

Finding Your Next Mentor

A Resource Guide for Youth



#PowerofMentoring

CHOOSING A MENTOR

When choosing a mentor, ask yourself the following five questions:

- 1 What are your goals?** Consider what specifically you are trying to achieve with the support of a mentor and be sure to clearly articulate that goal(s) when speaking to potential mentors.
- 2 What are your needs?** Think about what information, experiences or opportunities that you are in need of and the individuals that could help you close those current gaps.
- 3 What is your style?** Take some time to reflect on your style and then think about mentor styles that will both work and not work for you. Having aligned life philosophies is important for a mentoring relationship to succeed (i.e. commitment to continual learning, trust, respect).
- 4 What are your values?** Mentors and their mentees do not need to agree on everything. They should have similar values to build a trusting and engaging relationship over time.
- 5 What is your offer?** Mentoring relationships should provide value for both the mentor and the mentee. As a mentee, consider what you have to offer prospective mentors from your unique life experiences, perspectives, networks, and skills.

YOUR POWER FIVE

Dr. Art Markman, a professor of psychology and marketing at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *Smart Thinking* and *Habits of Leadership*, encourages people to consider the set of people that we need to have around us to help us succeed.

The Coach. Find someone that doesn't tell you what to do, but listens to you and asks great questions. They suggest perspectives that you have not considered and suggest strategies for your reflection.

The Star. Identify and build relationships with people who have the career that you want. As you spend time with them, reflect on how they operate and what

they think about. Consider their advice and pay attention to how they engage with others.

The Connector. It is often who we know that helps us advance projects and growth opportunities. Find someone around you that knows everyone and is willing to make introductions for you.

The Librarian. Find someone that knows how to navigate your organization including those hidden resources that will help you succeed. These individuals help prevent you from reinventing the wheel when tackling projects.

The Teammate. It is important to have mentors that understand you and where you are in your career. These are individuals that can just listen to you sometimes and provide some validation when you have a rough day. They don't add drama to your life; they help you avoid getting caught up in negative energy.

In addition to Dr. Markman's set of people, consider mentors that will both challenge you and be your biggest cheerleader. Identify informal and formal mentors who are at diverse stages of their careers both inside and outside of your industry and organization.

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn.”

- Benjamin Franklin

MAKING THE ASK

When you are ready to make the ask of someone to serve as a mentor for you, follow these key recommendations:

Personalize the ask. Do not send a generic request via email. Pick up the phone or speak to the individual in person.

Focus on your purpose. Be clear in the ask what you are aiming to achieve in your mentoring relationship and how that goal(s) aligns to your career aspirations.

Connect your purpose to the person. Make it clear why you have identified the individual as a mentor for you. Do your homework and reference specific areas where you feel like you could learn from their experiences, decisions, skills and accomplishments.

Look for a commitment. Discuss what your expectations are for a mentor and ask what they would expect in return from you as a mentee. It is important to determine if the individual is willing to make your mentoring relationship a priority.

Demonstrate your commitment. Be sure to demonstrate that you are committed to the mentoring relationship by following through with your commitments, immediately circling back with the individual if they commit to serving as a mentor and adding value for the mentor.

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP LIFECYCLE

According to our research and experience, mentors and mentees typically go through three phases of their mentoring relationship:

Beginning. As mentors and mentees begin working together, it can feel awkward and uncomfortable for both. Sometimes, the mentor focuses on directing versus collaborating on the course of the discussion and focus of the relationship. Both individuals need to have an equal voice in the discussion and decisions. There needs to be an intentional focus in this stage on building, not breaking trust. Practicing patience with each other and discovering more about one another instead of trying to shape the other is critical to building a solid foundation to your relationship.

Building. In this phase of the relationship, mentors and mentees trust each other and begin to feel as though they are achieving some breakthroughs together. With increased trust, there is the risk of mentees becoming too dependent on mentors so setting clear expectations and boundaries is important. As mentees open up about deeper challenges that they are facing, mentors must remain focused on championing mentees and not “fixing” them.

Testing. The third phase of mentoring relationships often experienced is the testing phase which can be confusing and challenging for both mentors and mentees. The sharing of diverse perspectives, suggestions or performance feedback can sometimes put individuals on the defense, so it is important for both mentors and mentees to remain open minded and nurture a growth mindset. Rather than avoiding challenging conversations, mentors and mentees should aim to communicate transparently and reflect on how they are continually learning from each other and their experiences.

“We rise by lifting others.”

- Robert Ingersoll