

# Thom Coats, MBA

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## **Education**

Master of Business Administration, 2017 - 2017

Western Governors University at Salt Lake City, UT

Bachelor of Business Administration, 1980 – 1985

Mississippi State University at Starkville, MS

## **Professional Experience**

*The order of experience will be listed in chronological order because each phase and position provided skills that built upon each other. This was done to demonstrate that teaching, training and coaching have been integral parts of my career from the beginning. My success in sales and management is a result of my ability to help others learn and succeed. I am now at a point in my career where I would like to begin dedicating more of my activities to teaching others and focusing on their advancement.*

### **1987 – 1993: Law Enforcement**

My first real position after graduating from college was as a police officer in Starkville, MS. It was there that I learned how to communicate, lead and follow. Beginning with being recognized by the Lieutenant Governor during graduation at the Police Academy for organizing study groups, my Law Enforcement career was one of learning and leading. During my years as a police officer, I earned my way onto the SWAT team as well as serving as a regular police officer.

I ran the Crime Prevention Program, where I leveraged marketing interns and acting students from Mississippi State to send out PSA's covering the entire region to promote the program. I used the volunteer acting students to reenact crime scenarios, then redid the scenes using proper tactics. These segments were broadcast during the weekly Sunday evening television news from Columbus, MS. I also conducted safety programs at many apartment complexes, neighborhood watch groups and businesses in Starkville.

As a certified DARE instructor, I learned classroom management and teaching skills. I developed a safety program for pre-K through 4th-grade students as a precursor to the DARE program which began in 5th grade. Using film and puppets as teaching methods, the program stressed three points, “say no, get away and tell someone.”

### **1993–98 & 2003-04: NFIB and U.S. Chamber of Commerce – Cold Calling**

My first sales position was with the National Federation of Independent Business, and I was promoted within the first seven months. This sales job was strictly door-to-door cold-calling to small businesses in my assigned territory. I was able to leverage my communication skills and leadership skills from my law enforcement days. Territory management and sales activity were the keys to success.

Within seven months I was made the regional trainer, helping new employees become successful. A few months later I was made a District Sales Manager, where I took a team from the bottom of the rankings to the top five. When I took over the district, my first plan of action was to work with each team member to see that they had the tools and skills necessary to do their job. When I found team members that lacked those skills, I worked to ensure that I did everything possible to help them improve their performance to an acceptable level. I was able to redirect the majority of my sales reps to perform successfully, helped some overachieve, and concluded the process by terminating the employment relationship with only two reps due to their lack of effort. I also had the lowest turnover rate in the nation while mentoring three sales reps to management level, even though these reps did not have sales backgrounds (a coal miner, a former food server, and a rodeo bull rider.) During this time, I presented to my largest audience of 5,000 during the first company-wide sales conference and served on the planning team for the conference.

### **1998 – 2002: RJ Young – Solutions Sales**

Whereas the NFIB sale very much required a transactional process, selling wide engineering equipment at RJ Young was a solutions-based sale. I was the third sales rep hired and the first to be successful in establishing the market. Again, reaching back to my law enforcement days, the skill of listening helped design the best solution for the client.

## **2004 – 2012: Paychex & Century II – Solutions Sales**

### **Paychex**

Solution-based sales continued and were improved during my Paychex days. I sold the Human Resources and the Professional Employer Organization services. That service encompassed all payroll, HR, employee safety, worker's comp, benefits and retirement. I drew the skills to succeed from a combination of territory management experience of NFIB and solutions sales experience of RJ Young.

I overachieved quota each year, making Paychex's Conference Level (President's Club) five years and Circle Level (their highest sales achievement) four of the years during my time with Paychex. I was named to the Zone Advisory Council and taught at the Paychex University as a guest instructor in Rochester, NY. On a quarterly basis, I was responsible for teaching CPE seminars for CPAs in Nashville, Birmingham, and Chattanooga.

When I started with Paychex there was one Human Resources Specialist stationed in Nashville that served three regions. When I left eleven years later, I had increased our clients to the point that three specialists were needed in Nashville, one in Birmingham and one in Memphis. I was named number one rep in the district each year bringing in an average of 65% of the total district's quota.

### **Century II**

Century II was a local PEO with an outstanding reputation. While with Paychex, Century II was the only competitor from which I could not win clients away. During my short time with them before they sold to another PEO, I graduated from Leadership Rutherford, became part of the leadership of the Southeast Business Forum (a regional networking organization) and served on the Advisory Board for Read to Succeed of Rutherford County.

For the first time in my sales career, my market was only Middle Tennessee. I could once again plug into the community. It was here that I was able to build an amazing professional network and partnered with Accelerent of Middle Tennessee, a mid-market business organization.

By serving my clients and networking partners, I was able to help companies connect and grow, and as a result, my own sales continued to grow.

## **2017 – present: Technology**

### **JourneyTEAM, Pilgrim Consulting, and LOGICFORCE**

When Century II was on the market to be sold, I had the opportunity to transition into technology sales. This type of sale is very much a solutions-based sale, but it

is important to know where your limits lie. The saying is that “with time and money, any project is possible,” but that does not necessarily make the project a good fit. I had to find other technology companies that were best in class in the services that my clients needed in addition to the services my company provided. Building virtual teams and leveraging technology to keep them and the client informed has been exciting and a wonderful learning experience. I’ve been able to engage in multiple projects with companies such as the Lee Company, Health Stream, VGR, and three of the twelve divisions of the world headquarters of the Methodist Church.

## **Professional Development**

In late 2016, I decided that my next career move would be into teaching. I have trained and taught throughout my career, and I realized that this is what gives me the most satisfaction. To meet that goal, I entered into the Western Governors University graduate program to earn my MBA. I was able to continue to work and studied on nights and weekends, earning my MBA in less than one year’s time. It was my honor to be recognized by the university for a paper I wrote on business ethics that explained the lessons I had learned from growing up in a small business in south Mississippi.

In 2017, I founded the UnStuck Business Academy and hosted the first annual UnStuck Business Conference. The premise of “UnStuck” is that all business people get stuck on occasion. Growing up in a small business, I learned that business owners grow their businesses through hard work and common sense. The problem with that is that their growth will eventually level off and they’ll be “stuck.” I organized the conference to bring that uncommon wisdom to professionals. It was held at the Bridgestone Arena as a TEDx format and was very successful. I then asked each of the speakers to write their topic as a chapter and combined it with my chapter as a book titled, “UnStuck: 10 Proven Strategies for Breaking Through the Barriers to Small Business Growth.” That book was a number one best seller on Amazon. By the close of 2017, I had earned my MBA and had become a professional speaker and best-selling author. The following year I hosted the second Unstuck Conference as well as several professional training classes.

I have recently added a networking group to the UnStuck offerings. It is called C|SUITE and meets monthly in Brentwood, Murfreesboro, Hendersonville, and Nashville. The next two locations will target Chattanooga and Huntsville, and plans are to add online training in addition to the on-site training in 2019.

## **Publications**

Thom Coats. 2017. *UnStuck: 10 Proven Strategies for Breaking Through the Barriers to Small Business Growth*. Amazon

## **Honors, Awards and Achievements**

### **Community Involvement**

Advisory Council to Read to Succeed – current

Board of Directors to Tennessee Philharmonic Symphony – 2017, 2018

University Achievement Award – Ethics Team Paper, WGU 2017

Main Street JazzFest Planning Board, Murfreesboro – 2014 ,2015, 2016, 2017

Volunteer of the Year – Read to Succeed 2014

Kentucky Colonel – commissioned 1995

Board of Directors to Oktibbeha County American Heart Association – 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993

### **Professional**

UnStuck Nashville Conference 2017, 2018, 2019

Founded the UnStuck Business Academy 2016

Founded C|SUITE Networking Group 2017

Paychex:

- Exceeded Quota - 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Zone HR Representative of the Year - 2007
- District HR Representative of the Year - 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Zone Advisory Council - 2009
- Guest Instructor, Paychex University - 2008
- Conference Incentive Trip Winner - 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012
- Circle Incentive Trip Winner - 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

RJ Young:

- Exceeded Quota - 1999, 2000, 2001
- President's Club - 1999, 2000
- Branch Sales Rep of the Year - 2000

U.S. Chamber of Commerce:

- Exceeded Quota - 2003
- President's Club - 2003
- Ranked 1 of 40 for new business - 2003

NFIB Division Manager:

- Ranked 5 of 52 - 1997
- Ranked 3 of 52 - 1996
- Ranked 16 of 52 - 1995
- Regional New Business Percentage Award - 1996
- President's Club - 1996, 1997

NFIB Field Rep:

- Ranked 2 of 12 - 2003
- Ranked 3 Of 150 for new business sales - 2003
- Exceeded Quota - 1993, 1994
- Ranked 10 of 1900 for New Business Sales - 1st Quarter 1994
- Ranked 1 of 12 for Sales/Day and New Business Avg. - 1993, 1994