

Helping entrepreneurs succeed:

Advisory relationships in government-funded programs

Presentation by:

Kelley A. Packalen, PhD

Associate Professor of Strategy & Organization

Queen's School of Business

Comments by:

Alison Lobb

Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre

Focus of presentation:

advisory relationships in small business centres

- What type of advice do directors and advisors emphasize?
- Do directors' and advisors' own backgrounds influence the centre's offerings and/or services provided?

Context

Organizations (not all of them)

- Regional Innovation Centres
- Community Futures Development Corporations
- Small Business Enterprise Centres
- Business Advisory Centres
- Economic Development Corporations
- Business Enterprise Centres

Programs (to name just a few)

- For youth:
 - Summer Company
 - Canadian Youth Business Foundation
- For different regions
 - CFDC loans
 - Southwestern Ontario Development Fund
 - Eastern Ontario Development Fund
 - Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
- For EI recipients
 - SEBP

Interviews to date

- 12 advisors from 8 different centres across Ontario
 - 1 centre focused on high growth businesses; remainder serve all types of clients
- 14 directors or managers from centres across Ontario
 - 3 centres focused on high growth businesses; remainder serve all types of clients

What interviewees were asked

- Directors
 - Career histories
 - Programs offered and how centre is organized
 - Hiring criteria for advisors
 - Advisor's job requirements
- Advisors
 - Career histories
 - Job expectations and responsibilities
 - Three most important topics to discuss with entrepreneurs
 - Overview of relationship with a challenging, typical and ideal entrepreneur

Entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well among program directors

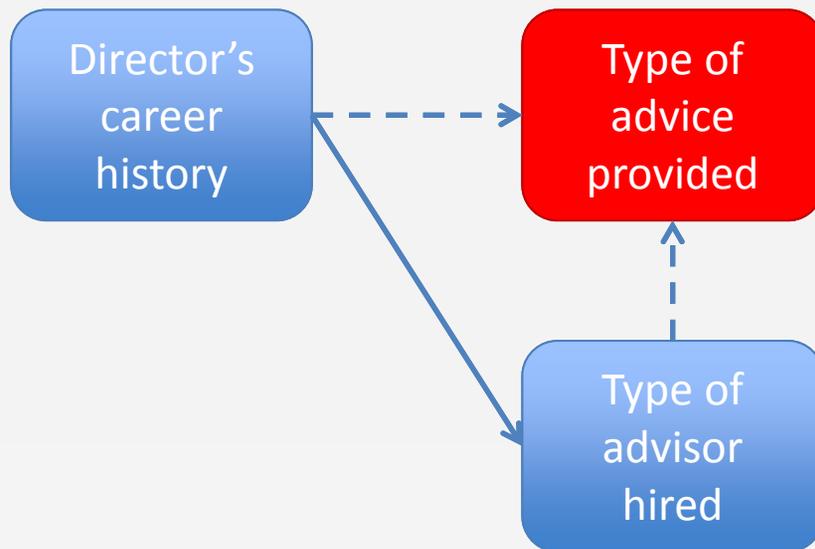
- Basic items were covered in all centres
- But directors appeared to be given the freedom to decide how their centre would offer their services
 - Varied use of internet-supported learning
 - Number and type of seminars offered
 - Community events participated in and/or hosted
 - Methods of advertising

Directors' and advisors' backgrounds influence what they value



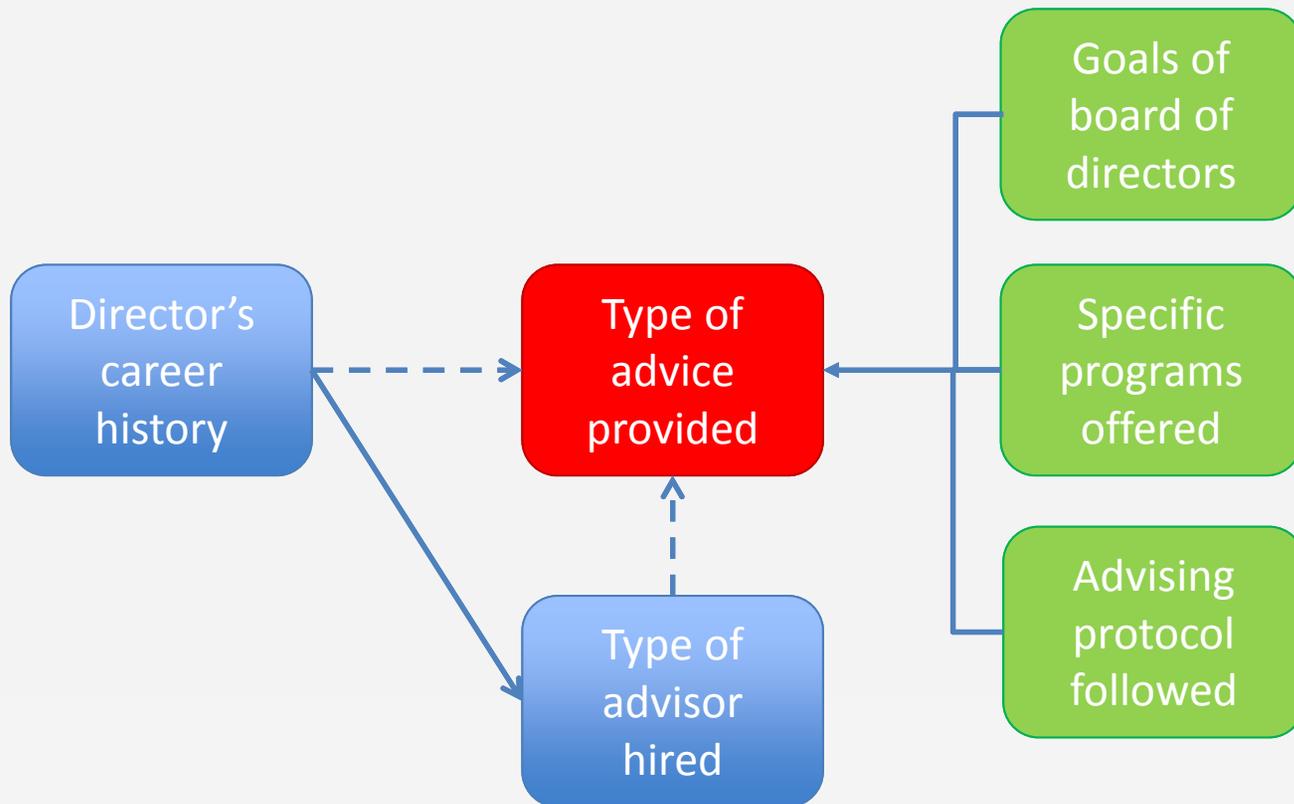
- Former entrepreneurs think practical experience is essential
- Directors who grew up in the region often see that as an important factor in their success

Directors' and advisors' backgrounds influence what they emphasize



- Those close to entrepreneurs emphasize psychosocial types of advising
- Those who don't have first hand-entrepreneurial experience speak about trust and rapport, being a good listener, etc. as being essential skills

But entrepreneurial spirit is tempered by (sometimes) necessary bureaucracy



Recommendations

- To government sponsors:
 - Minimize change
 - Simplify processes
- To boards of directors & funders
 - Avoid pushing growth for growth's sake
 - Understand that people don't always want to publicize their support
- To directors & advisors
 - Continue to put the entrepreneur first
 - Use technology & other creative solutions to the extent possible thereby maximizing value of contact hours