Entrepreneurial Education

Thomas Younk, co-founder of Cons Helping Cons – Free to Serve, Inc., a Florida 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is a prolific entrepreneur. He has owned several successful businesses.

Thomas goes to two Florida prisons and teaches classes on successful re-entry to society. A facet of these classes is starting a business and obtaining capital for said business.

When these men and women exit prison, they enter the Cons Helping Cons transition program which houses them, helps them either find a job or begin a business depending upon the person’s wishes, and assigns the person a mentor who works with them to make sure they stay on track and become successful tax-paying members of society.

The classroom portion described above typically is a year long process. Inmates are alerted to the program by their classification officers and word of mouth within the prison. Cons Helping Cons and Thomas have an excellent reputation inside the prison.

The transition program described above is typically six months at which time the person finds their own housing but continues with the mentorship. The mentor stays in touch with the person until it is decided by both parties that daily communication is no longer needed. We currently have mentors who are still in touch daily with people after three years and we have some clients who have ceased daily communication after nine months. Communication frequency continues to decrease upon agreement of both parties.

We utilize Wells Fargo as our go-to bank for opening checking and savings accounts and then capital loans after the client develops a relationship with the banker.

Our success rate with ex-offenders is phenomenal. We have assisted 650+ formerly incarcerated men and women in the past 3.8 years and only five (5) have returned to prison. That is a recidivism rate less than 1%. Current statistics suggest that without our assistance, 77% or about 500 of these people would have returned to prison.

The key, we believe, to this success is that Thomas works face to face with these men and women while they are still in prison and develops a trusting relationship. Thomas does not use on-line resources because he cannot use anything internet related inside the prison. He explains in easy to understand terms process, strategy, financing, marketing, human resources, leadership, contracting and market/product development. He helps the participants to decide what they want to do for a business. Most clients already have an idea because they have had a lot of time to think about this while sitting in prison. Thomas helps them form their ideas into a business plan.

When the person gets out of prison and into the transition program, Thomas and the mentors help the person start the business of their choice by being economical and buying used equipment and starting small. As the company begins to grow and needs capital to expand, Thomas takes the person to Wells Fargo to apply for a loan. The client receives said loan about 90% of the time. For the remaining 10%, Thomas obtains private financing for the person.

Thomas helps the client do their first year of tax returns and is available by phone at any time for human resource, legal, and strategy questions.

While this description may seem elemental, it works very well. It is all about sparking a desire in the client to realize the dream they have had for a very long time. It is about showing them how they can climb what they see as a mountain but in reality is just a good-sized hill. Thomas utilizes a lot of psychology in his dealings with the men and women.

Should you want testimonies from any number of people who have been through the program, please let me know.