

Published May 22nd, 2013

The Benefits of Tapping into Business

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Score counselor Larry Tessler and Randall Martin meet for mentoring sessions. Photo Sophie Braccini

The former owner of a small business startup, Tessler has been a counselor for 14 years since his early retirement from the corporate world of retailing. He consults with local businesses all over the United States via the Internet.

"When I first met Randi (Martin), I was very impressed by his degree of preparedness; that's quite rare," says Tessler. "I quickly introduced him to other counselors who have experience in forming franchises and we started devising a plan."

Martin is in no hurry to start the franchise. "In order to franchise you need to have systems in place," says Martin. "Jim Philpott, a Score franchisee expert, came in to offer some perspective on what type of franchise could work for us." A third counselor, ex-Siemens' CFO Karl Haug, also provided input.

Martin continues to execute the plan and meets with Tessler every six months for "validation sessions," and exchanges email on a monthly basis.

"He explains to me what he is doing and asks me if there are holes in it," says Tessler. If he sees a problem, Tessler asks more questions and has Martin draw his own conclusions.

"When I meet with a new client I never tell them that their idea is no good," says Tessler. "I keep asking questions until they have thought out all the issues."

Tessler says that nine out of 10 people who come with an idea do not end up starting a business. "That's good," he says. "We are saving them a lot of money."

"You can't start without a plan," he adds. "When I meet with someone who wants to start a new business I start by asking all the questions they should have already worked on, that way people realize what they have not thought about and go back to the drawing board."

He goes over key elements with prospective entrepreneurs. "First, you have to start with a solid idea or concept. You see a problem in the market, come up with a solution that has benefits to the potential clients, and forms the basis of the marketing message and of your marketing plan," he says. "Second, you need a financial plan of sorts: the start-up expenses, the operating expense, the revenue projection, and you have to be able to figure out your growth margin."

Tessler says he works about 60 hours a month for Score. He follows up with his clients for months, if not years; last month alone he counseled 30 different people at different stages of business creation.

"Score mentorship works because the mentors care about the mentees," says Martin, who's been working with Score now for two years. "If I'm successful, Larry (Tessler) and his colleagues feel proud. Mentors create jobs for other people; they give opportunities to other people. It is a real domino effect." He expects to have an ongoing relationship with Tessler.

"As you grow, you have different challenges," he says.

For more information about Score of the East Bay go to Eastbayscore.com, Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ScoreEastBay.

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