen to what the mentor says and not to get defensive when receiving advice. However, the mentor cannot be involved in the business and must be dispassionate. The worst situation would be for the mentor to suggest a line of action the YE cannot deal with.

"A good match is to be with someone who has knowledge and experience to learn from. Someone you can really connect with. You're telling them really intimate things so you have to feel really comfortable in the relationship".
<div align="right">CYBF Young Entrepreneur</div>

Mentors should be uplifting and "keep reminding you why you are doing it". Having someone who is external to the business allows the YE to have a clearer view. They see things the YE does not see. For YEs working in creative environments such as the arts, it is beneficial to have a mentor who can "pull you out of trouble" in areas such as finance, tax and business law.

Mentors felt that both parties must *want* to have a relationship. There is a view that you can get past other issues providing there is a willingness on both sides. This confirms the view of Flaherty (1999) who said that the key elements of the relationship are mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual freedom of expression. Clients also felt that personality plays a part; a mentor might have all the technical skills, "but if you don't get on it's not going to work". Skills and experience are important factors in the relationship, as are attitude and personality, and it can sometimes work best if personalities are different e.g. where one person is an introvert and the other an extravert. However, there does need to be a good chemistry and this can be enhanced if there is a willingness to listen to each other. It is also important to have an interest in the client's business, to have some insight, which will enable mentors develop rapport with their clients.

"At the start of the journey, if the client feels comfortable with you, they will share anything. To build trust you have to start as you mean to go on. You need to be a good listener and ask them relevant questions such as: how much they know about business, how far they want to go with it, how much research they have done".
<div align="right">PSYBT Mentor</div>

Indicators of a relationship not working would be a lack of communication, follow through, commitment and respect on behalf of the mentor. Clients would also feel uncomfortable if they did not trust the advice that was being given; where it was unrealistic or ineffective. There does need to be a 'bond' between both parties and if they are not getting something out of it there is little point going through the motions, "ticking the boxes". That will simply lead to a position where meetings start becoming a 'chore'.

"You have a feeling about people. If you couldn't share a coffee with them, chat with them, it won't work. In which case there would be little point in continuing the relationship".
<div align="right">PSYBT Client</div>

Mentors thought they could probably tell if it was working or not working based on the relationship moving closer or becoming more distant. If there is tension or an avoidance to meet and the mentor has to continually chase the client then it is unlikely to work. Other indicators are when questions are asked and the client becomes elusive or changes the topic. Mentors also expect there to be evidence that actions agreed upon are carried out. The relationship would become strained if the client did not follow up on things they said they would do. Meetings seen as unproductive will lead to frustration for both parties and when that happens, enthusiasm for making contact starts to wane.

"I would know, can't tell you how I would know. I would just know. When you try to pin it down, it's difficult but you know when it's not working".
<div align="right">PSYBT Mentor</div>

The importance of receiving regular reports is shared by the programme managers who raise concerns when reports stop arriving for no apparent reason. It can be an indication that the relationship is not working and if that is the case to find out the reason why. Both clients and mentors would consider asking PSYBT or CYBF to intervene if the relationship was breaking down. However, it may be something that could be dealt with

without an intervention from the organisation because the problem was one of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. The bottom line is that if the relationship is not working and it is not going to work, it is important to find someone else as soon as possible.

3. Challenges

The relationship between the client, the organisation and the mentor involves three key phases: start-up, midpoint and the end-point, sometimes referred to as the 'letting go' phase. The organisation is involved in assessing the suitability of the client prior to receiving support and then will look for a mentor based on 'fit' in terms of factors such as experience, network, geography, age, gender and ethnicity. Once the match is complete the mentor and client will meet for up to three years. However, the challenges faced by the YE can be very different at the mid point or end point compared to the start up. At start-up, the client is looking for encouragement, positive support, helpful advice and useful ideas. It is valuable to have an outsider's viewpoint. It probably means having more meetings, but once the client is up and running this frequency is probably not necessary.

Other challenges exist, for example getting sales and creating an infrastructure such as training of employees and writing manuals. This is where a mentor can really help because of the client's lack of experience. From the mentor's pint of view a number of potential conflicts occur at start-up. These could include finding out about each other and the business, establishing boundaries around confidentiality and trying to find time to meet. Also, the client may well be suffering dips in confidence due to a lack of business acumen. This lack of experience can be confusing where the client is trying to work both 'high and low' i.e. working on the big decisions as well as tactics for the smaller day-to-day business needs such as managing cash flow and getting to break-even consistently.

"I need to be excited about his ideas. However, it's important not to get too close to the business and when there are problems, I need to get him to see them himself, letting him discover the answers on his own".

Mentor, CYBF

At the mid-point clients see the challenges as changing gear from theoretical support to more hands-on support .This is likely to be a period of growth and the mentor will want to make sure the passion is still there and that it is shared with those the YE might be bringing into the business. Mid-term is also when clients need to keep their energy levels going and keep their goals in sight, keep an eye on the bigger picture. At this stage, clients will have a better understanding of the business and will be able to be objective; looking at the books, making comparisons and flagging problem areas. Mentors at the mid-point will be looking at the client's ability to maintain momentum and energy especially as the 9-18 month period can be a most challenging time for start-up businesses.

"This is a bit of a crossroads. There is the potential for growth but the client may not be sure on which way to go. Does the YE stay within their comfort zone or go for it. This may be a time to go back to basics and re-do the business plan".

Mentor, PSYBT

Keeping an eye on the business plan is important as a way of showing what progress has been made, as well as providing a platform for growth. At this stage there should be evidence of an emerging client base. For the mentor it is all about helping the client to manage the expectations of the business. Another of the many challenges may be a lack of capital to expand the business and this is where the organisation can help by laying

down clear boundaries on its loans policy. Marketing, promotions and recognition are also necessary as a means of setting up the business for the growth phase. From the programme manager's viewpoint, there should now be a defining of the relationship by ensuring that there is no over-reliance on the mentor. It is a period during which the business needs look ahead and ask, 'what next'?

At the end-point, defined as the point where the loan has been repaid, YEs will ask when the relationship will end. Many clients see the relationship as an ongoing friendship. It is not seen as an end in itself especially if the client has been lucky enough to have had a 'good' mentor.

On a practical note, the client may well want to focus on 'new markets' and to get general ideas on how to grow the business while the mentor is still around. From the mentors' viewpoint, there is always a concern that the client will not be able to let go and that a pattern of continued dependency will become the norm. To counter the challenge of the client 'losing' their established networks the mentor will want to ensure that the client is able to capitalise on all that they have learned together. If the relationship has gone well then the mentor should no longer be needed and the business will be self sufficient and self sustaining. The client will need to move on, but that doesn't mean all contact is severed. The mentor will still probably be at the end of a phone line.

"I don't feel the relationship will ever conclude. Our relationship will still be an integral part of the business. I would still 'check in' with the mentor even when the formal agreement finishes".

YE, CYBF

4. Mentor Competencies

At the start of their relationship mentors identified the need to be supportive, tenacious and to enable the YE to keep their vision in sight. During the relationship-building phase it is important to know what it is that makes people tick. However, as in common with all three stages, the mentor's role is to help the client to reflect on what is happening. Within the reflective process there may be a disguised 'call for help' brought on by the reality of running a business and the mentor can help by listening for signs of anxiety, and *be there* to support the YE. In addition to the 'softer skills' such as listening, the mentor needs 'harder skills' such as analytical adeptness to review business plans and stay objective. The start-up phase probably requires for a mentoring approach that is more tactical than strategic i.e. winning the first customer, getting the cash in quickly, keeping correct financial records etc. The role is more about keeping the client focussed on generating short-term results.

The mentor also needs to be a 'blank slate', to be a good listener and to know how to do solid needs analysis. Furthermore, s/he needs to be focused and organised and ensure the client does likewise. Ideally, the mentor needs to have connections in an area which is industry specific to the client's business and help by making introductions to potential customers. Moreover, the mentor needs to have a positive demeanour and have enough personal experience to give solid, informed advice. The role can be summed up as someone with an 'outsider's' view who gives positive support, helpful advice and useful ideas.

"Mentors need to show compassion and understanding. It is easy to get carried away with the client's enthusiasm and so the mentor will need to be embedded in reality".

Regional Manager, PSYBT

At the mid-point, mentors need to keep the client motivated and encourage them to persist. This may mean sitting around the table doing the financial forecasting and checking where the client has come from and where he is now, where he is going. This is also likely to be the 'growth phase' and the client may need to understand how and where to attract further funding. At the end point, mentors need to be objective and encourage lift off. This is where the mentor may want to help the client think big, as they did at the very beginning. After that, possibly organise a good party and celebrate! Once the ties are severed it may be that mentoring gets changed for a 'normal' business relationship where the role becomes more about advice and a discussion about ideas.

5. Support

A key element of the mentoring relationship is the support given to clients. Mentors support clients in a variety of ways. It really depends on what support the client wants and then to be there when they need you. YEs come to CYBF and PSYBT for a reason. They need someone who is objective rather than someone in the family who may have a hidden agenda.

Mentors agreed that most of the work has to come from the client. Mentors do believe that many YEs will ultimately succeed using their own talents and abilities. However, for some there is the fear they wouldn't make it off first base and therefore need someone to understand them and bring out their talents. Clients recognise that they need positive support, regular contact and to have someone they can bounce ideas off. They view the mentor as someone that can offer them a business insight that they can't get elsewhere and that it is invaluable to have someone there when you need them. Mentors become an objective mirror, which means the YEs have to be honest with themselves about goals, problem resolution etc. Mentors agree with YEs that it is important to be available, offer constructive criticism and to help with networking by passing on opportunities that might be helpful. Mentors may also provide tangible and practical support such as providing templates and budgeting tools. Mentors also help by knowing how organisations and businesses operate and are able to give impartial advice.

"The mentor cannot do it for you. You can have the best mentor in the world but without drive and ambition to do it yourself – it's wasted".

YE, PSYBT

Conclusion

Robshaw (2001) identified three types of business start-up: the job option/survival business, the lifestyle business, and the growth business. Whichever 'route' is chosen as a potential start-up the fundamental motivators for an entrepreneur are recognition and a sense of achievement. This was evident for YEs in the study who felt that having a recognisable brand and getting tangible benefits for the energy put into the business were important factors. This would allow YEs to meet their financial goals and become self-supporting. Mentors and supporting organisations generally viewed success in the form of financial results and being able to pay back their loan leading to sustainability and growth.

However, there are other forms of success such as independence and the freedom to be your own boss. YEs further state that success as an entrepreneur is to show enjoyment in what you are doing and this form of positive attitude is fundamental in achieving goals; personally and professionally. In the context of relationships that work, clients and mentors agreed that honesty and respect were both important factors in the relationship in order to create a 'bond' between the parties. Although difficult to quantify, there needs to be a 'good chemistry' The relationship can sometimes work best when personalities are

different, although YEs suggested "a mentor might have all the technical skills but if you don't get on it's not going to work". When a relationship did not work it was seen by YEs as a lack of communication, commitment, respect or simply lack of trust in the advice being offered. Mentors agreed with this view and felt there was little value in going through the motions in order to 'tick the boxes'. As a result, unproductive meetings would lead to frustration and the enthusiasm would start to wane. To create a productive relationship there is a need to make clear contracts so that both mentor and client can agree their respective roles.

The findings also gave insights into the different phases of the relationship. At start-up, YEs are looking for encouragement, positive support, helpful advice and useful ideas when starting off in business. In contrast, mentors view this phase as getting the client to manage a steep learning curve. This is particularly relevant as young people opting to become entrepreneurs will probably not have had any previous experience of running their own business. If start-up requires basic advice i.e. getting sales and creating an infrastructure, the second phase of the relationship requires clients to change gear, especially during the 9-18 month period which can be a most challenging time for start-ups. Mentors will need to get their clients to keep an eye on the business plan as a way of showing what progress has been made and to determine whether there is a platform for growth. It requires the mentor to keep the client motivated and to encourage them to persist.

At the end-point, defined at the point when the loan is repaid, the YE wants to know what the nature of the ongoing relationship will be with their mentor. From the mentor's viewpoint, a concern would be that the client is unable to 'let go' and continuing dependency becomes the norm. There is recognition that the YE may not have all the necessary resources to go it alone, but letting go, although risky, is part of the process of personal growth. A measure of success within the relationship is that the mentor is no longer required and the client is ready to face a new set of challenges on their own.

The research indicates that YEs want support from someone who is neutral, objective and non-judgemental. It would be natural for there to be well meant advice from family and friends, but there may also be hidden agendas present. Overall, mentors believe that YEs will ultimately succeed using their own talents and that the mentor cannot run the business for them. The ultimate responsibility for the business lies with the client and therefore the YEs will always be accountable for their actions. YEs recognise this and they see the support of a mentor as an added bonus. YEs want regular contact, someone they can bounce ideas off, someone on hand to answer questions and in general to provide an objective mirror enabling the YEs to be honest with themselves.

In summary, the research has not only identified a need for a different approach by mentors at the key stages of the relationship, but also for the organisation to support mentors and clients by adopting a structural approach through the three phases . Firstly, match clients and mentors as early on and allow the relationship to develop; secondly, teach the YEs about business growth and thirdly, bring the relationship to a conclusion so that all three parties can reflect and take positive learning points from the experience. A long lasting programme does not necessarily lead to long lasting success.

Overall, the case studies show the qualitative benefits of mentors working with young entrepreneurs and how this can lead to young people growing in confidence and becoming successful both personally and professionally. However, this cannot be achieved without consistent support structures from the organisation at every stage, from engagement, to the young person achieving independence and ultimately letting the client

'fly'. In the context of the value of a mentor in enabling young people to be successful, perhaps the final comment should belong to this young entrepreneur: *"They have provided me with the opportunity of a mentor, what else do I need"?*

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