

AUTOOCUPACIÓ'S MENTORING FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Objective of Good Practice:

Business consolidation for the support and empowerment of young entrepreneurs through a network of volunteer mentors.

Year of Inception of Good Practice:

2013

Keywords:

Mentoring, Volunteer mentors, Youth entrepreneurship

Overview of Good Practice

Autoocupació's mentoring approach is based on personalised support from a mentor that helps entrepreneurs to improve their skills, influencing their professional and personal development to consolidate their enterprises and guide them towards success in business. Mentees are young entrepreneurs between 18-35 years. They are unemployed or in a vulnerable situation (underground economy, underemployment, etc.) and have decided to create their own business. They display entrepreneurial potential and have a viable idea, but they lack experience in business management. Given the fact that the survival rate for new businesses is quite low, mentoring is a great support to meet their needs. Mentors are highly experienced entrepreneurs. They are volunteers and their role excludes investing in the business. Mentoring relationships last for one year (but they are extendable for one more year if wanted and needed). Meetings happen on a monthly or bimonthly basis.

Innovativeness

The innovativeness of the Good Practice lies in the professional and structured methodology, which has already been successfully applied in over 50 countries. Mentors and entrepreneurs follow the same process, which includes selection, training, matching, monitoring and evaluation. The programme is managed by a mentoring manager, who supervises all the steps and supports mentors and entrepreneurs to make the most out of each relationship. Autoocupació's developmental approach is focused on the individual and on improving personal skills. Listening and questioning are the main tools used in this approach.

Outcomes

The businesses participating in Autoocupació's mentoring programme show a survival rate of 87%, more than double the Spanish economy's average (41%). In just 4 years, they duplicated their turnover and increased the number of employees by 60%. The programme has a very positive impact on the professional and personal development of the participants, with a contribution of 72% on their skills and 64% on their business knowledge. 95% of persons are currently working. Almost 80% of the entrepreneurs say they are highly or fully satisfied. The contribution of the participant businesses to public finances derived from the increase in income and reduction in expenses generated by their economic activity amounts to €19.8 million (June 2013 to June 2017).

Efficiency and Sustainability

Since 2009, more than 1830 young entrepreneurs were mentored, thanks to a pool of over 1300 volunteer mentors. Moreover, this approach shows a high rate of commitment and repetition with consecutive mentoring relationships. It is cost-efficient, as it is structured as a volunteering programme. Mentors have the business experience and the willingness to commit to working on a voluntary basis, acting in the entrepreneur's best interest.

Institutional profile

Autoocupació, is a private and independent not-for-profit organisation created in 1986 to promote self-employment in Catalonia and providing financial and non-financial services to underserved entrepreneurs. Member of the EMN since 2009.

Type of Organisation

NGO

Country

Spain

Products & Services provided

- Financial: Business microloans.
- Non-financial: Entrepreneurship training, Mentoring.

Target Audience

Urban population, Unemployed people or people on welfare, Women, Ethnic minorities and/or immigrants, Youth

Organisation Website

www.autoocupacio.org

The mentoring is for a maximum of two years for each business. The programme complements other financial and non-financial services that Autoocupació offers and makes them more sustainable. Benefiting from a mentor's support increases significantly the survival rate of the businesses and reduces the default rate of microcredits' portfolios.

Lessons Learned

Autoocupació believes in leveraging successful methodologies by sharing good practices through international and local networks. The adoption of a developmental approach based on coaching techniques succeeded in supporting young entrepreneurs and engaged experienced professionals as volunteers to act as mentoring managers and drive the whole process. This was made possible thanks to an accurate selection process, which fostered the successful engagement and impact of the relationships. Autoocupació underlined the importance of training both mentors and mentees to align their expectations and establish common ground rules. Matching criteria for these relationships should be well defined and not industry based. Moreover, it is important to monitor continuously the mentoring relationship and to produce a final exhaustive evaluation. Lastly, organising networking events is also helpful to engage both entrepreneurs and mentors.

In Practice: Success Story

Marc Coloma set up his business in the food-tech industry in 2017, when he was 26 years old. His business produces and distributes a new generation of food based on vegetal proteins. Talking about his products, he says: "When the butchers try it, they think it's meat!" Marc won the Most Innovative Award at the Food Fair Business 2018, and the Most Innovative Start-up Award at the Basque Culinary Centre in 2018. He has benefited from more than two years of mentoring, which allowed him to create 8 new full-time jobs and 10 part-time jobs. His business had already generated great profits in the first quarter of 2018, and he is now expecting a turnover of 600,000€ in the second year.

Marc Coloma: *"Counting on someone with so much experience with whom to share worries, feeling listened and debating solutions is one of the best gifts an entrepreneur can receive."*

His Mentor: *"Marc has grown a lot since our mentoring relationship started: he listens, analyses, contrasts and takes good decisions, and Foods for tomorrow has turned from being a good idea to a business with a great potential."*



Further Readings

Promotional Video [#PutAMentorInYourLife](#)

PwC Impact study of the Mentoring Programme ([executive summary](#) and [full version](#))

Marc Coloma's Food for Tomorrow [website](#)

