10 Reasons Why Leading Entrepreneurs Join a Peer Advisory Board

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Being an entrepreneur is an amazing experience. You get to see your ideas come to life and build a business of your own. Unfortunately, many business owners feel alone. Unlike being in the workforce, you aren't always surrounded by others who you can share ideas with or troubleshoot issues. The reality is that entrepreneurs are surrounded by people, such as family or friends, who don't always understand their challenges.

As the saying goes, It's lonely at the top. There are things that, as an entrepreneur, you can't or don't want to speak to your employees, partner, family or competitors about. You just want unbiased advice (in other words you don't want to just Google it). You don't want to pay for an expensive consultant. And, you want real-world experience. So where do you turn?

When I first got into business in 1999, a business owner friend encouraged me to join a peer advisory board. These boards (also referred to as business owner advisory boards or mastermind groups) are a group of peers from non-competing organizations. They come together to share ideas, advice and insights with one another. It's a great way to amplify the collective knowledge and expertise of an executive board without the cost of an executive board. Joining a peer advisory board was one of the best decisions that I ever made.

Over the next decade, I was supported by other business leaders as I navigated numerous opportunities and challenges

in my business. Since 2012, I've been running peer boards to help connect and support other entrepreneurs. Here are 10 reasons why leading entrepreneurs choose to join peer advisory boards and why you should as well.

1. Ability to get advice in a safe environment

Competition is fierce. Small business owners often have to operate in a vacuum to avoid sharing information that could be leveraged by their competitors. Unfortunately, this leaves us to our own devices whether we are making good or bad decisions. A peer advisory board gives you a safe environment to open up and share the challenges and risks that you are facing in your business without the fear of rejection or ridicule. Since members of your advisory board will be from outside or unfamiliar industries, their advice is most likely to be unbiased.

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2. Non-financial benefits

Most people join a peer advisory board to help their business grow so they can increase profits. However, there are many other benefits beyond the financial aspect. You can expect to build a camaraderie with the members of the group since they share the same interests and drive as you. Your peers will also be able to share non-business guidance such as how they balance their personal and professional lives.

A peer advisory group can also provide the motivation you need to aggressively pursue your business goals. It can be easy to lose steam or become unmotivated when you are working alone. Even if you have employees, it's unlikely that they have the same drives and motivations as you.

3. Opportunity to give back

The benefits of a peer advisory board are a two-way street. While you'll be able to get feedback and guidance on your own business, you'll also be able to share your experiences with others. No business owner can be an expert at everything. A peer advisory board allows each of you to showcase your strengths to the benefit of the entire group.

4. Improve your leadership skills

Unfortunately, many entrepreneurs have a blind spot when it comes to developing leadership skills. It's difficult to evaluate yourself and even employees don't provide the most honest feedback. Your peer advisory board facilitator and your peers will help you identify weaknesses in your leadership style. They'll also recommend mentorships, coaching and other training to make you a better leader.

5. Avoid costly mistakes

As a business owner, you will make lots of mistakes. This is inevitable and a great way to learn. However, it's much easier and cheaper to learn from other people's mistakes. In a peer advisory board, you will be able to find out what pitfalls other business leaders faced and work to avoid them yourself.

6. Understand the basics

Many small businesses have a great product or service idea and jump right into the business. This is the great thing about entrepreneurship. The downside is that it often forces business owners to learn the basics as they go. Unfortunately, this means that many lack some of the foundational skills to properly run a business. A peer advisory board will help you identify what basic skills you should sharpen to make you a

more effective and successful entrepreneur.

7. Switch from reactive to proactive

Entrepreneurship is much like being a firefighter. It’s your responsibility to put out fires as they emerge. You are the last line of defense for your business. Guidance from a peer advisory board can help you focus more on preventing crises than spending all your time dealing with them. It can also help you be more proactive in chasing leads, establishing stable and repeatable business processes and getting ahead of employee turnover issues.

8. Helps to avoid tunnel vision

As business owners and entrepreneurs, we tend to operate in our own little world. It can be motivating to be surrounded by people who agree with you, like your team. But it’s important to also hear opposing or alternative viewpoints. A peer advisory board will help you think of solutions that are outside of the box or things you wouldn’t have considered on your own.

9. Accountability

One study found that people who have someone to keep them accountable for completing their goals will complete them successfully 95 percent of the time. A peer advisory board will create an environment of accountability. You will share your goals with other members of the group so they can help motivate you to stay on track. You will also be able to help other members of the group by holding them accountable.

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10. Access to new opportunities and friendships

Being a member of a peer advisory board gives you the chance to bond with like-minded people who can become lifelong friends. These connections will be invaluable as you build and grow your business. In addition, they may push you into new industries or directions that you hadn’t considered before. There may even be opportunities for collaboration on projects or ventures with other members of your peer group.

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