



I grew up in a home that wasn't the most pleasant. This isn't the right place for the full story, but I will share that I was rarely given direction in life that didn't include anger in one form or another. Due in part to this, I got in my fair share of trouble, had dismal grades in the first part of high school, and nearly didn't graduate with my class. And that's not even sharing the whole story. But for the purpose of this article, I want to focus on one (of several) life changing events that happened to me. When I was 16, I got a job with a State Farm agent named Susan, to be her office assistant. This opportunity did two significant things for me. First, it got me started in the career I'm still in today, and second, it introduced me to what it means to have someone mentor me. Susan viewed every moment with me as a teaching moment. She quickly recognized the lack of direction I had at home and took it upon herself to always be ready to give advice, encouragement, and guidance. She would never let me take the easy way out, but always encouraged me to research and investigate before guessing or assuming – two skills that I use tremendously in my career today. But the most important thing about Susan, was that she was a voice of experience and wisdom in my life, and that she cared about my success and my future. Today, 28 years later, I still connect with her regularly, and I even take advantage of her wisdom as I pick her brain on some unique insurance topics I encounter.

I firmly believe that mentorship is one of the main keys to success in life. In fact, I will be bold and say that mentorship is quite possibly second to only God, when it comes to shaping someone into a successful person. If I'm correct, that means that mentorship is vital to success, vital to growth, and vital to a person's wellbeing. We work in an industry that is everchanging. And there are layers upon layers of everchanging information that we encounter daily. Mix that with trying to make sure our clients are taken care of and getting new clients... well those things alone are enough to get anyone overwhelmed. That's where a mentor comes in. A mentor is someone who has traveled the path before you. They have filtered through those piles of policies, they have helped client after client with all sorts of problems and questions, and they have found a new prospect, and taken them from first contact to, "biggest client ever." Mentors have seen what works and what doesn't work. And mentors have made mistakes, and made mistakes again, and learned from them. And most importantly, mentors aren't perfect. They still make mistakes, they still lose customers, and they still get stuff wrong now and then... but they learn, they grow, and they improve.

Now take a new agent. This could be a brand new, greener-than-my-grass agent, who just got their license yesterday, or this may be an agent who's been in the industry for years but wants to take it to the next level or learn something new. These agents would really benefit from a relationship with someone who has more or different experience than them. They can learn and grow and come out of that relationship with greater knowledge that will help them be an even better advisor for their clients. Meanwhile, the agent who is giving their time to be a contact and a resource for that agent; they too are growing and learning as they get to stretch themselves mentally to help someone else. Plus they get to see things from a new perspective as they hear what's working and what's not working with the person they're helping.

If you have never had someone come along side of you in your insurance career, imagine how you could have benefited from having a relationship through some of the challenges – or wins – that you faced. And on the flip side, what if you did have someone to coach and encourage you? Imagine how much different your career would have been if they weren't a part of your life.

Mentorship is one of the easiest and most beneficial things a person can take part in. When you mentor, or when you are mentored, you take an active part in one huge aspect of CAHU; you help protect consumers access to healthcare. You do this because you are engaged, educated, and informed so that your clients can be engaged, educated, and informed.

CAHU recently launched a mentorship program through the CAHU Foundation. Shortly after launch an agent jumped on board to be mentored. I was in the process of recruiting mentors so to not keep her waiting, I jumped on a couple quick calls with her. Here is a quote from an email she sent me after we spoke: "Thank you so much for the coaching sessions this week. Your advice and suggestions are so practical and insightful. I am very lucky to have your help. I look forward to learning more from you and other mentors in the future." The thing is, everyone reading this will have advice and suggestions that are "practical and insightful." And that practical and insightful advice can help one of your peers to grow and improve.

When I was a kid, if someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I can promise you that I never said, "an insurance agent." But here I am today, and I wouldn't change a thing. But I don't think I would feel the same way that I do today, if it wasn't for Susan mentoring me when I was just getting started. A mentor is a person who can shape and change lives for the better. And we need more people to shape lives... and people who want their lives shaped.

Please, log on to [www.cahufoundation.org/mentor](http://www.cahufoundation.org/mentor), and complete a quick form to become a mentor, or to be mentored. If your experience is anything like my experiences have been, it will be one of the best choices you will make, in both your professional and personal life.

Tim Kanter

President – CAHU Foundation