

Make Mentoring Work For You

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If there were something you could do to increase your chances of getting promoted by forty percent, you would do it in a heartbeat, wouldn't you? What if that same activity would mean you were twenty percent more likely to increase your salary?

Studies have shown that mentored individuals have higher salaries, higher promotion rates, and, overall, are more satisfied with their jobs.

For women, mentoring can be the key to unlocking an advancement path in their career. Mentoring, a developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced partner, or mentee, is different than what your manager does for you or a high-level person in your organization might do to help you advance, that's sponsoring. Mentoring is really about somebody outside your organization taking a vested interest in helping you advance your career.

A mentor isn't there to make decisions for you or judge those decisions. Rather a mentor is there to guide you into finding the answers you need about your career. They might draw on past experience, and share with you how they made a decision in a similar situation.

Realizing the value of a mentor and the impact she can have on your career is only the first step. Next, you have to find a mentor. The best place to start is your own backyard, once you start looking you will find good candidates all around you. A few things you can do in your search:

- ◆ **Talk to your peers.** Ask other people in your organization to suggest potential candidates.
- ◆ **Ask your manager.** Your manager may believe she or he already serves as your mentor, and you'll want to acknowledge the value of that relationship and explain what you envision for your mentoring relationship. Your manager might be willing to recommend a potential candidate.
- ◆ **Attend company functions.** Meetings, speeches, and receptions are all opportunities to identify mentor candidates. Engage potential mentors in informal conversation, look for people who ask questions, listen well, and are interested in new ideas, and then introduce yourself.
- ◆ **Examine work relationships.** Some of these relationships could easily become mentoring relationships and benefit from the process and structure outlined in this guide.

Once that you know where to start looking for a mentor, you should make sure you've identified what you need in a mentor. Ask yourself what knowledge, skills, and behaviors you would like to learn from your mentor? When searching for the right mentor, consider the candidate's:

- ◆ **Ability to provide the required expertise.** Can the mentor support your understanding of other areas of the organization, such as accessing a particular network, understanding corporate culture, or understanding customers and their needs?

- ◆ **Position.** Trust is more assured if your mentor is not in your chain of command. The ideal mentor is at least one, but no more than two levels above you. Your mentor should remember how it felt to be in your situation.
- ◆ **Values and beliefs.** Some feelings are so basic and strong that conflicts in these areas will undermine the mentoring relationship. Identify any areas where you should avoid conflicts. Research shows, however, that differences can often create a better arena for learning. Don't look for someone exactly like yourself.
- ◆ **Background.** A relationship with someone of a different race or gender can take you out of your comfort zone but be very rewarding and challenging. For example, establishing a mentoring relationship with a partner of another culture or background can provide benefits for both participants. The added dimension found in these partnerships can create additional opportunities for growth.

Once you have chosen a mentor and embark on this new relationship remember that you, the mentee, should be the one driving it. You need to be responsible and accountable for the relationship, reaching out to your mentor when you need to, and defining your goals and expectations with your mentor from the very beginning.

With these handy times you'll be on your way to a successful and fruitful mentoring relationship in no time at all. Good luck!

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Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

With a relentless commitment to learning, Linkage also offers conferences, institutes, summits, open-enrollment workshops, and distance learning programs on leading-edge topics in leadership, management, human resources, and organizational development. More than 200,000 leaders and managers have attended Linkage programs since 1988.

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