One of the defining moments of my life came in the fourth grade, the year I was Mrs. Duncan's student. What Mrs. Duncan did for me was to help me to not be afraid of being smart. She encouraged me to read, and she often stayed after school to work with me, helping me choose books and letting me help her grade papers. For many years after that, I had one goal that I would one day become a fourth-
grade teacher who would win the teacher award—because I was going to be the best teacher anyone had ever seen! – Oprah Winfrey, The Oprah Winfrey Show

At work, do you have your own Mrs. Duncan? If not, it’s not too late to have your own mentor.

I believe in having a mentor and mentoring someone. My belief in mentoring was further solidified through a conversation that I once had with a highly successful entrepreneur many years ago. I ran into her at a conference and she gave me some excellent advice for networking, self-branding and how to grow professionally. She told me some apt stories that made me realise the undisputed power of mentoring and why everyone needs a mentor in life or at work.

“I have a mentor. No one is too good or too successful to have a mentor. You are never too old, clever or experienced to have a mentor. Most successful people have mentors,” she said. Fascinated, I listened attentively as she proceeded to tell me that some of the biggest names in business have always had mentors and taken advice and guidance from their mentors. “For instance, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Mark Zuckerberg etc., all have had mentors and still have them. You would be amazed that most successful people have probably been mentored at some point in their lives”.

Mentoring empowers!

The more you understand the process of mentoring, the more you realise that it’s no surprise that some of the most successful and influential people in the world can easily tie their defining moments in live back to a strong mentoring relationship they had or still have.

At work, when it comes to the wisdom that you need to help you advance in your career, your mentor will be the one there guiding and helping you to maximise your potentials. A mentor will also help you to open doors; empower you, engage and enable you to focus on your goals, help you to realise what you are capable of achieving regardless of the challenges you foresee.

Whether your goal is career advancement, career change, entrepreneurship or you are job seeking, if you need to soar, deliver great results and reach the zenith of your potential at work, you need to get a mentor.

According to the study, Does Mentoring Matter? A Multidisciplinary Meta-Analysis Comparing Mentored and Non-Mentored Individuals published by Elsevier in the Journal of Vocational Behaviour, mentoring relationship may promote career success. Mentors can impart specific knowledge and expertise which contributes to protégé
Introducing proteges to influential individuals within academic and organizational contexts. These important career contacts can in turn lead to career success in terms of salary, promotions, and job offers.

New research from North Carolina State University also finds that young people who have had mentors are more likely to find work early in their careers that gives them more responsibility and autonomy, ultimately putting them on a path to more financially and personally rewarding careers.

Who is a mentor?

I value the mutual collaboration, knowledge sharing and the support of my mentors; because their guidance helped me both in my personal and professional live. For me, I will describe a mentor as that valuable role model of yours, the person that you admire and look up to because of their achievements, wisdom, knowledge and experience.

Typically, a mentor at work is that special someone who is passionate about their career, has leadership experience, has the wisdom only experience can provide, while you, the mentee is in the early or mid-stages of your own career. Usually, you, the mentee will seem to be the one reaping the benefits of the mentoring relationship, when in actual fact, mentoring benefits both the mentor and you, the mentee.

What’s mentoring at work?

Mentoring at work is an effective way of helping people to progress further in their chosen careers. It is a partnership between two people, the mentor and the mentee. Usually, the two people work in a similar field or share similar experiences. It is a helpful relationship based upon mutual trust, respect and understanding.

“Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.” – Eric Parsloe, the Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring

Mentoring is becoming increasing popular now that its potential is appreciated by most people.

When it comes to mentoring, I may be stating the obvious here, but from experience, mentors are a valuable resource for everyone. Whether it’s someone you look up to at
can open doors for you in your career or open a door to your desired job.

In addition, research has shown that mentoring relationships succeed and are satisfying for both parties when both the mentor and the person being mentored take an active role in developing the relationship. Now, let’s first explore 10 concrete reasons why anyone needs a mentor at work:

10 Concrete reasons why anyone needs a mentor

When you get a mentor, they will:

1. Take you under their wing and help you to stay motivated and discover the path that you may need to take.

2. Understand what it takes to get to the top and be a valuable resource by answering your career or work related questions and providing good advice.

3. Provide you with a wealth of knowledge and resources and help you to connect with various Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

4. Be your own personal cheerleader and help you discover new opportunities.

5. Be an advocate of your achievements and will be there for you every step of your career.

6. Let you shadow them at work or exchange career tips with you and alert you to new opportunities.

7. Praise your accomplishments and provide you with constructive feedback.

8. Help you to be passionate about your success and brand.

9. Push you to hone and learn new skills that are needed for future roles.


See How Mentors Can Help Set SMART Goals

Ok, I get it. Now, how do I find a mentor?

To find a mentor, you need to look within or outside your organization for a leader that you admire and who is two or three steps above your level at work.

You can also crank up your Social Media presence on LinkedIn and locate a successful person in your field through there. On Twitter, you can search using hash tags for successful people in your field; also look through your professional association or just contact the person you look up to directly in person. Don’t be afraid to ask anyone of
next person. Remember, if you don’t ask, you don’t get.

Infographic: How to find (and keep) a professional mentor
CONNECTION THAT MATTERS
How to find (and keep) a professional mentor

Connecting with a mentor who can offer real-world guidance on how to navigate today’s business landscape can make all the difference in your career. Here are a few steps that will help you find the right person, connect with him or her, and maintain a healthy relationship so you can keep moving forward in your career and your life.

1. GET STARTED

1.1 FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU WANT

Take a step back and ask yourself:

- What are your career goals?
- Where do you see your career going?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What’s important to you?

Answering these questions will help you better understand what you seek from a mentor.

1.2 CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

The greatest mentor might be closer than you think—and you might not even know it. Ask to

- Talk to friends, family, colleagues, and community leaders about your mentors. Each of them can provide valuable information. Ask question about their networks. Even if they're not the best fit for you as a mentor, they might know someone who is.

1.3 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Once you find potential candidates, do a little extra research to see if any of them are the ideal fit for you.

- Look at their professional background.
- What type of industry do they have experience in? What have they achieved? How do they define success? Most of these questions can be answered by looking at their LinkedIn profile or by researching their background on the web.

2. INITIATE CONTACT

2.1 SEND PRAISE

Compliment your potential mentor on a recent article or blog post or on their professional accomplishments. A little flattery goes a long way and can open the door to a valuable relationship.

2.2 ASK ABOUT THEIR WORK

Show interest by asking a question about a potential mentor’s career. This can be a big picture question about how the individual decided to pursue their career path or a more specific question about a project they’ve been working on.

2.3 SHARE INFORMATION

Send an article or other piece of content related to a candidate’s position or industry to indicate you’re interested. Doing so can start the mentorship relationship off on the right foot by showing that it will be reciprocal.

3. MAINTAIN CONTACT

3.1 CLARIFY YOUR INTENTIONS

You and your mentor need to agree on short-term and long-term goals to help build a clear picture of the relationship. By setting mutual expectations, you’re establishing a healthy connection from which both parties can benefit.

3.2 AVOID PUTTING ON THE PRESSURE

Be cautious about asking the mentor too much of their time. If you ask for too much too soon, you’re likely to be rejected due to selfish reasons. Strive to maintain a relationship that is mutually beneficial with appreciation.

3.3 LOOK FOR WAYS TO RECIPROCATE

Mentorships are a two-way street; mentors are just as interested in learning from you as you are in learning from them. Share your successes, continue offering relevant content related to their interests and stay connected with their career accomplishments. Ask if the mentorship benefits both parties.

THE NUMBERS DON’T LIE

In the workplace, mentoring goes a long way, and we’ve got the numbers to prove it.

- 96% of employees are able to apply their learning directly to their careers
- 75% of associates say mentoring plays a key role in their careers
- 71% of Fortune 500 companies have a mentoring program
How do I work with a mentor?

Found a mentor? Great! Now, you should start making the most of the relationship. However, there are set rules that you must be aware of in order to make the most of the mentoring relationship.

The rules are:

- Discussions between you, the mentee and the mentor are confidential.
- Meetings are mentee driven, so you must take the initiative and do the leg work in the relationship.
- As the mentee, any action points are your responsibility.
- Make it interesting and enjoyable for the mentor, less paperwork as mentors are usually busy people. Discussion should be fun but make them goals focused.
- The mentor will always empower you to make your own decisions and turn them into actions.

To start with, you as the mentee need to:

- Be clear on why you want a mentor.
- Define the type of help you’re looking for in a mentor.
- Establish goals for the mentoring relationship.
- Discuss and agree upon the goals of the relationship and what you, personally, are going to do to make it a successful mentoring relationship.
- Don’t limit yourself to just one mentor.
- Establish communication methods and the frequency of meeting and contact from the beginning.
- Manage expectations and build trust.
Mentoring takes time and needs sacrifices for both the mentee and the mentor. So, be respectful of your mentor’s time and the other priorities in his life.

Before each meeting, it’s important for you to actually implement your mentor’s advice or action points and tell the mentor that you’ve implemented them.

If you are seeing results of the mentorship as they manifest, confirm to your mentor that you are benefiting from the mentorship. This will give the mentor positive encouragement to continue mentoring you.

Pay attention to great skills that you notice in your mentor; these skills include listening, guidance, recommendations and wisdom. When you receive feedback from your mentor, listen, digest it and take immediate steps to apply what you have learned. Be sure to express regularly that you value and appreciate his guidance.

Talk about your past experiences, projects, goals, skills, development and plans and professional events that you plan to attend with your mentor.

Always thank your mentor for his time after each session.

Make sure it’s not a one-way relationship, so find ways to return the favour by asking if your mentor needs help with any project that he’s working on.

**Adapted from the Infographic: Mentors make a difference**
Going by your experience of having a mentor or mentoring someone in the workplace, can you share the value of mentoring with others by adding your comment below? If not, now that you’ve explored these 10 reasons why everyone needs a mentor at work, can you add more reasons why having a mentor is important for anyone’s career and development?

About the author

Catherine Adenle is the Founder of Catherine's Career Corner, the career site empowering and inspiring ambitious candidates of all ages and professions to thrive and work smarter on their careers. Catherine is passionate about Change Management and Career Development.

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Change Management in Organisations: How to Get it Right First Time

How Truly Engaged Are Your Staff?
Catherine Adenle
Director Employer Brand, Elsevier. Certified Change Agent | Career and Change Blogger

Great comment, Jane Druda. It's great to know that you demonstrate the qualities and skills of a good mentor at work. We need more people like you in the workplace.

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