The purpose of this free Mentoring Guide is to educate you on the topic of mentoring. It is not to answer all your questions about the topic, as it is a growing document with the latest information included as of the publication date. It will be revised as new information is gathered. Please send any suggestions for improvement, additions or corrections to Career Woman, Inc. using the “Contact Us” form on our website.

Author: Lisa Quast

www.CareerWomanInc.com
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What Is Mentoring?

Mentoring has been around for a very long time. In fact, the etymology of the word is Latin, from the Greek, Mentōr, and dates back to 1616, according to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mentor).

When we think of a mentor, we probably think of one person guiding or helping another person in some way. And, the Merriam-Webster dictionary agrees with this by defining a mentor as "a trusted guide or counselor." For the purpose of this Mentoring Guide, we will look at mentoring from the standpoint of a person’s career. That means our definition of a mentor and mentee will be:

**Mentor:** Someone who helps another person develop / grow / progress in their career.

**Mentee:** The person receiving the help of a mentor.

Benefits of Mentoring

There are too many benefits from mentoring to list them all here, so I’ve provided the following list based on feedback from women I’ve worked with over the last 20 years:

**Mentees**

- “My mentor helped me clarify my career aspirations and figure out the actions I needed to take to achieve my career goals.”
- “I had so many goals and aspirations in life I wasn’t sure where to begin. My mentor helped me prioritize them so I could accomplish as many as possible.”
- “I was having a difficult time dealing with all the politics at work. My mentor helped me understand the political situation and power players and then helped me figure out how to get my projects supported and my budget approved.”
- “I ran into a huge barrier at work. My mentor helped me see the situation from all angles so I could determine the best way to overcome it.”
- “I’m fairly shy so I don’t usually ‘hype’ myself and my accomplishments at work. My mentor taught me how to get myself more known throughout the company, which has led to other career opportunities.”
- “My mentor did an incredible job of introducing me to key people in our industry, who have been a terrific help in getting me my next position.”
• “I was laid off due to the economic situation (my company downsized), and my mentor gave me encouragement and support when I needed it the most.”
• “My mentor helped me get ‘back in the game’ when it came to updating my résumé and looking for a new job. I hadn’t done that in over 10 years so I was really rusty!”

Mentors
• “My mentee helped me see issues in the company that I didn’t know existed.”
• “I was able to see the perception others held of me, through the eyes of my mentee.”
• “I have been able to watch and actively help younger women succeed in our industry – and it’s such a wonderful feeling to help another person succeed!”
• “By helping others I’ve also created a network of allies I can rely upon when I need help.”
• “I’ve been able to step out of my own shoes and help my mentees see things from other perspectives. This, in turn, has helped me in resolving issues within my own department.”

Now that you’ve heard about the benefits of mentoring from other women, here are some very interesting stats that were compiled by the Human Resources department of Sun Microsystems, as quoted by Anne Fisher, Fortune senior writer, on March 13, 2007 on www.cnnmoney.com.

Sun Microsystems compared the career progress of approximately 1,000 employees over a 5-year period and here’s what they found:
• Both mentors and mentees were approximately 20% more likely to get a raise than people who did not participate in the mentoring program.
• 25% of mentees and 28% of mentors received a raise – versus only 5% of managers who were not mentors.
• Employees who received mentoring were promoted FIVE times more often than people who didn’t have mentors.
• Mentors were SIX times more likely to have been promoted to a bigger job.

The bottom line: Being a mentor or a mentee could definitely boost your career!

Differences Between a Coach and a Mentor

I receive a lot of questions from women on “What’s the difference between a coach and a mentor”. Let’s take a look at both, as I’ve explained them in my book, “Your Career, Your Way!”:

**Mentor:** A mentor is generally someone farther up the career ladder than you, someone who has experience and knowledge you currently lack. They are someone you admire for their professionalism, for their knowledge and for their ability to succeed in difficult situations. They are politically savvy in business and are admired for their fair treatment of others.
A mentor provides career guidance and can help with career opportunities because they are generally a senior-level manager from within the same company or industry. They act as your advisor and provide suggestions and guidance on development opportunities, career paths, and leadership strategies. A mentor relationship may be formal (arranged between the individuals or with the help of the HR department) or informal. A critical element within a mentoring relationship is mutual respect. A mentor is generally not paid for their services.

**Coach**: A coach focuses specifically on your personal development and learning. Coaches observe your performance, analyze your skills, behavior and attitude, and provide you with an unbiased, outside perspective to help you improve your efficiency and effectiveness. A coach may be a manager or colleague within your company or industry; however, a coach is most commonly someone who is hired by you or hired through your human resources department for a contracted length of time (usually six months to three years) for a specific fee.

A coach works with you during the contracted time period on such areas as knowledge transfer/training, behavior modification, behavior modeling, and image enhancement. They may help you develop or enhance a skill set and improve leadership capabilities. A coach is hired to help you become the best you can be both personally and professionally.

Hiring a coach is usually a formal process where the coach and “coachee” agree upon specific coaching goals, discuss and agree on expectations of the relationship (such as confidentiality). They agree on how they will communicate and schedule meetings (over the telephone, in person or via email), agree on how they will measure success and the specific metrics that will be used, and agree on the time commitment for the coaching sessions.

In a coaching relationship it is critical for the coachee to be open to having the coach observe their work and be open to feedback. They must also respect the coach.

Keep in mind mentors and coaches generally do not provide consultative services as licensed mental health professionals and are not intended to replace counseling, therapy or mental health care.

Deciding if someone needs or wants a mentor versus a coach is up to each individual person based on their unique situation. Mentors can be incredibly helpful because they can aid in navigating the often-confusing maze of the business world in your company or industry. They can provide support and help when it’s needed the most. And, they can help open career opportunity doors that were previously closed. In my coaching practice, I recommend that all my clients work with mentors throughout their careers.
Who can be a Mentor?

Almost anyone can become a mentor to help another person maximize their career potential, but there are definitely characteristics and skills that stand out when analyzing successful mentors, and not everyone is in possession of these skills.

Successful mentors are people who:

• Are comfortable providing honest, constructive criticism
• Are well respected in their company or industry and have the experience necessary to be able to discuss a wide range of topics and situations
• Have good listening skills and listen in order to understand, not reply
• Have the time available to help others with their careers
• Teach, don’t tell. In other words, they know the kinds of questions to ask that will help others determine the answers for themselves
• Are trustworthy and can keep discussions confidential
• Have a positive, upbeat, and caring attitude
• Have the ability to motivate the mentee
• Have a good sense of humor with the ability to take situations seriously but be able to laugh at themselves
• Are open to two-way learning, not only helping the mentee learn but also realizing there are things they could learn from the mentee

Who can be a Mentee?

The best mentees are those who:

• Want to proactively advance in their careers
• Are open to receiving constructive criticism
• Want to proactively look at their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement
• Are willing to share their mistakes and failures in order to learn from them
• Are willing to listen to the advice of others and act upon it
• Can be honest with themselves and introspective
• Have the ability to hold themselves accountable and be self-disciplined
• Are open to new ideas and opinions
• Have a good sense of humor with the ability to take situations seriously but be able to laugh at themselves
Types of Mentoring

According to Catalyst, a nonprofit research and advisory organization working to advance women in business, there are many types or approaches to mentoring and mentoring programs. Each has their positives and drawbacks, depending on the specific situation, so it’s important to think about the type of mentoring program you’d like to start (if you’re establishing one for a company), or type of mentoring relationship you’d like to have (if you're an individual mentor or mentee). Listed below are several mentoring program approaches and mentoring relationship styles that are explained in Catalyst's “Creating Successful Mentoring Programs: A Catalyst Guide.”

Mentoring program approaches include:

• **External versus internal programs**: There are many mentoring programs that are external to specific companies versus ones that companies create for their internal employees. Some external mentoring program examples include: Women Unlimited, the International Mentoring Association, and MENTOR.

• **Formal versus informal mentoring programs**: This can refer to both companies and individuals. Companies can choose to implement formal mentoring programs for employees or take an informal approach by encouraging employees to find mentors themselves. This can also refer to the approach taken for the actual mentoring process – it can be formal, discussions scheduled at regular intervals with clear goals and objectives defined. Or, it can be informal – meetings as needed with topics of discussions that revolve around the mentee’s situation at a given point in time.

• **Facilitated mentoring programs**: This is often a hybrid of informal mentoring at companies in which they provide networking opportunities to help facilitate mentoring. It can also be when companies or mentors/coaches use tools, such as mentoring guides, to facilitate the mentoring relationship. For example, “Your Career, Your Way!” is a great book to use as the foundation for mentoring by offering a roadmap for achieving career success. Mentors read the book and provide it to their mentees, working through the exercises together and using it as a basis for discussions.

Mentoring relationship types include:

• **One-on-One**: This is when one mentor and one mentee are paired together.

• **Panel of mentors**: Additional mentoring relationships have been created over the last decade that expand the number of people involved in the mentoring, such as:
  - **Quads**: This is where there is one mentor and three simultaneous mentees, whereby
the mentees can gain advice from their mentor as well as feedback and advice from their peers

- **Groups or circles:** This is where two to four mentors are matched with double the number of mentees, i.e. four mentors and eight mentees. As you can imagine, this type of mentoring relationship can pose scheduling nightmares.

- **Reciprocal or reverse:** According to Catalyst, “this type of mentoring involves a more senior-level person learning from a more junior person. The goal of reciprocal or reverse mentoring is that it is mutually beneficial.” This approach can be applied to any of the previously listed mentoring relationships.

Mentoring can take place between females, males, or females and males. Remember, a mentor is someone who takes their mentee’s best interest to heart and is committed to helping them achieve their goals and aspirations – gender shouldn’t matter.

Mentoring relationships shouldn’t be restricted to people of the same gender or to people who are exactly like us - because there’s much we can learn from people who are different from ourselves!

### Why Do Women Have Difficulty Finding Female Mentors?

A lot of the women I’ve coached and mentored have commented to me about the lack of female role models and mentors in upper management. They want female mentors, but can find few within their company or industry, especially if those areas have been typically male dominated.

Catalyst has reported several times on their research into the barriers to women’s advancement in business and the current lack of female role models. Here’s a direct quote from their report titled, *Women in U.S. Corporate Leadership: 2003,* “The top barriers that women see as impacting their own advancement to senior levels reflect issues within the work environment, including exclusion from informal networks, gender-based stereotypes, and a lack of role models.”

While I’ve also experienced this situation throughout my career (the lack of female role models), don’t let it stop you from actively seeking and finding good mentors (or on being a mentor to others). The lack of female mentors during my own career is one of the key reasons why I created *The Wing to Wing Women’s Mentoring Project* - to inspire women to reach out to other women and, through the simple act of offering guidance and insight, help them achieve their personal and professional aspirations [www.Wing2WingProject.org](http://www.Wing2WingProject.org).

Over the years, the lack of female role models in business will change and there will be more women in the top echelons of company management around the world. For now, that shouldn’t stop women from seeking out mentors, even if they happen to be male.
understand the desire to have female mentors, but there’s still a lot we can learn from men who’ve succeeded in their careers.

Topics of Discussion for Mentoring

The topics that can be discussed during mentoring sessions are as varied as the people themselves. Most of the time, the discussions will focus on the topics that are of the highest priority to the mentee, which might include:

• Defining career aspirations, goals and objectives
• Overcoming career issues/hurdles
• Understanding leadership styles
• Managing people and dealing with difficult people
• Valuing and leveraging differences and diversity
• Analyzing 360 degree feedback
• Techniques for a healthy work/life balance
• Techniques for successful project management
• Helping prioritize workloads
• Networking techniques and opportunities
• Understanding and navigating company culture and politics
• Managing up
• Analyzing strengths and weaknesses and creating a career development plan
• Improving communication style and skills
• Overcoming fear of public speaking
• Dressing for success
• How to hold effective meetings
• Updating a résumé, obtaining letters of recommendation, and improving interview skills
• How to use social networking online
• Increasing assertiveness
• How to ask for a raise
• Writing performance appraisals

Generally, no topic is off limits during mentoring sessions, unless one of the parties prefers not to discuss it. So be creative! Mentoring is about helping others succeed in their careers and this can include a wide variety of topics that can be discussed.

Tips for Mentors

Mentoring is not for everyone – it takes an investment of time, a commitment to help others, and... a lot of patience. But, it can be one of the most rewarding things you’ll ever do. Tips for mentors:

• Become a mentor if you enjoy spending time with others and helping them succeed
• Be open with your mentee on how much time you'll be available for them
• Establish a good mentoring relationship by discussing the expectations your mentee has of you as well as the expectations you have of your mentee
• Agree on when and where you'll hold discussions
• Discuss the need for confidentiality of discussions
• Use your own experience, successes and failures to help your mentee learn
• Provide networking opportunities – introduce them to key people so they can build their list of contacts
• Help them understand company and industry culture and politics
• Find out about their career aspirations, goals and objectives
• Help them create their very own career development plan
• Help them think through their key hurdles/barriers and how to overcome them
• Learn to ask the kinds of questions that will allow your mentee to explore their situation – instead of telling them what to do (for example, try saying “What do you think are some ways you could...” instead of “You need to do this...”)
• Be honest and candid with your comments
• Be open to two-way learning; mentoring another is a great way to learn new things for yourself
• Be prepared to let your mentee grow their wings and fly away

Tips for Mentees

Here are some helpful hints for seeking and approaching a mentor:

• When looking for a mentor, don’t restrict yourself. Good mentors can be found in a variety of places such as your current workplace, other companies in your area, non-profit organizations, local associations, church groups, and community groups such as the chamber of commerce
• Prior to seeking a mentor, write down and clarify what your specific expectations are of the mentor and the role you'd like them to play
• Once you’ve identified a potential mentor, ask to meet with them to discuss a potential mentoring relationship. This meeting should take place at their convenience, in a mutually comfortable location, and in a place that allows you to speak in confidence
• At the meeting, explain that you would like to have them as your mentor and why
• If the person agrees to be your mentor, ensure you both share the same commitment to your expectations. Be clear on the time required and mentor availability. Establish a meeting schedule with topics for discussion
• If the person cannot be your mentor, gracefully thank them for their time and if possible, try to gain an understanding of why – are they currently too overloaded with work to take on the role of a mentor, are they willing to consider mentoring
you in the future, is there someone they recommend you could contact as a potential mentor

- Don’t be upset if you are turned down. In my career, I’ve been turned down twice when seeking a mentor. In both cases, the person I had hoped to have as a mentor was male. Both told me they thought it would be inappropriate to be mentoring a female. So, don’t get discouraged! Keep looking until you find a mentor you trust and respect
- And...be sure to thank your mentor for the help they provide you!

Remember that you and only you are responsible for your career. You are accountable for your goals, initiatives, dreams, and aspirations, not your mentor. Seek to find mentors throughout your career who can help you build upon your strengths, overcome your weaknesses, navigate politics, and help you optimize your potential. You can do it!

Summary

Mentoring another person is one of the greatest gifts you could give them.

And there’s almost no better feeling in the world than to help another person accomplish their dreams. There’s an unexplained karma in the world that you get what you give and the more people you mentor the more the rewards come back to you, only multiplied.

The Wing to Wing Women’s Mentoring Project is a global movement that aims to inspire women to reach out to other women and, through the simple act of offering guidance and insight, help them achieve their personal and professional aspirations. Help a woman spread her wings and fly by becoming a volunteer mentor today! Learn more by visiting the website at: www.Wing2WingProject.org.
Additional Mentoring Resources


- **Mentoring Fact Sheet – Overcoming Relationship Pitfalls**: This is a free document produced by the Mentoring Resource Center and funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It provides an overview of the life cycle for mentoring and helpful hints for new mentors. While it was written targeting mentors of young people, the concepts are applicable to career mentoring also. Free document can be downloaded from their website at: http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet10.pdf

- **Women Unlimited**: A nationally recognized resource for cultivating leadership excellence for high potential women. Can be found at: http://www.women-unlimited.com/home/home.html

- **International Mentoring Association**: Promotes individual and organizational development through mentoring best practices in public and private institutions, businesses, and industry. Can be found at: http://www.mentoring-association.org/

- **MENTOR**: An organization that promotes, advocates and is a resource for mentors and mentoring initiatives worldwide. Can be found at: http://www.mentoring.org/

- **The Mentoring Group**: A division of the not-for-profit corporation, Coalition of Counseling Centers, Inc. (CCC). Provides consulting/technical assistance, skill-based training, skill assessment, research/evaluation and publications related to mentoring. Can be found at: http://www.mentoringgroup.com/

- **MentorNet**: The E-Mentoring Network for Diversity in Engineering and Science. Can be found at: http://www.mentornet.net/may10event/?gclid=CJvk-Lmu2Z4CFR9dagodNwgzlQ
• Menttium: The goal of Menttium is to improve professional performance through mentoring. Can be found at: http://www.menttium.com/ABOUTMENTTIUM/tabid/223/Default.aspx

• National Mentoring Month (January of each year): First proclaimed by President Bush in 2002, National Mentoring Month is an annual, high-profile campaign to draw attention to the need for more volunteer mentors to help America’s young people achieve their full potential. Can be found at: http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/initiatives/nmm.asp

• Catalyst, Inc.: Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit membership organization working globally with businesses and the professions to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and business. You can find excellent research material on mentoring and also women in business / leadership at: http://www.catalyst.org/page/64/browse-research-knowledge

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Author: Lisa Quast
www.CareerWomanInc.com