



Do Mentors Make a Difference in Career Development and Building a Successful Career?

There are many anecdotal stories by leaders highlighting how mentors are critical components in building a successful career. In a recent study by Ivy Exec, the findings support this impression. The study results showed that:

- 90% of senior executives who have mentors credit them for their positive career trajectory.
- 88% of executives who don't have a mentor think it would be valuable to have one.

Even though those interviewed noted the importance of and value in having a mentor, an overwhelming percentage of people in management actually don't. The two primary reasons as to why that was the case are:

- Difficulties in initiating a mentor-mentee relationship – These leaders expressed that they don't know how to effectively approach a mentor.
- Lack of an established or structured program – No formal mentorship programs at their companies exist.

Finding a mentor can be a daunting task, especially for women, racial minorities, and people with English as a second language – as well as those in cross-border jobs and situations where the dominant spoken language is not their native language. Generally, this segment also tends to be under-represented in an organization. Because of this, it becomes difficult to find the right person to fill the mentor shoes given the small percentage of this particular segment in the management team or the senior leadership group. Instead of doing without, think outside the box – well, actually outside the organization!

Think about the people at your local school, community association/league, book club, place of worship, or regular group activities. There may be a successful person that you know there. How that person became successful could offer you insights on how you can advance in your career as well.

With something outside of work, it may also be easy to approach and start a conversation with a potential mentor. The lessons and concepts in how to advance are more or less generic building blocks. While the circumstances may be different, the tips on getting to a desired outcome are transferable. Even so, the crucial element lies with how they are applied and executed in a specific situation. To successfully implement, this requires some personal reflection in order to appropriately adapt the insights and make them relevant and actionable for that individual's particular circumstance.

Therefore, a workplace setting should not be the limiting factor in finding a mentor.

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