



## ADVANCE YOUR CAREER WITH MENTORING

BY GRETA DAVIS

Workplace mentoring is essential for career growth and development. Research in business, organizational development, and psychology consistently reveals that high-quality mentoring has many potential benefits and positive outcomes. Mentors often provide career support in the form of feedback on performance, work opportunities, and access to professional networks. As the relationship and connection deepens, the mentor has a greater opportunity to enhance the mentee's sense of competence, their professional identity, and their role effectiveness on the job. Other positive outcomes of mentoring include increased retention, decreased isolation, increased chances of promotion, and even improved mental health.

According to *Forbes*, 84% of Fortune 500 companies have established mentoring programs and regard mentoring as important for on-the-job training, onboarding, skill development, and succession planning. Additionally, 76% of employees think mentors are important, but only 37% have one. For those who do not have access to formal mentoring, they can still realize the benefits of mentoring by seeking out an informal mentoring relationship.

Establishing an informal mentoring relationship can be more organic and evolve naturally, as opposed to participation in a formal program. However, to maximize the potential benefits of mentoring, best practices suggest that the mentee establish a relationship with some intention and parameters. Here are some things mentors and mentees should do to best use their time together.

**CLARIFY DESIRE:** Consider what you hope to gain from the mentoring relationship, whether it's skill development, personal growth, or career development.

**INITIATE CONVERSATION:** Start with a casual conversation to get to know each other. Share information about background, interests, and career aspirations, and get agreement to participate in mentoring.

**DEFINE EXPECTATIONS:** Outline what each person wants from the relationship, and discuss frequency and format (e.g., in-person, virtual, combination). Virtual mentoring provides the opportunity for flexibility and ease of scheduling. However, in-person mentoring is essential for making personal connections and facilitating introductions, so a combination of meeting formats is typically preferred.

**ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION OPTIONS:** Clarify the use of phone calls, video chats, messaging apps, and emails as a part of the mentoring process.

**SET GOALS:** Even though the relationship is informal, it's still beneficial to set both short-term and long-term goals.

**REFLECT AND ADJUST:** Allow the relationship to evolve naturally, and be flexible. Regularly check in on the progress of the mentoring relationship, and adjust structure or frequency to align with evolving needs.

Career development involves taking actions that help move your career forward. One of the ways that people intentionally advance their careers is through mentoring relationships.



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