MENTORS@the mill

The Hamilton Mill is Southwestern Ohio’s small business incubator for green, clean, water, digital and advanced manufacturing technologies. Conveniently located between Cincinnati and Dayton in the original pioneer town of Hamilton, OH.

We achieve our goals by providing a diverse mix of business development services that range from educational to programmatic. These services will enhance the entrepreneurial acumen of our target audience. The Hamilton Mill is housed in a vibrant environment with on-site staff that provides ongoing mentoring and support for students, workers, and high-growth enterprises.

Our mentors play a big part in this success!

MILL MENTOR OBJECTIVES

- Provide an experienced and objective team of advisors to coach, educate and support each company going through The Mill program.
- Provide the startups with access to individuals who can help fill in the knowledge and connection gaps.
- Create lasting relationships between regional business professionals and budding entrepreneurs.
- Quickly enhance each founder’s network by making introductions to potential partners, investors and customers.
- Enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of The Mill program.
- Get Crazy!

THE MILL’S APPROACH TO MENTORSHIP

- We don’t force partnerships - we like to see that grow organically.
- We do perform on-boarding assessments to determine startup strengths and weakness and communicate that as needed to our mentor community. Additionally, there will be events to introduce mentors to founders.
- We leave it in the hands of both founder and mentor to agree that they’d like to work with each other and take it from there.
- Our mentors come in many forms with expertise across multiple disciplines such as operations, marketing, branding, sales, product development, infrastructure, pitch and investment.
- We don’t have any time commitment rules and won’t track time spent with our startups - that is up to you. Sometimes the least amount of time spent on something can have the largest impact.

MENTOR EXPECTATIONS

- No firm time commitment - get involved as much or as little as your time allows - 1 hr/week is general rule of thumb
- Respond in a timely manner
- Educate and guide - don’t sell
- Direct communications between mentor and founders remains confidential
- Communicate back to Mill staff if there are issues with the mentor/mentee partnership
- Mentors will not be compensated
- Connect them to your network where relevant
- Promote and advocate for your partner companies
- Follow-through on promised actions
THE SKINNY

- Be socratic.
- Expect nothing in return (you’ll be delighted with what you do get back).
- Be authentic / practice what you preach.
- Be direct. Tell the truth, however hard.
- Listen too.
- The best mentor relationships eventually become two-way.
- Be responsive.
- Adopt at least one company every single year. Experience counts.
- Clearly separate opinion from fact.
- Hold information in confidence.
- Clearly commit to mentor or do not. Either is fine.
- Know what you don’t know. Say I don’t know when you don’t know.
- “I don’t know” is preferable to bravado.
- Guide, don’t control. Teams must make their own decisions. Guide but never tell them what to do. Understand that it’s their company, not yours.
- Accept and communicate with other mentors that get involved.
- Be optimistic.
- Provide specific actionable advice. don’t be vague.
- Be challenging/robust but never destructive.
- Have empathy. Remember that startups are hard.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE MILL

- Regular communications of events and required meetings
- Request of your bio and photo for placement on our website
- Scheduled check-ins to evaluate the mentorship with the companies and The Mill
- Recognition - for those that go beyond the call of duty
- Indemnity for mentors is spelled out in The Hamilton Mill Program Agreement. Activities outside of The Mill are covered under a related service contract.
- The Mill reserves the right to remove any mentor from our list at any time for any reason - don’t be the first!

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE HAMILTON MILL!