

The Benefits of a Workplace Mentor

Could you benefit from having a mentor in your workplace? Depending on whether you are a new employee; transitioning to a different position within your company; or want to align yourself with the right people in your organization to facilitate a career move, developing a mentor-mentee relationship can be beneficial to your success. A workplace mentor can serve as a motivator, teacher, facilitator, and, if you are really lucky, a friend. A mentor often holds the type of position you are striving for and may have the clout and connections to guide you there. Identifying someone you admire and respect in your company is the first step to establishing a successful mentor-mentee relationship. You can then either approach a potential mentor with a formal proposal to develop the relationship, or develop a good rapport first, then when you are comfortable, reveal how much you appreciate his or her experience and insight and want to continue learning.

Things to Consider When Choosing a Mentor

- Decide what you need in a mentor and what skills you would like to develop. Approaching a potential mentor without a plan or attainable goals may give the impression you need a life coach more than a mentor.
- Consider a mentor with the same educational or professional background as you, or who may have faced the same challenges as you. Mentors are more likely to invest their time in individuals with whom they can share common experiences.
- Choose someone who will be supportive and willing to offer you constructive criticism. You want a mentor who sees your needs as important. Formally establishing the relationship will assist your mentor in planning his or her schedule accordingly.

Advantages of a Mentor-Mentee Relationship

- Mentors can keep you in the loop concerning industry happenings; additional responsibilities you can take on within the company; or opportunities outside the organization.
- Your mentor can help you assess your strengths and weaknesses and help you develop a long-range career plan.
- Your mentor can help you navigate your organization's culture and politics and introduce you to others with influential connections.

Points to Remember

- Be careful not to demand too much of your mentor's time and attention or become overly dependent. Your mentor should see how well you perform on your own, and that you are able to tackle daily workplace issues within your designated chain of command.
- While it is important to not become burdensome to your mentor, you two should be communicating regularly. Finding balance is important.

- Show your mentor that you value his or her advice or career leads. For example, if your mentor suggests you contact a certain person, or gives you a good lead, act on it right away. And be sure to report back the outcome of the contact.
- Be cautious about asking your direct supervisor to serve as your mentor. You want to feel comfortable when discussing workplace or personal issues with a mentor.
- Do not badmouth your supervisor or coworkers to your mentor. Expressing your frustration and seeking a fresh perspective is fine, but making disparaging remarks gives an impression that you cannot handle pressure in a more tactful, mature manner.