



How to make a mentoring relationship work

Finding a mentor is one of the best ways to take your career to the next level. The most effective mentor search begins by examining yourself. To find the perfect mentor, you need to be clear about your career goals and aspirations, your strengths and challenges, and the skill sets, behaviours, or even work styles, you'd like to develop.

Identify your long-term career goals

It's important to know what types of career paths interest you and how you want your career to progress over time. It is important to give consideration to career milestones so that you can monitor your progress towards achieving your career goals.

When you have clear goals in mind it helps your prospective mentor to identify which areas to focus on when guiding you. Without clear goals your relationship is likely to stall.

Mentors are usually interested in giving back to their profession and/or they want to mentor in order to develop their own skills. But be considerate about your mentor's time and value the contribution they make to your development.

Here are some tips for working with a mentor:

1. Be clear and honest about your goals and how you want a mentor to help you.
2. Take the initiative in leading your mentoring relationship.
3. Agree with your mentor on how you want to communicate with each other.
4. Prepare for meetings. Review previous meeting notes and ensure you have completed agreed actions.
5. Be open. Being realistic, open and honest with your mentor will allow a positive and productive relationship to form. When looking for guidance and support, you should be willing to learn and take on advice.
6. Work with your mentor to make your own decisions and turn them into action. Mentors should serve the role of guide. You must accept responsibility for your own decisions and actions.
7. Don't get defensive if you are given feedback. This is what will help you to get to the next level.

Share your successes with your mentor and include examples of how their guidance has helped you.

If a mentoring relationship is to be successful, it should be based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.