

## SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE LIKE TO SHARE

By: Robert Sher

I am fortunate to have worked closely with several great mentors who enriched my professional life providing priceless advice, friendship and encouragement.

Just as they were here for me, mentors are within your reach and, as corporate decision makers, community leaders and entrepreneurs, you can reap immeasurable benefits from the wise elder, the technical expert or the peer who is a few steps ahead in his or her career.

While a typical network contact is most often associated with a quick introductory hand shake, a routine exchange of business cards and a few phone calls, your relationship with a mentor will be deeper than that. The best mentors are successful – which should not be confused with the richest person you know– and will delight in sharing their secrets of success with others. Successful people like to share.

You and your mentor must enjoy each other's company and share unusually good chemistry. The relationship can be nurtured through many long lunches and a great deal of time in his or her office. You need a mentor to offer constructive criticism and who, hopefully, will be in a position you would like to be in with enough clout and connections to guide you to a similar position.

This road to finding a mentor is long and it is imperative you do some homework before launching the search. You have choices for finding a mentor. Here are some tips to get you started:

- 1) Identify someone you admire and respect and ask that one person to mentor you.
- 2) Make a list of all of the successful people you know, or want to know, contact them and ask to meet and talk about his or her success. The one, or ones, who respond will be the serious mentor candidates. You might find someone from your own place of employment.
- 3) Do not ask your direct supervisor to be your mentor. This is just really never a good idea. What if you want your boss's job or if you have workplace issues to discuss.
- 4) In this process, decide what characteristics you want in a mentor. What type of communication style complements yours? Do some snooping, asking the would-be mentor's colleagues about personality and for some insight.
- 5) Know what you want. Consider finding a mentor who you respect and someone with whom you share your values. Some mentees prefer an older, more experienced mentor at a higher career level so they can aspire to the top. Others prefer peer mentors.

Once you have found your mentor, discuss mutual expectations for the mentoring relationship and how it will work. A critical point: Be sure not to overburden your mentor by demanding too much time and attention. Set boundaries relating to confidentiality, time commitment and the areas you mutually feel the mentor can help you the most. Decide what you both need from this relationship and then discuss with your mentor the skills you want to develop.

The right mentor can help to guide you, provide tips on reaching goals and show you the road he has already traveled. Your time together should be engaging and energizing. While it takes time and diligence to find the right mentor, it will be well worth the effort. Along the way, remember to show your gratitude with heartfelt thanks in the form of a written note or comment about how much the advice has meant to you.

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