



Developing Your Personal Advisory Board

As a coach I often am asked how someone can engage my services. While coaching provides support in reaching short-term goals with measurable outcomes, there are times when a broader approach to personal development is needed. Over the years, I've come to rely on a Personal Advisory Board.

I did not come up with this idea on my own. It came from the author Jim Collins who talks about his own Personal Advisory Board in his books, *Good to Great* and *Great by Choice*. A Personal Advisory Board provides a sounding board, offers wisdom and counsel, and accountability.

There are several things to be considered when developing a Personal Advisory Board:

- What is my purpose in developing a board?
- What are the goals and objectives I have for my life and work?
- Who are three to five people you respect?
- What can you offer in return?

What is your purpose? Clearly defining your purpose is the starting point. Be specific about what areas you want to address: career development, personal growth, financial objectives, etc. Ask yourself: What would make having a Personal Advisory Board a great success?

What are the goals and objectives I have for my life and work? Clarify your purpose by setting specific goals and defining what will be accomplished as you focus on each area. Ask yourself: What will be different as a result of accomplishing this goal? How you will know when you've achieved the goal? What is your timeframe for reaching the goal?

Who are three to five people you respect? Make a list of three to five people who you respect – they may or may not be in your current professional field. Ask yourself: Who has experience in the areas of my purpose and goals who would give me frank and constructive advice, hold me accountable, and be able to have real dialogue and debate about the issues I'm facing? Is this someone who inspires me to achieve more and offers new perspectives? Is this person positive and forward thinking? If I could pick up the phone and seek anyone's advice, who would I call?

What can you offer in return? Before you contact someone, consider what you can contribute to an advising and mentoring relationship. Ask yourself, How can I add value to their personal or professional life? Perhaps you have a skill or knowledge that would support a project they're are engaged with. You can show appreciation by offering a small gift certificate to their favorite

restaurant or bookstore, or, occasionally buying coffee or lunch. And always thank them for their time, counsel, and commitment.

Begin by sitting down and answering the questions above. Then start with one or two people with the goal of building a small group of up to five people that are available when you need someone to encourage, challenge, and advise you. Build relationships with people you respect by introducing yourself at a conference and asking good questions, reading their blog or public social media pages, or sending an email with an article or book that contributes to their interests.

When you invite someone to be a part of your Personal Advisory Board or provide mentoring, be specific about your purpose and goals. State why you respect them and would like their support in reaching those goals. Suggest how you might have contact in order to be accountable: meet occasionally for lunch or coffee, meet via online video conference, or have telephone meetings supported by email. Take responsibility by sharing your purpose, goals, objectives, measurements, and timeframes with them – in writing. Continually honor the relationships by considering what you can offer in return.

Whether you develop a Personal Advisory Board or find one or two mentors, the place to start is with yourself. And, while the cast of advisors will change over time, the value is in finding the right encouragement, support, and wisdom at the right time.

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First published in the *Kansas EMS Chronicle*.