

# THE VALUE OF MENTORING

As a homeschooled graduate who entered the business sales world at age 17, there is no doubt in my mind of what was most influential in launching me at such a young age: the mentorship training of my father. During my final two years of high school – at ages 15 and 16 – my dad would take me into his office as an insurance agent. I would study my high school lessons in an empty office upstairs; then, in the afternoon, I would sit at a desk a few feet from his father’s desk, and I would help him on the phone with customer service and sales until dinner.

For the first year, every time I picked up the phone, I did an awful job. I would forget to write down someone’s last name, incorrectly copy a phone number, or I’d be nervous and distracted during the conversation. As soon as I hung up the phone, my dad would offer some suggestion on how to do a better job communicating with the next client. And the longer I sat there by his side on the phone, the better I got. It wasn’t easy, and it wasn’t fun – but my dad was committed to helping me succeed on the phone, and eventually it paid off.

At the age of 20 now, I’ve been doing my own sales work for 3 years on a part-time basis, and I’m making a full-time income. But that wouldn’t have happened without the training and mentorship of my dad. I don’t have a college degree, and I had little or no “formal” business training. But the same lessons I learned in homeschooling found themselves true in the business world too. Here’s a few of the things I learned:

1. Teaching seems to work best in context of relationship. My father had an intense interest in my success, and he had a life-long, personal relationship with me. No one knew me better, or was better-equipped to train my skills and character than he was.

2. There’s nothing in the world that better prepares you for phone skills than . . . talking on the phone. I discovered that doing is a critical part of learning. It was a simple lesson, but profound for me. What better way to prepare for my future sales business than to be immersed in the work environment of that business?

3. While I enjoyed phone sales, I didn’t care much for the insurance industry. I eventually switched to credit card processing sales, and I found it to be a better fit. Working in my dad’s office allowed me to test the waters and determine what I liked and what I didn’t like. I didn’t waste 4 years in college and \$100,000 only to find out (as 80% of Americans discover)

that I didn’t like the occupation I had studied for. My father’s mentorship and oversight steered me in the direction that best fit my individual gifts, calling and abilities.

Recently, I conducted a study of the 2007 Forbes chart of top billionaires in the world. Of the 15 wealthiest people in the world at that time (worth \$15-60 billion per person), only 4 of them had graduated from college. A full 6 of them attempted college, but dropped out (including notables like Michael Dell and Bill Gates), and one was a high school drop-out! I learned that there are some indispensable elements of success in the business world that had nothing to do with training offered in institutional business schools.

After being mentored by my father, he recommended that I pursue a part-time mentorship with Kevin Swanson – a pastor, radio host, homeschool leader and speaker, and director of the Christian Home Educators of Colorado (CHEC). I quickly found that the mentorship model worked just as powerfully in ministry as it did in business. My view of history, worldview, apologetics, theology, and the church were shaped by the life and teaching of a mentor who illustrated these lessons, every day, right in front of me.

As I look back on my mentorship over the last 3 years, I realize how far my own thoughts on education have come. I had been accepted into law school to study for a Juris Doctorate degree at the age of 17 when my father and I decided to pursue the mentorship with Kevin Swanson instead. Having a doctorate at the age of 21 is not too bad in the mind of most folks, but I wouldn’t trade the training I’ve received through my mentorship for all the doctorate degrees on the planet.

This vision for relationship-based, character-focused, life integrated learning has been central to CHEC’s homeschool ministry for many years, and it the same exact vision which is driving our new AME program. AME (Apprenticeship, Mentorship, & Entrepreneurship) is CHEC’s bold, new idea to help other homeschooled students find mentors and businessmen to help train them through the higher education years. If there’s a young man out there who wants to be a mechanic, we’d like to help him connect with a godly, experienced mechanic who will walk beside that young man and mentor his skills and disciple his character on a day-to-day basis. While we certainly don’t despise colleges or universities, we’re just not yet

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convinced that homeschooling has to stop after high school. Homeschoolers have long out-performed their counterparts in public and private institutions on standardized tests, national competitions, and so many other areas, so it might be time for every homeschooled highschooler to ask the question: "Why stop now?"

Jesus changed the world by developing a close relationship with 12 men who walked beside him for 3 years. Now, that makes sense to me. My life has been dramatically shaped and molded in the last few years, and I have more vision and excitement for the future than I ever had. I plan to – if the Lord allows – continue to work in business and church ministry for the next few decades of my life. And when the time comes, I plan to return the investment of mentorship in the life of my sons and grandsons.

*Chad Roach*

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*Chad will be leading a workshop called Mentorship for the Homeschooled Student at our 2009 Convention*