How mentorship helped build a global business
Clayton Cross, Head of Strategy of Predikkta (https://www.predikkta.com/), is a serial entrepreneur. One of his latest ventures, Magnium Australia (https://www.magnium.com.au/), was incorporated on 20 May 2020. Like other
businesses during the pandemic, they had to start from scratch and find efficient ways to propel the enterprise in the startup phase through the heart of the pandemic, with limited communication.

“Basically, we had no board, we had no macrostructure, and we had no real governance, however, we were perceived as a big business very quickly and pedalling too fast due to the high level of inquiry (we had good SEO). We were just bootlegging it,” Clayton said. He attributes his conversations and guidance with his mentor, Rob McGeary, Director at APT Travel Group (https://www.aptouring.com.au/), which helped him shed light on how he can move forward with strong foundations with this new business.

Their mentorship journey also happened at a very interesting time, given the challenges posed by the lockdowns and the pandemic. This is why Clayton valued the experience even more as it came at a crucial point in his life.

“The pandemic created a new business norm and having someone with the experience of Rob, who’s had a very rich and full business life, was critical in working through that time where you had limited communications. What was interesting is that it was the first global business I’d been involved with, which involved global politics and the world’s biggest companies. Rob was well-versed in that area, so he was incredibly helpful because he is exposed to that ilk. That was probably the big assist, his demeanour and the way he handled himself settled me down.”

For Rob, their sessions allowed them to take a pause from their daily activities and talk more about business. “I think part of it is just the actual process, and it doesn’t matter who the mentor is, but I think the process of stepping out of the day-to-day and having a conversation about your business. It naturally becomes at a higher level, which just automatically helps. I think there’s extra value, but certainly, for the mentee, the process in itself and preparing for the discussion and then having the discussion helped with that. That was one of my learnings from EO as well in my forums. And so, I sort of had that framework. I think I saw that with Clayton and I certainly had that with my framework and with my approach to it.”

Clayton sees mentorship as a necessity in his entrepreneurial journey. In fact, this was his second time as a mentee in EO’s Mentorship Program and he’s again starting with his third intake. “I need it. I’m an introverted businessperson. I
need a mentor. For me, it’s the most important part of EO,” he remarked.

He further expounded, “Rob was my second mentor. For me, the mentorship program has been the most substantive and important part of EO because it brings a high degree of accountability. Even if I don’t catch up regularly, I’m always thinking about it if I have to report in because once you meet your mentor you start to learn and unpack their expectations, and EO, by its nature, creates that responsibility to deliver to a fellow member. I find the program very powerful in that respect as being exposed in a one-on-one situation to a proven business leader instils that confidence and pushes you that extra 5% that is needed to achieve significant change.”

“The mentors, from my experience, all have their strengths, and you tend to try and adapt and nuance to meet their strengths. With Rob, he was superb at structure and advice on the big end of town, capital raising and setting up a global company for listing, which is not something I’ve done before. Rob guided me on the bigger infrastructure requirements for a global business, the purpose of each board member, looking outward at the large capital raisings and generally the big-picture thinking at a global level, which wasn’t my wheelhouse. So, he explained and provided those inputs and many suggestions and leads and people to contact on that front,” Clayton explained.

Rob also shared how he learned from the mentorship through his conversations with Clayton. “What Clayton was doing was very specific and had very specific technical knowledge and technical skills and aspects that I could offer nothing on. It was helpful that it kept very pure and that it was more about leadership and structure and people and direction and vision and strategy. It was more about strategy than technical aspects which he was absolutely all over.”

“Clayton was very good, and he threw himself in, similar to my experience, which was very limited. My experience with raising money with the politicians (https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2022/06/Green-magnesium-refinery-proposal-for-Collie-reaches-milestone.aspx) and with the federal government (https://cqtoday.com.au/news/2022/05/13/25m-stanwell-magnesium-plant-promise/) liaison was almost very little and was fruitless. And Clayton, I think, came also from a lower base but he actually made it fruitful. It
changed my perspective slightly on what was achievable through those means. I think I personally have grown. Yes, I've grown as a person and definitely, I've appreciated a different perspective,” Rob continued.

Moreover, for Clayton, it was indeed a profitable experience. “It was much more significant to the financial success of Magnium than to Rob, as I expect he picked up very little from our meetings. He continually realigned us to that macro-level of thinking. And each time I thought of Rob during our relationship, I realized that I had to continually address the probing queries he raised as I became more aware of the questions he may ask as our relationship developed. So, that was always sitting in the back of my mind that, yes, I was good and could deliver on the micro but the macro is more significant, and without Rob’s guidance it would have slipped. For Magnium, it is significant because we now have an accomplished board and the base structure from the guidance in the mentorship, which already has translated into a significant investment demand from global interests.”

He added, “We’ve raised (https://www.afr.com/street-talk/magnium-australia-raises-3-24m-for-csiro-developed-tech-20220711-p5b0u4) over five million dollars and the company has the fundamentals for sustained success. In two years it has gone from start-up to over 45M and, more importantly, we’ve now got the infrastructure to grow the asset, with fantastic investors, an awesome team, and an incredible board and it stems back to the most part from my conversations with Rob. Really for me, it’s massively significant.”

As a mentor, Rob also found fulfilment from all this experience. “I think the mentorship program gave me the opportunity to give back as I’ve had a successful EO journey and I’ve gained much from my forum groups. This was an opportunity to contribute and give back and to say thanks to EO and society. It’s also very challenging in thinking differently and approaching things in a different way because it’s not a superior-subordinate reporting relationship as a mentor. So, it’s a way to think and approach things differently. Thirdly, it was very satisfying to see the positive impact I had on Clayton and his business and his business journey. Fourthly, it was interesting to open my eyes to things that I wasn’t aware of. I became aware of a whole sector and a whole emergence and a whole technology that I had previously no knowledge of and now, I have some knowledge in.”
In closing, Clayton described the entire journey in these words: “The beauty here is the harmony of how both mentor and mentee are able to work together with different backgrounds and break new ground to achieve a common goal (https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/2022/07/11/alan-kohler-end-of-coal/).”

We have many other beautiful mentorship stories like Clayton’s and Rob’s. If you’re interested in the program, visit our Mentorship page (https://www.eomelbourne.org/mentorship) to learn more about it.

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