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# A "Buddy" Can Help You to Grow Your Business

by Denis Ledoux



Working with another writing teacher can be a significant boost to your work as a lifewriting professional. Why not pair up with a "career-development buddy?" I've seen it work this way...

In the Soleil Lifestory Network certification program, I ask each teacher to connect with another teacher to call for regular "check-ins" once they get back home. While everyone in the group gets a list of each other's telephone numbers and e-addresses, choosing a buddy is much more proactive. Buddies agree on a date to call each other. No one goes home without the safety net of a buddy.

There's a high energy level in the training program, and the buddy system permits this energy to survive once the workshopers are back in their communities. It also commits teachers to hold themselves accountable for the goals they set for themselves during training. At the teacher certification programs, I am always trying to help teachers to create attainable goals rather than ambitious but possibly unattainable ones that might result from the enthusiasm of the moment!

What a gentle pressure it is to know that, at a certain time (one or two weeks) after the end of the certification program, your buddy will call. Have you been actively lifewriting so that you will be really familiar with the form you will be teaching? Are you creating the outreach material you need to get your workshops up and running? Have you made exploratory contacts with venue directors to present your first workshop?

What a boost it is to be able to say "yes" and to hear the other person congratulating you on being so successful and urging you to continue on your path of achieving your dream of being a lifewriting workshop leader. However...

If you are having trouble, your wonderful buddy will commiserate with you and perhaps (if you ask) share ideas about what s/he might do in a similar situation. Have you written your writing schedule down on your calendar—that helps! Have you reviewed the publicity material in *The Presenter's Manual* and on the Publicity Template Disk—the models there can help you get going in your outreach! How about if by our next call you have contacted three venue directors—you can do that can't you?

Graduates of the training programs, of course, know each other from having studied and played together. They have a feel for the difficulty their buddy is experiencing and why. They can both support change and promote progress with their sensitivity and knowledge. But even if you have not

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been to a residential Soleil Lifestory Network training program, you can still find a buddy. Here are a few ideas for finding one:

**W**hen you hear someone say things you can relate to or speak in a way you find supportive and reassuring, ask that person to be your buddy.

**T**his is about helping the other person to articulate personal goals and about helping that person to achieve them.

**1. Attend one of our Open Forums** (free to SLN Affiliates and Associates, free the first time to a visitor (\$15 thereafter) and listen carefully to the interactions. When you hear someone say things you can relate to or speak in a way you find supportive and reassuring, ask that person to be your buddy.

Of course, many of the Affiliates who attend an Open Forum are already paired with someone, but even a paired teacher may be interested in working with a second buddy. After all, the buddy system operates as a board of advisors and having more than one advisor can be a great thing.

**2. Sign up for a Business Supports Seminar Tele-Class** (\$350/15 weeks/comes with the Business Strategy Manual). Members will be encouraged to find a buddy, and I'll do my best to make sure everyone does. Here you will find people who are very focused on succeeding in their work and who will be looking for a buddy.

**3. Participate in one of the many individual Tele-Classes** we offer and find a soul-mate in one of them for developing your lifewriting work. After all, these are people who are expressly interested in lifewriting and want to develop themselves as memoir-writing professionals.

**4. Make a list of writing teachers** or micro-business professionals you know and ask one of them if s/he would be willing to work with you on a buddy system. Point out to the other person the benefits of pairing. If s/he declines, ask the next person on your list. So...

There are many possibilities for finding a buddy.

How does it work? Here are a few guidelines for working successfully with a buddy and for implement some of the many benefits of the buddy system.

**1. Set a time to telephone each other.** (I'm presuming that distance will be a factor here and you won't be able to get together in person.) Determine the length of the call so as to focus your discussion and have clear boundaries about when to end and how long each buddy will have to speak. (Focusing on one person at a time is perhaps most effective but that may just be my style. I prefer an entire call dedicated to one buddy. Then the other buddy gets to be the focus on another call day.) If you do joint coaching during a call, alternate who originates the calls so as to share the expense.

**2. Fax or e-mail each other any relevant documents,** notes, press releases, etc., beforehand so as to maximize the work you can accomplish together on any given call.

**3. During the call, listen to the other person** very respectfully. This is NOT about helping the other person realize the goals you wish s/he had set for him/herself. This is about helping the other person to articulate personal goals and about helping that person to achieve them. If you are non-judgmental and ask a lot of questions, you are probably going to be successful as a helper. Even on the telephone, you can pick up on many cues that tell you what the person needs but is not asking for. Listen carefully for these cues.

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**4. Ask for what you need** during the call. By thinking of your needs beforehand, you will be in a position to ask for them!

**5. If the process of working with a particular buddy is not successful** for you, it is courteous to tell the other person the two of you are not a good match after all and you need to find someone else. Thank the person for what you two have shared and then move on. Begin the process the process of finding a buddy over again. Don't give up!

**6. A buddy, as you may have guessed, is essentially a coach.** If you feel that you would benefit from working with a professional coach who is experienced in helping people write memoirs and/or grow their memoir micro-business, you may call me for a free exploratory session. And...

Whatever you do, why not take action today?

Good luck.

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