



# Dan Sullivan

Dan Sullivan is the world's foremost expert on entrepreneurship in action.

Many of the world's top-performing business owners regard Dan Sullivan as the person to teach you how to be a better entrepreneur.

When Dan Sullivan stands before a room of entrepreneurs, either in his Strategic Coach® Program or as a keynote speaker, they pay attention. Not because he's a celebrity—he deliberately keeps the focus off him and on his clients—but because they know he can help them figure out what to do next.

You may have heard of Dan's clients, many of whom have become household names for their successful books, programs, and processes. Others are distinguished within their industry, and some choose to stay behind the scenes. These top-performing business leaders often quote Dan's maxims about business life, and refer to his coaching processes as the final piece of the puzzle that helped them transform their wisdom into the innovation for which they're now so well-known.

Despite being some of the busiest people on the planet, these entrepreneurs travel from as far away as Australia and the Middle East to attend Strategic Coach® workshops. Although they come from over 60 different industries, they all remark on Dan's tremendous ability to understand their unique situation and offer strategies that create breakthroughs.

"The problem is never the problem," says Dan. "The problem is that you don't even know how to think about the problem." Since 1974, he's been giving



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entrepreneurs a context for thinking about their challenges and opportunities, identifying the next right step to take, then taking that step with confidence. He's passionate about doing this work because he believes entrepreneurs are the engine that drives all human progress in the modern world.

Dan defines an entrepreneur as someone who is free to work when they want, free to work with whom they want, and free to earn an income that's based entirely on their results. While his clients enthusiastically share Strategic Coach tools with their families, business partners, and team members, the Program is aimed at them because they have the greatest power to put his ideas into practice.

Being so results-oriented, entrepreneurs are a demanding audience, and Dan enjoys rising to the challenge. "Always test your ideas out on check-writers" is one of his mottos. For over 35 years, he's been refining his methods and learning from his own experience as an entrepreneur and from his clients' experience—engaging in over 50,000 hours of conversation with more than 6,000 of these successful business leaders.

Dan sees his central purpose as a coach as helping people become "unmanipulated"—liberated from external forces like industry constraints, economics, and politics, as well as internal forces, like their thinking, their habits, their past-based assumptions, and the messes in their lives. When they gain this freedom, they begin to see and capture all the opportunities in their situation.

From the very beginning, Dan's central strategy has been asking deep, open-ended questions. As a child growing up on an Ohio farm, he used to visit an elderly neighbor and ask her questions about the world and her life. Later she would tell his parents, "Danny was here today, and I feel so much better now." He continued asking questions through his education at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, where he studied The Great Books in interactive sessions led by tutors. This kind of peer-group learning is present today in the Strategic Coach Program.

Another aspect of Strategic Coach that clients often remark on is the enjoyable, first-rate experience they have every time they visit the company's offices and events. The entire organization is designed around the concept of producing an excellent "Front Stage" show,

which is achieved through countless "Back Stage" processes that honor and harness the talents of the company's team members. This structure is based on Dan's involvement in organizing USO shows during the Vietnam War. It's a model that sets a high standard for service, yet fosters a great warmth of spirit and a consistency with the ideas presented in Strategic Coach workshops.

One of Strategic Coach's first thinking tools—and still one of its most popular—is The Strategy Circle®. This deceptively simple process has helped solve endless challenges, from moving offices to winning political campaigns. Like so many of the tools used in the Strategic Coach Program, it captures any situation in a "graphical overview" that takes away complexity and emotion, leaving the user free to make decisions and take action. Dan created The Strategy Circle early in his career, while working as an illustrator for one of Toronto's top advertising agencies. Today, he still uses this talent for capturing the essence of things on paper: Many of the company's biggest breakthroughs began as a line-drawing on Dan's sketchpad.

His marketplace predictions consistently come to pass ... and this has earned him a reputation as a thought-leader in business. But his passion always comes down to helping entrepreneurs.

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The last piece of the puzzle fell into place in 1985, when Dan met Babs Smith. She soon became his best friend, his business partner, and his wife. A successful entrepreneur herself, Babs was able to build the Back Stage organization and team to support Dan's skills, and Strategic Coach was born.

Since then, more than 13,000 entrepreneurs have participated in the company's flagship offering, the Strategic Coach Program. From this enormous body of wisdom and his ability to ask good, purposeful questions, Dan has constructed a repeatable process in which any entrepreneur can escape the bureaucracy, limitations, and averages of their industry, and gain the freedom to use their talents, act on their ideas, enjoy their success, and make a lasting impact on their corner of the world.

Dan Sullivan and Strategic Coach have a particularly high profile in the financial services industry—partly due to the natural networkers who populate the industry, partly due to Dan's forecasts about it in his books *The 21st Century Agent* and *The Great Crossover*, and in his unforgettable point-blank, yet often comic, speeches at events like the Million Dollar Round Table.

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His marketplace predictions consistently come to pass—for financial services and the many other industries he's worked with from the beginning, and this has earned him a reputation as a thought leader in business. But his passion always comes down to helping entrepreneurs. "I'm always looking for the piece of bad news that's widely shared and trying to solve it," he says. "When you hit it, people get very excited. And if you solve it for one person, you've probably just solved it for 50 people, or 500, or more."

The company has grown exponentially since 1985, always using the same principles and processes taught in the Program, and with the addition of associate coaches—successful entrepreneurs with a long-time involvement with the Strategic Coach Program—the

reach of Dan's ideas multiplied. The Program was offered in additional locations across North America and then in the United Kingdom, with clients literally coming from around the world to participate.

The impact of Dan's life and work is impossible to measure, but each individual client's story is profound—the outstanding business innovations they've created; their fascinating global adventures; the deep, caring relationships they've started or been able to rekindle in their work, their communities, and at home; and the lives they've brightened through their tremendous charitable work. All of this has been possible, they say, because of the freedom and success Dan has helped them achieve.

Talking to someone about their goals for the future, Dan says, is like tuning in to a radio station: "I'm able to immediately zero in on the frequency—and I believe in what I hear. I take your future very seriously."

"As a coach," he says, "you set up a series of thinking experiences so clients can get it themselves and own it, taking greater and greater ownership of their unique future. When you pull it off, it's an enormous joy."

**For information about Dan Sullivan's upcoming workshops, see:**  
<http://www.strategiccoach.com/workshops/upcoming>