How to Get and Keep Mentors

A mentor is someone with first-hand life and career experience that they are willing to pass along in order to help others succeed. The role of a mentor is to inspire, teach, and guide. Mentors help their protégés pursue their occupational goals and provide a great introduction to the workforce. These role models can provide structure in which a protégé can follow the mentor's examples and learn from their past mistakes in order to successfully enter and advance in the working world.

1) **Pursue Actively:** Mentors don't come to you; they must be sought out. A potential mentor may be more than willing to help out, but it is unlikely that he or she is actively seeking an apprentice. Local businesses are good places to start, especially among companies at which you're interested to work.

2) **Seek Resources:** There is a National Mentor and Befriending Network as well as Education Business Partnerships that can help provide a mentor to those in search of one.

3) **Choose Wisely:** Mentoring is a two-way investment. Decide what you want out of the relationship ahead of time and be certain that the individual you choose matches your criteria. If so, they also need to demonstrate a genuine interest and a sense of accessibility.

4) **Set Expectations:** Once a mentor is chosen and has agreed to provide their expertise, it's important to set goals for the relationship, which may include how to best proceed, desired outcomes, contact preferences and frequency.

5) **Assume Ownership:** Professionals have very busy schedules. Don't wait for them to contact you or think that they're too busy. The responsibility for staying in contact lies squarely on the protégé.

6) **Be Genuine:** protégés must prove their commitment through genuine interest in the mentor's field of work. The student must be willing to learn and grow from the mentoring relationship. The more seriously a student approaches the experience, the more enriching it will be.

7) **Demonstrate Progress:** Don't let them wonder. Mentors will feel much more rewarded and remain motivated to help if they have a sense of tangible progress. Provide them feedback, such as examples of how you did something specifically or differently as a result of taking their advice.

8) **Give Back:** It is important to remember that this experience is a two-way relationship. Seek ways to provide value in return, such as by sending them articles, items of interest, and referrals.

9) **Express Appreciation:** It's always a good idea to write a thank you note and express appreciation in general. Mentors may not feel comfortable with receiving gifts, but they are very appropriate at times.

10) **Assess Value:** It is important to take stock in how the mentor-protégé relationship is going. Sometimes two people find that they simply do not match up. If the relationship is falling below expectations, consider what if anything can be done to create more value. If the situation cannot be remedied, then communicate that accordingly and professionally. However, it is key to always keep in mind that any professional can one day help create a valued connection.

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