THE ALTERNATIVE BOARD



WHITE PAPER

Choosing The Right Business Owner Coach



Where do you turn when you have a question about your business?

The best business leaders aren't those who always know the right solution for everything. They're the ones who recognise when they need another perspective and have a network of experienced people they can turn to for guidance and support. Some of these relationships may be informal, while others are developed through professional networks, peer advisory boards and business coaching.

Many larger businesses have the luxury of a board of directors, but where do small businesses turn for an outside perspective? The Alternative Board explored this question through its Small Business Pulse Survey, asking business owners from around the globe who they turned to for guidance and support and what impact those relationships had on their businesses.

The findings highlighted the importance of having trusted people who can provide fresh perspectives, challenge your thinking and help you make more confident decisions. Read on to explore the benefits of business owner coaching and how to find the right support for you and your business.

Navigating Growth with Confidence

As their Queensland-based electronics business, Sci-Blue Integrated Systems, expanded across Australia, brothers Michael and Paul Sciberras faced the challenges of managing rapid growth. Their solution? Drawing on the experience and perspectives of fellow business owners through The Alternative Board to help them navigate challenges and make more confident decisions.

"Sometimes, having a third party impartial perspective can make all the difference," says Michael. He credits The Alternative Board with helping the brothers work through differing opinions on important business decisions and find a clearer way forward.

Michael Sciberras
Sci-Blue Services Pty Ltd

Who Do Business Owners Trust Most?

The Alternative Board's Small Business Pulse Survey explored where business owners turned for guidance and support. The findings revealed a range of trusted sources:



Peers:

Nearly a third (31%) listed fellow business owners as their most trusted source of guidance and support. These relationships may range from informal friendships to professional associations and advisory boards.



Coaches:

Nearly one quarter (24%) chose coaches as their most trusted source of professional guidance and support. The value placed on coaching was further reflected in the findings, with 80% of respondents having worked with a coach at some point in their career and 41% having done so within the previous six months.



Family:

The third highest category was family members (18%).



Other:

No other category received a double-digit response. However, smaller percentages of business owners identified accountants, employees, consultants, friends and legal professionals as their most trusted sources of guidance and support

Together, fellow business owners and coaches accounted for more than half of respondents' most trusted sources of guidance and support. This highlights the value respondents placed on external perspectives, structured coaching and peer support.

One interesting finding was the difference in how business owners perceived the impact of coaching. Of those who had previously worked with a coach, 71% rated the coach's impact on their business as seven or higher, compared with just 18% of those who had never used a coach rating its potential impact at that level.

While these findings don't establish that coaching will deliver the same results for everyone, they suggest that business owners who have experienced coaching may have a greater appreciation of its potential value.

Business Owner Coach or Business Consultant?

What's the difference between a business owner coach and a business consultant? At first glance, they may seem similar, but they play different roles in helping business owners overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

Business owners typically engage **consultants** for their specialist knowledge and expertise in a particular area, such as marketing, financial management, operations or succession planning. A consultant may recommend specific solutions and, in some cases, assist with their implementation.

A **business owner coach**, on the other hand, focuses on helping you develop the skills, confidence and clarity to make better decisions for yourself and your business. Rather than simply providing answers, a coach challenges your thinking, asks the right questions, helps you identify opportunities and holds you accountable for taking action.

Both can provide valuable support. A consultant may be the right choice when you need specialist expertise to address a particular issue, while a business owner coach can help you strengthen your leadership capabilities, navigate challenges and achieve your longer-term business and personal goals.

The Power of Challenging Questions

Running a business often means making difficult decisions without anyone to challenge your thinking. For Tori van der Donk of Aegis Business Services, joining The Alternative Board provided access to experienced business owners who could offer fresh perspectives, ask difficult questions and help her stay focused on moving her business forward.

“Our Facilitator asks hard questions that we’ve been avoiding asking ourselves, ensuring we answer truthfully and then do something about it to head in the right direction,” says Tori. “Joining The Alternative Board has kept us focused and given us techniques and tools to start guiding the business into the next phase.”

Tori Van der Donk
Aegis Business Services

Benefits of Working with a Business Owner Coach

Working with a business owner coach can be beneficial no matter what stage your business is at. If your business is growing, a coach can help ensure that growth is strategic and sustainable. If progress has stalled, a coach can help you identify what's holding you back and develop a clearer path forward.

The benefits of coaching extend beyond addressing immediate business challenges. Having someone who can challenge your thinking, provide a fresh perspective and hold you accountable can help you become a more confident and effective business owner and leader.

Some of the key benefits include:

Developing Your Skills as a Business Owner

Most business owners can identify specific skills they could improve upon. Could you be a better communicator? A better negotiator? Better at managing your time and setting goals for your business?

A business coach can help you work in specific areas, developing skills that will help you succeed not only in this current business but in whatever venture you take on in the future.

Planning and Strategy

Business owner coaching is particularly valuable when it comes to stepping away from day-to-day operations and focusing on the bigger picture.

A coach can help you clarify your long-term goals, identify priorities and develop strategies to move your business forward. Just as importantly, they can provide the accountability needed to turn those plans into action.

Whether you're looking to grow your business, improve profitability, develop your leadership team or create more time for yourself, having a clear strategy can help you make decisions that support both your business and personal goals.

Active, Objective Listening

Good business coaches are trained in active listening. This means more than sitting quietly while you voice your concerns — it means asking thoughtful questions, offering feedback and "listening between the lines" for what's really going on.

What's more, a business owner coach offers an objective, confidential perspective. This gives you the freedom to discuss sensitive matters with someone who is removed from the day-to-day challenges of your business and can help you see things differently.

Turning Plans into Action

After years in senior corporate roles, Allan Anderson of All Purpose Safety and Training found that running his own business meant losing the opportunity to discuss challenges and test ideas with experienced colleagues. Joining The Alternative Board gave him access to fellow business owners who could challenge his thinking, offer fresh perspectives and help him stay accountable.

“Being a member of The Alternative Board has assisted me with analysing my business more effectively, putting short and long term plans in place and challenging me with deadlines for expected improvement,” says Allan.

The experience helped him regain focus, establish clearer goals and develop greater confidence in the direction of his business.

Allan Anderson
All Purpose Safety

Sharing Business Knowledge and Experience

When you work with a business owner coach, you benefit from their broader business knowledge, leadership experience and understanding of the challenges business owners face.

A good coach can share valuable insights, introduce new approaches and help you apply proven business principles to your own circumstances.

They don't need to be an expert in your particular industry. In fact, experience across different industries can bring fresh perspectives, challenge established thinking and help you identify opportunities you may otherwise have overlooked.

Identifying Strengths and Areas for Development

Beyond helping you improve your business, a good coach can also help you grow as a business owner and leader.

By recognising your strengths, identifying areas for development and challenging the way you think, coaching can build your confidence, strengthen your leadership skills and help you achieve both your business and personal goals.

Growing from Business Owner to Leader

When Michael Spragg of Laser Plumbing transitioned from tradesman to business owner, he found himself navigating the challenges of growing a business without formal business training. Wanting to ensure his business reached its full potential, he joined The Alternative Board to learn from the experiences of fellow business owners.

“Working with other private business owners like myself, I’ve learned how to better understand my employees’ needs and concerns and dramatically improve our communications and business culture,” says Michael.

Through The Alternative Board, Michael gained valuable insights into managing his team, turning ideas into action and developing the skills needed to lead a growing business.

Michael Spragg
Laser Plumbing

What to Look for in a Business Owner Coach



Working with a business owner coach is a very personal relationship, which is why it pays to spend time finding the right person.

Personal referrals can be a useful starting point, as can testimonials and case studies from other business owners who have worked with a coach.

However, experience alone isn't enough. The right coach should have an approach that suits your needs, understand the challenges of business ownership and be someone you trust to challenge your thinking.

Some of the most important qualities to consider include:

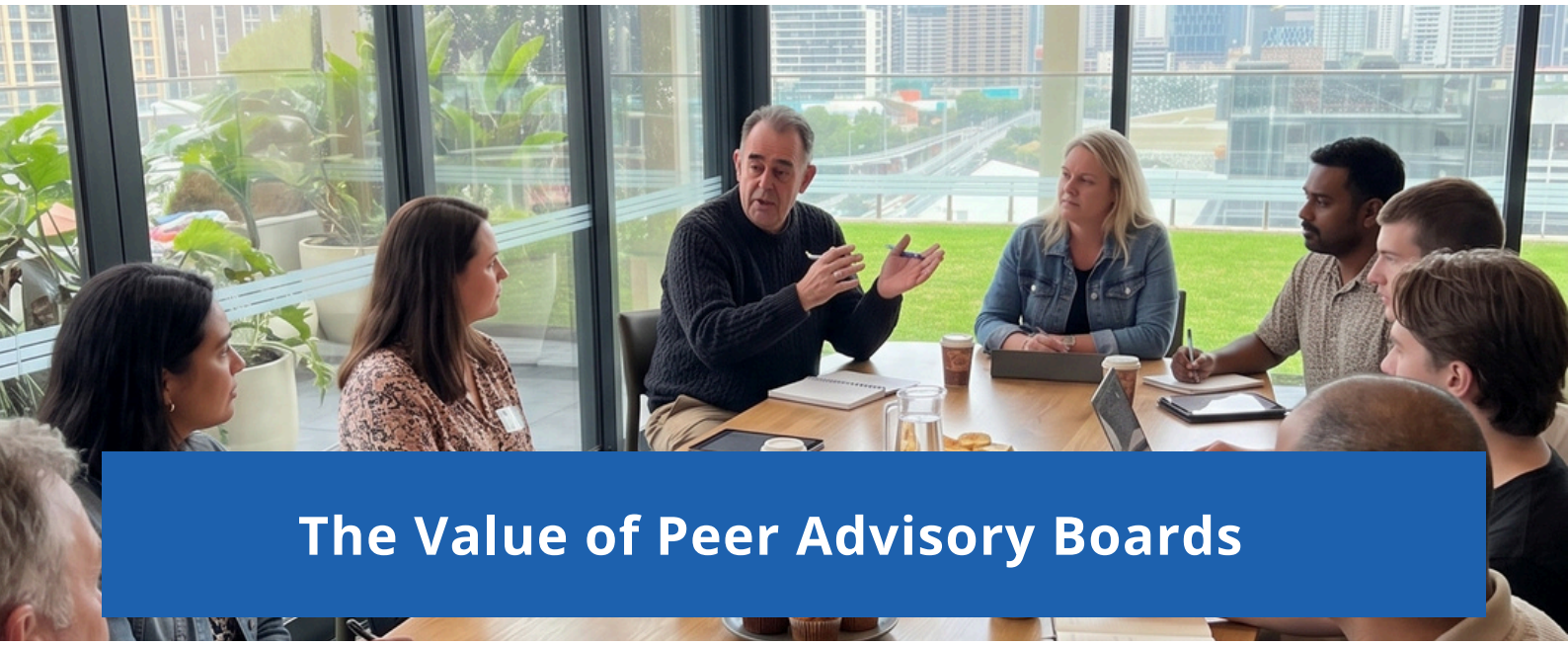
- **Experience**: A strong understanding of business ownership, leadership and the challenges involved in running a business.
- **Coaching style and approach**: Someone who asks thoughtful questions, challenges your assumptions and helps you develop your own solutions.
- **Trust and integrity**: A person you feel comfortable discussing sensitive business issues with, knowing your conversations will remain confidential.
- **Accountability:** Someone who will help you establish clear goals, maintain focus and follow through on your commitments.
- **Personal compatibilit**y: A coach you can build a productive working relationship with, even when conversations become challenging.

Ultimately, the right business owner coach should do more than make you feel supported. They should be willing to challenge your thinking, help you recognise opportunities and keep you focused on achieving meaningful results.

What Should You Expect From Your Business Owner Coach

Beyond experience and personal compatibility, a good business owner coach should help you turn your goals into meaningful progress.

This means asking the right questions, challenging your thinking, helping you identify priorities and holding you accountable for taking action. Coaching should also provide opportunities to review your progress, recognise what's working and make adjustments when needed.



The Value of Peer Advisory Boards

While one-to-one coaching provides personalised support, there is also considerable value in learning from the experiences of fellow business owners.

The Alternative Board's Peer Advisory Boards provide business owners with a supportive, confidential environment where they can share experiences, gain fresh perspectives and work through challenges with other business owners.

Meeting monthly, members have the opportunity to discuss real business issues, explore new ideas and develop practical strategies to move their businesses forward. The boards also provide accountability, helping members stay focused on their goals and turn plans into action.

Together, one-to-one business owner coaching and peer advisory boards provide a powerful combination of personalised support, shared experience, fresh perspectives and accountability. This helps business owners make more confident decisions, turn plans into action and achieve their business and personal goals.

The value of this approach is reflected in The Alternative Board Australia's member experience, with 92% of members saying they would recommend The Alternative Board to others. Members also stay with us for an average of five years, reflecting the ongoing value they receive from their peer advisory boards and coaching.

But the benefits go well beyond business performance. Through peer advisory boards, one-to-one business owner and leadership coaching, strategic business transformation programmes and leadership development, The Alternative Board helps business owners and leaders strengthen their capabilities, build confidence and create businesses that support their personal goals and aspirations.

Ultimately, success isn't just about increasing revenue or profitability. It's about building a better business in ways that can genuinely change your life.

The Value of Shared Experience

For Kay Godfrey of First Class Accounts Mona Vale, one of the greatest benefits of The Alternative Board has been the opportunity to connect with fellow business owners, share experiences and support one another through the challenges of running a business. These relationships have helped her gain clarity, make important decisions and feel more confident about the future.

“Just having the support of other people, I think, has helped me tremendously,” says Kay. Through her peer advisory board and coaching, she's gained a clearer understanding of what she wants from her business and how to achieve it.

Kay Godfrey
First Class Accounts

Is The Alternative Board for You?

At The Alternative Board, we help business owners and leaders improve their businesses in ways that change their lives.

Through peer advisory boards, one-to-one business owner and leadership coaching, strategic business transformation programmes and leadership development, we provide the support, fresh perspectives, practical tools and accountability needed to navigate challenges, make better decisions and achieve meaningful goals.

Whether you're looking to grow your business, strengthen your leadership capabilities, improve profitability or create a better work-life balance, The Alternative Board helps you build a stronger business and a more fulfilling future.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

Discover how The Alternative Board can help you achieve your business and personal goals.

Connect with your local business owner coach to learn more about our peer advisory boards and coaching programmes.

Find The Alternative Board near you