



# Russell Schmidt

Russell Schmidt looks for “teachable moments” that lead to genius.

Russell is passionate about nurturing progress and helping others create a life lived with awareness, balance, and purpose.

For Russell, who spent years as an educator before starting his financial services business, coaching is all about finding “the teachable moment.” “That’s number one for me,” he says, “watching what happens when something we’re doing lands for someone, and they say, ‘Wow, that’s exactly what I needed to know right now!’”

The function of a coach, Russell says, “is to help someone discover and manifest their genius.” “What I appreciate about the clients is the candor, the wisdom, and the willingness with which they participate. The Program attracts a special kind of human being. There’s just something about people who stick around with Strategic Coach® that’s wonderful.”

Russell was introduced to both entrepreneurship and coaching early on by his grandfather. “I knew him as a farmer,” Russell says, “but in the truest sense of the word, he was an entrepreneur. He was also the kind of guy in the community that everybody would call when they had something they couldn’t figure out. He would go, and he would figure it out for them.” Russell spent two summers working for his grandfather, learning directly and by osmosis. “Only when I joined the Strategic Coach® Program, did I realize just how important that influence was.”



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The second big influence in Russell's life came from another summer job, when he worked on a survey crew. He wanted to go to university in Toronto, but at the end of the summer, he still didn't have enough money. The entrepreneur in charge of the crew took Russell under his wing. "He arranged to send me to Toronto and set me up with a job there. I worked for a year, then every summer all I had to do was call that company, and they gave me a summer job. That mentoring had a tremendous impact."

Russell's education ultimately led him to become a dean at Sheridan College, a highly respected school near Toronto, but he found the bureaucracy that went with the profession stifling. "Everybody got paid according to scale. If you were good at something, you didn't get recognition. It was very much status quo, maintain the organization, don't rock the boat. And I've been something of a boat-rocker most of my life." Russell had been taking securities courses and was already thinking of retiring from education. When the college went through a restructuring period, he seized the opportunity. "There's no such thing as trying something. You have to go out and do it. So I said, 'This is it! If I don't do it now, I'm never going to do it.'"

Being an entrepreneur came with some growing pains, Russell admits. "That discomfort manifested itself in a lot of ways. There was anxiety about whether I was good enough and whether I really wanted to be in financial services. It wasn't an issue of focus because I'm a very focused person. It had more to do with the stress of taking on a new venture like this."

Then someone handed him a brochure for the Strategic Coach Program. "I normally made decisions at that point based on how much things cost. This time I decided I'd figure out whether the Program was for me, and if it was, I'd join regardless of the cost. I read through the brochure and said, 'Yeah, this fits.' So I sent in my check."

"I vividly remember my first day in the Program ... It was about me, it was based on my experience, and it was there to help me understand and define my future."

"I vividly remember my first day in the Program," Russell says. "Having been an educator, I felt that I was finally in a place where somebody understood what education was about. It was about me, it was based on my experience, and it was there to help me understand and define my future."

In the Program, Russell saw ways he could evolve his business, such as building a team to support him. "I was like many others—a 'rugged individualist' doing everything myself." He took a chance on hiring someone, but that person didn't work out. "About an hour after I fired him, I called someone who'd worked part-time for me. We met at a restaurant, and I outlined what I had in mind. She told me the salary she felt was fair, and I said, 'I'll have to think about it.' When I got back to my office I said to myself, 'What's there to think about? I need to have this person on board!' I hired her, and she's still here." Over the past ten years, Russell has continued expanding his team, gaining more and more freedom in the process. "It's nice to be at the point where I've got a team in place who can run the business pretty much without me. It frees me up to work on my future in a much bigger way."

One of his latest projects is creating a program to help young professionals manage their finances. "It's tough to get entry into financial services if you don't have any money. Helping young people is a very important aspect for me at this stage. I guess in some ways I'm returning the favor that was done for me."

"I can't imagine not doing what I'm doing most days," Russell says. "If it hadn't been for Strategic Coach, I would have left financial services a long time ago. The things the Coach helped me work through have really kept me there. I've got such a great life — relative to free time, relative to travel, relative to all of the things I like to do. Why would I stop doing what I'm doing?" Russell readily admits it isn't always easy or comfortable to have big goals, and being a coach doesn't change that. "But," he says, "if you haven't invented a bigger future and aren't willing to work on it, then it's just not going to happen!"