

“How I Met My Coach and Mentor in College”
by
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As graduating seniors preparing for the transition from college to our first job, it is normal for each of us to feel some stress and anxiety about the uncertainty and challenges we will encounter during the next year. We may wonder if we have considered the right criteria when comparing competing job offers and, ultimately, whether we have accepted the right job. We may be anxious about making a good first impression at our new job and whether we will fit in with the culture and people at the firm. We may feel overwhelmed by the amount of information we will have to learn during the on-boarding process and by all of the personal decisions we will have to make while establishing our home in a new city.

While our concerns are not unique among college students, we do believe we have an advantage over many of our peers in navigating through these challenges. Along with an undergraduate sales education from The Ralph and Luci Schey Sales Centre at Ohio University, each of us has our mentors, with whom we have established relationships during college, to seek support and guidance.

At The Sales Centre, we had the opportunity to build a formal mentoring relationship through its Coach and Candidate program developed four years ago by advisory board member Greg Kaple and two students at the time...Chris Knapik and Tony Swegle. Each Candidate in the program is matched with a member of the Professional Sales Advisory Board who shares a common interest in their desired field of sales. John Petrucci, Vice President of Sales for State Auto Insurance Companies, has been a longtime participant in the program as a coach. He has found his time coaching a Sales Centre student to be a very rewarding experience. John explains, “The one-year, on-going mentoring relationship affords the Candidate the opportunity to 'pick-the-brain' of a sales executive, learning from their insights, education and real-world experiences.”

Throughout their senior year candidates prepare for professional life after college through the advice and guidance of their coach. The candidates also see the benefit of a mentoring relationship that can be carried into their professional life upon leaving Ohio University. Chair of the student Candidate Advisory Council of the Ralph and Luci Schey Sales Centre Amy Rotella explains, "Working with my coach has opened up many doors for me. Difficult situations with job search and personal life issues have become so much easier. I am able to reach out to my coach and ask for advice on what he may have done in a similar situation. I have truly seen the value in creating such a unique bond with someone who is willing to share his insights with me."

In addition to the formal mentoring Coach and Candidate program, students are also able to build informal mentoring relationships with other sales professionals that contribute to our program. One such professional is Alan McMillan, Divisional Vice President – Central US for Data Domain. Alan, a member of the Professional Sales Advisory Board, has been a significant contributor to the lives of the candidates who graduate from the Sales Centre. Alan has developed a professional education, one day workshop known as “Transitions” which helps students prepare for life after college. During this event he discusses financial planning, personal networking, how to become a standout player on day one of a new assignment, creating professional and personal life balance and living a fulfilled life. Alan has shared his time, experience, wisdom and passion with students in the program which in turn has led many students to seek his guidance for career and personal decisions.

Whether through formal mentoring programs or educational events, students at the Ralph and Luci Schey Sales Centre learn how to create mutually valued relationships with mentors. The lessons learned will be carried from our college life into our future careers and allow us to become even more of an asset to our future employers.