

Mentors and Networking

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Mentor

a person who has achieved career success and counsels and guides another for the purpose of helping him or her achieve like success

Mentor Roles

- Teacher
- Guide
- Counselor
- Motivator
- Sponsor
- Coach
- Advisor
- Role model
- Referral agent
- Door opener

Teacher

- share experiences as a seasoned professional
- share the wisdom of past mistakes

Guide

- helps navigate through the inner workings of the organization, i.e., "behind the scenes" dynamics, or office politics, that are not always apparent, but are crucial to know
- decipher the "unwritten office rules", i.e., the "kernels of knowledge" that one only acquires over a period of time

Counselor

- think through problems, develop problem-solving skills

Motivator

- motivate to complete a difficult assignment, or to pursue an ambitious goal
- provide positive feedback

Sponsor

- creates opportunities that may not otherwise be made available
- provide as much exposure as possible, with a minimum of risk

Coach

- positive and negative feedback as the situation demands, critical to professional growth

Advisor

- develop professional interests and set realistic career goals
- goals: specific, time-framed, results-oriented, relevant, reachable, and flexible

Role model

- a living example of the values, ethics, and high standards of professionalism

Referral Agent

- action plan: outlines knowledge, skills, abilities needed to reach career goals
- enable according to plan

Door Opener

- introduce to contacts to help build network structure
- direct to resources that may be helpful

Mentor Characteristics

- Supportive
- Patient
- Respected
- People oriented
- Good motivator
- Effective teacher
- Secure in position
- An achiever
- Able to provide visibility
- Accepts others

An Achiever

- a professional achiever, one who sets lofty career goals, continually evaluates these goals, and strives to reach them.
- one who takes on more responsibilities than is required, volunteers for more activities, and tends to climb the proverbial career ladder at a quick pace.
- inspires with this same drive for achievement, to set, evaluate, and reach career goals.

To Receive Effective Mentoring

- both mutually agree to the relationship
- a personal fit: congruent values
- many mentors
- natural evolution of relationship

Networking

- making connections with others in order to build a sort of "database" of people with whom you can exchange information for various purposes
- two-way street
- a PhD student at a research conference has in common with a businessman on a golf course: the opportunity for an informal chat with colleagues
- engaging in exchange of ideas can enrich your own research and reveal opportunities in related fields

Who?

- Research supervisors: Ph.D. and post-doctoral adviser
- Assigned senior faculty mentors within the department
- In the field, outside the institution

Who?

your core community of scholars

- Who are the people working in your research subfield?
- Who are the top 30 people in your research subfield internationally (“center of influence” for their area of technical expertise)
- What other projects have been funded in your field of research or related areas?

Who?

multi- and cross-disciplinary research is becoming the norm

- Whose research in different disciplines impacts on your own?
- Where exactly are the borders of your field today? Where will they be tomorrow?
- Talk to people outside your field!