



I want to leave a legacy and sharing wisdom is part of that. I teach the difference between being successful and being significant



Wise guide

You have people who can advise you throughout your education and career – teachers, trainers, bosses – until you reach the top. But who do you turn to then? A professional mentor such as David CM Carter can step in



Words: Charlotte Metcalf
Photography: Marcus Butt

Such is the reputation of David CM Carter that he is known as ‘The Mentor’. He represents a growing trend – one which is accelerating so fast, there are not yet figures available – for City firms to employ mentors. Latest research from the European Mentoring & Coaching Council identifies seven ways in which companies benefit from mentoring programmes, including easier recruitment and induction and the fact that people are a third less likely to leave if they have a mentor.

Carter went solo three years ago when he left Merryck & Co, the company he founded in 1997 (Merryck is the M in his CM) and which became the world’s leading CEO mentoring company. ‘I believe the purpose of life is being and becoming the very best version of ourselves,’ says David. To this end, he mentors high-fliers, helping them break through to the zenith of their game on all levels – personal, spiritual and emotional as well as financial. His clients tend to be entrepreneurs and CEOs in transition to the very top tier of their communities.

His mentoring technique is intensive and focussed, so he never takes on more than 10 clients at a time, but he’s already making his mark on the City. Setting out to establish why his offering is unique, we talked first to Tony Manwaring, CEO of Tomorrow’s Company, a think-tank that works with business leaders to harness trends and shape the future in a positive and significant way. Carter, who passionately believes in Manwaring’s work, first mentored him about two years ago, as one of his two annual pro-bono clients.

‘David only takes on people he judges will benefit from him to make a wider impact on the world,’ says Manwaring. ‘For leaders to be significant outside their own confines, they need a tougher, more reflective process and to be continually

holding themselves up to the mirror of other people’s point of view. This is what David helps with.’

‘I don’t take on clients who simply want to move remorselessly up the corporate ladder,’ confirms Carter. ‘I only take on people who want to reach the top in order to make a difference.’

To that end, Alison Hutchinson is a typical client. She is trustee of the Charities Aid Commission and CEO of The Pennies Foundation, which launched Pennies, the electronic charity box. She’s also an independent non-executive director of the award-winning LMAX Exchange. Carter first mentored Hutchinson about a dozen years ago. ‘I went on a 48-hour retreat, which is unique to David,’ Alison explains. ‘At first I said I didn’t have time to do it but David only mentors people who are prepared to commit the time and, in return, he invests time in getting to know you, so it’s a tried and trusted partnership. Basically, if you’re not really serious about putting time aside to improve yourself, then I’m not sure David would be interested in helping you.’

Carter has just moved house from Wimbledon to South Kensington but intends to carry on using his home for his retreats. ‘My home is a sanctuary and I want my clients to feel it’s a place in which they can hang up their holster, switch off their phone and put their feet up. It’s a serene environment in which we can unload the jigsaw pieces of their life so we can start fitting them together again.’

I talked to Shalini Khemka, who had just finished a mini-retreat with Carter. With the support of Sir Richard Branson, Luke Johnson, Duncan Bannatyne and a heavy-hitting board, Shalini founded E2Exchange in 2011 to help entrepreneurs create high-growth companies, and access finance and the UK’s leading non-executive directors and mentors. ‘I was pleasantly surprised

by how useful the mini-retreat was,’ says Khemka. ‘What I learnt in that one day could have taken months to realise. David got straight to the heart of things and helped me clarify and articulate my objectives. When you’re really busy you’re thinking all the time but you’re not necessarily focussed.

He asked me if I was interested in the exit of my business or in running a business that gave me a sense of satisfaction through what I could contribute to it. That was a crucial question to ask. David is seriously expensive compared with other mentors but worth every penny. Any leader would benefit from his mentoring as it’s all about helping you get to where you want to be.’

Carter’s credibility is founded not just on impressive client testimonials but on the fact that he has been a CEO and at the top of his own game for 25 years, as well as experiencing a roller-coaster ride as an entrepreneur and a couple of broken marriages. ‘My clients know I speak their language,’ he says. ‘There’s nothing about being a CEO I don’t know. But it’s more than just business that has contributed to my arsenal of skills. Raising two children, almost single-handedly for 17 years, taught me the gift of unconditional love and loyalty, and the wisdom I’ve accumulated has enabled me to continue to lead a fulfilling, purposeful and fun life... no matter what.’

Recently he has published a book, *Breakthrough*. It allows the reader access to Carter’s methodology that has hitherto only been available to his clients. ‘I want to leave a legacy – sharing wisdom freely is part of that intention,’ Carter says. When asked how he would sum up why someone already successful would hire him, he doesn’t hesitate: ‘I teach the difference between being successful and being significant.’ ● davidcmcarter.com