**Mentors as important to career success as hard work and talent**

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**Want to give your career a boost and build your confidence without spending a dime? You can get invaluable support by seeking out a mentor.**
Chances are, at least once in your educational or professional career you have benefited from the advice of a professor, colleague or manager who provided perspective and guidance. No matter what your personal experience, it is clear that having a mentor pays off.

**Benefits of a mentor**

Mentors are as important to career success as hard work and talent.
Why? Because of the prominent role they play in guiding your personal and professional development. They can teach you how to operate in the working world, starting with connecting you with the experiences and people you need to move ahead.
They can show you the ropes and maybe even pull some strings, opening new doors of opportunity for you. My mentors over the years have not only built my self-confidence, but they also have fueled my desire to succeed. It is in a company’s long-term interests to create an environment for mentoring too. Not only does it build the self-esteem and confidence of employees, but it also contributes to the retention of talented workers, and creates an environment of continuous learning

**Finding a mentor**

There are numerous places to look for a mentor. A mentor could be someone you have heard speak at a seminar, someone you met through a friend or someone you were introduced to through your company. Believe it or not, your mentor does not have to be from your industry. The challenges and obstacles that successful people have overcome to become who they are today are not industry-specific.
Companies can also put programs in place to support both formal and informal mentoring for employees. They can encourage connections between employees at junior and senior levels, provide mentors for students on work terms or provide online resources for career questions.

**What makes a good mentor**

Look for someone you think would challenge, encourage and inspire you. The best mentors should listen to you, ask for your opinions and, above all, have a genuine desire to see you succeed.
When approaching a potential mentor, introduce yourself and explain what you want from them. Then send a follow up e-mail or make a phone call. Don’t expect more than a half-hour a month from your mentor. While more time may be required initially if you are struggling with something, the time may lessen as issues are resolved.
You’ll know when the mentoring has paid off. It will be when you are ready to become a mentor yourself — and that is what mentoring is all about.