

A Plan for Finding a Mentor

Follow these seven steps to locate and select a mentor:

Step 1: Identify what your needs. Before you approach any prospects, decide your professional needs and identify your goals.

Step 2: Review the following common characteristics of mentors and then rank their importance to you.

- They have a large circle of influence and a broad-based network.
- They are people-oriented.
- They are good at motivating others.
- They are effective teachers.
- They are secure in their position and profession.
- They are usually high achievers who set aloof career goals, continually assess these goals, and strive to reach them.
- Able to give the protégé some visibility.
- They value their profession, their work, and public service.
- They respect others.

Step 3: Evaluate and select what you are looking for in a mentor:

- Do you prefer to work with a male or female mentor?
- Do you want to work with a mentor from within your organization, or from outside it?
- Do you want to work with a mentor who is in your line of profession, or someone who is not?
- How important is it to you that the mentor models the type of behaviors you desire?
- How important is it to you that the mentor has the knowledge and experience you wish to obtain?

Step 4: Create a list of potential mentors. Here are some ways some protégés add people to their list:

- ___ Identify people who “walk the talk.”
- ___ Identify people you admire and respect.
- ___ Look at people you already know who can become your mentor.
- ___ Look through your rolodex, database, and membership lists.
- ___ Ask others who have had a mentor how they found theirs.
- ___ Check to see if your company has a mentoring program.
- ___ If there is no mentoring program, talk with your human resources department for suggestions.
- ___ Ask people who are knowledgeable in your field for suggestions.
- ___ Put out the word to your family and friends.

Step 5: Apply your list of criteria about what you want in a mentor to your list of potential mentors.

Step 6: Approach your prospective mentor(s). Here are some suggestions:

- ___ If you don't know the individual personally, determine who does. Speak to him/her about how to get an introduction. Then use it!
- ___ If the individual is only an acquaintance of yours, volunteer to do something with them on the same project or team.
- ___ Invite the individual to breakfast or lunch.
- ___ Ask if you can drive them to the airport or to an event an hour away.
- ___ Attend an event in which the individual is involved, so you can engage in conversation.

Step 7: Sell yourself to these prospective mentors. Tell him/her what you admire about them. People love to be praised. Just be sincere. Outline what you think you need from a mentor.