



MENTORSHIP FUNDAMENTALS

▶ **BOOST** YOUR CAREER, **ENHANCE** YOUR FUTURE





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INTRODUCTION

Entering into a mentoring relationship can be one of the best decisions you ever make for **yourself** and **your career**.

American Express Canada and the Women's Executive Network (WXN) have partnered together to create this guide and share how mentorship can pave the way for personal growth and open doors for career opportunities. It doesn't need to cost money and it doesn't require a huge time commitment. Mentorship is for everyone, from high-powered executives to the most junior people in an organization. It can be valuable at just about any stage in your career, in just about any field.

Reasons for seeking out a mentor can vary between individuals, but almost everyone involved in mentorship can agree that it is a very effective career enhancer. More specifically, you might also look to a mentor for guidance on career moves, or for support on a project or goal – like creating new workplace programs or policies, or attaining a certain level of seniority. Mentorship can also help grow one's professional network, which often leads to more and better career opportunities.



of women said they felt mentorship or sponsorship was "critical" to their career advancement.



of women said a mentor-figure had indeed championed their cause.



of women said they sought mentorship for support and guidance on career advancement.



of women cited networking as a primary reason for working with a mentor.

*Survey completed by WXN in 2016

In fact, a survey of more than 1,200 female entrepreneurs and full-time female corporate workers, commissioned by American Express and Women of Influence in 2015, revealed that female corporate workers with mentors were significantly more likely than those without mentors to consider themselves as high-potential employees (70 per cent overall, versus 86 per cent with a mentor).

If you're trying to picture what mentorship is, think about the relationship between these well-known pairs: talk-show host Oprah Winfrey and author Maya Angelou, Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg and Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, Gordie "Mr. Hockey" Howe and Wayne "The Great One" Gretzky, and Lean In author Sheryl Sandberg and economist Larry Summers.

DID YOU KNOW?

The original Mentor was a character from ancient Greek mythology, named in Homer's epic poem, Odyssey. Mentor was an elderly scholar whom King Odysseus asked to teach his son while the king went off to war.

The quotes you see throughout this guide are from real mentors and mentees who have participated in the WXN Wisdom Top 100 Mentoring program, and the mentors featured are WXN Top 100 Winners as well. We hope you find their words inspirational as you consider the role mentorship can play in your life.

MENTORSHIP DEFINED: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

► What It Is

Mentorship is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists a less experienced person (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee's professional and personal growth.

Mentorship can be beneficial at just about any stage in one's career, from new graduates seeking their first professional position and junior employees learning to navigate the workplace, to middle managers taking on leadership roles and senior executives looking to further their careers.

Mentorship is meant to be beneficial to both parties involved. For the mentee, mentorship offers support in achieving their career goals because they have a more experienced person to learn from and network with. For the mentor, it offers a way to give back, be introduced to new thoughts and help encourage emerging talent in their field.



ANGELA SIMO BROWN
Head of Social Change,
Strategy and Innovation,
LoyaltyOne



I would define mentorship as giving someone advice that I wish someone would have given to me 20 years ago. It's understanding what that person's personal goals are and then helping them figure out a path to achieve them. ”



The ultimate goal of mentorship is providing that north star for someone. ”



CANDY LEE
Senior Brand Manager,
Labatt Breweries



JOANNA GONCALVES
Director, Client Services
and Marketing,
Boyden



Mentorship is an open dialogue, a safe, trusted place without judgement, where you can bring forth the exact situations, conflicts and challenges you might be experiencing and hope to get some direct feedback on how to tackle them. ”

► What It Isn't

Mentorship is not the same as sponsorship, coaching or role modeling, though they all share some characteristics. Each of these is defined below.



Coaching: Giving advice in a workplace setting related to specific, immediate tasks, with quick results expected.



Sponsorship: A senior leader in the workplace who actively supports the career of a more junior person, and commits to their growth and success through the act of promoting them to colleagues or peers for a position, or multiple positions over time.



Role modeling: A more senior person in the workplace consciously behaving in a way that's meant to be emulated by a more junior person who is looking to advance.

MAKING IT WORK: HOW TO STRUCTURE A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring relationships are formed, carried out and end in all sorts of different ways. Some relationships develop organically while others are the result of a structured matching process. Some are intended to last for a certain period of time, like 12 months, while others last for years or even decades. There's no one correct way to do this. But the following tips can make the relationship smoother and more rewarding for both parties.

Finding a mentor:

- **Ask yourself these questions and be prepared to discuss them with a prospective mentor:** Why do I want a mentor? What am I hoping to get out of a mentoring relationship?
- **Determine whether your organization has a mentoring program.** If it does, do you want to be part of it or would you prefer a mentoring relationship outside of your workplace?
- **Consider asking someone who already knows you to be your mentor.** They can be more likely to accept your proposal because they know your work and trust you.
- **Leverage your network.** If you've identified someone who might be a good fit – through an industry organization or LinkedIn – use your network to find out more about them. Do you know people in common? If so, consider asking for an introduction.
- **Ask yourself what you would value in a mentor:** A C-suite title? Financial success? Someone with numerous publications to their name? A reputation for building bridges?
- **Look beyond your workplace.** Finding a mentor outside of your organization can be valuable because it provides an external point of view, widens your network and isn't influenced by workplace politics.

► Turning Awkward into Awesome

It can be difficult to muster the courage to ask someone to mentor you. However, most mentors report that they're flattered to be asked and are often just as nervous about the process as their mentees.

Looking back on finding her first mentor, one senior executive said she felt awkward asking a senior colleague out for coffee, but the prospective mentor's response put her at ease: "She was so excited that I asked her. She had never been asked before. Literally, her face just beamed," said **Angela Simo Brown**, Head of Social Change, Strategy and Innovation, LoyaltyOne.



REEGANNE DUNCAN

Canadian Talent
Acquisition Leader,
PwC

“My advice to someone seeking out a mentor is to not discount the natural, organic relationships that we have in our work, communities and friendships. A lot of people have told me that it was an invitation to coffee or lunch that turned into a mentorship, rather than going out and evaluating résumés of successful people and approaching someone in the context of looking for a mentor.”

► When One Isn't Enough

It's not uncommon to have more than one mentor. In fact, some people have a whole "portfolio" of mentors whose knowledge and experience they draw on in different situations.



To gauge what your mentor portfolio should look like, think about your goals and select mentors who can help you meet those goals. If you are looking to change sectors or industries, you might want a mentor who has successfully made a similar transition. Or if you're looking to simultaneously raise your family and raise your workplace profile, seek out a mentor who has successfully navigated the challenges of work-life balance.

One successful executive suggests having four mentors:

- ✓ one mentor at your organization
- ✓ one external mentor
- ✓ one male mentor
- ✓ one female mentor



RHIANNON TRILL
President and CEO,
The Economic Club of
Canada

“ I’ve had the experience of having multiple mentors at one time, and I suggest this to people. You sort of want to assemble your own boardroom of people around you, so to speak, who are going to be able to guide you in different ways. ”

► Becoming a Mentor

Whether someone asks you, or you seek out a mentee, being a mentor can be a very rewarding experience. It allows you to give back to a more junior person, share lessons from your career and meet emerging talent in your field.

Agreeing to be a mentor:

- **Take the role seriously.** As a mentor, you can have a big influence on someone’s career.
- **Check your schedule.** Ensure that you have enough time and energy to commit to this new relationship.
- **Do a background check.** Check any potential mentee’s background through LinkedIn and your common networks.
- **Recognize your worth.** Many mentors say they didn’t realize how valuable their advice would be to someone else until they started a mentoring relationship.
- **Do your homework.** Think about what your mentee could learn from you – and try to stay one step ahead by coming to meetings with ideas and suggestions.
- **Be prepared to admit your mistakes as well as your successes.** Your mentee can learn as much – or more – from your failures as your successes.

► The Relationship



Whether you’re the mentor or the mentee, there are several details that need to be taken into consideration from both people to ensure a successful and fulfilling relationship. It is important to always be prepared and have set goals, but equally important to allow the relationship to develop and unfold naturally.

Ongoing mentoring relationship:

- **Set meetings well in advance and stick to them.** If a meeting time has to be changed, book a new one as soon as possible.
- **Create an agenda for every meeting.** Allow for “other business” before the meeting closes, in case something comes up that one of you wants to discuss.
- **Change is good.** Don't always meet in the same place and at the same time. Try offices, restaurants, recreational or professional clubs and parks.
- **Be honest – with yourself and with the other party.** If your expectations are not being met, find a diplomatic way to broach the topic.
- **Follow up after meetings.** The mentee should send a memo to the mentor synthesizing what took place at the meetings and any action items. The mentor should read, acknowledge and act on the follow-up.
- **Understand that mentorship is free of strings.** A mentor isn't obliged to sponsor a mentee for a professional position or introduce them to someone they're not comfortable with. And the mentee isn't required to act on the mentor's advice.
- **Set Goals.** Set goals so that your mentor can help you work towards achieving your career goals. It's also important to set goals so that you can assess when it might be time to end the mentoring relationship. If you've met your initial goals, you can either create new ones with the same mentor or bring that relationship to a close.



RHIANNON TRILL
President and CEO,
The Economic Club of
Canada



Yes, be prepared, but don't let the prep kill the natural connection in the relationship. Mentorship is about an authentic exchange and relationship. You should prepare and have an idea of what you want, but you should let things happen naturally. ”

Concluding a mentorship



Most formal mentorship programs include closure exercises, and informal ones should, too. Proper closure encourages growth and cements the relationship that was built together.



Topics to cover include: achievement of goals, high and low points in the relationship and a vision for the mentee's future.

BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL PITFALLS OF MENTORING

► Things to Watch Out For

Mentorship can be extremely rewarding and fulfilling. But, like most relationships, it won't flourish on its own.

Here are a few common mentorship mistakes that both mentors and mentees should try to avoid:

- ✘ Failing to establish goals for the relationship.
- ✘ Not listening.
- ✘ Not scheduling regular meetings – or not sticking to a schedule once it's been set.
- ✘ For the mentor: trying too hard to shape and influence the mentee.
- ✘ Feeling that one party is owed something by the other party.
- ✘ For the mentee: expecting too much from one mentor. You may need a “portfolio of mentors” to support you in different areas of your life.



One of the most important things for mentors is to feel a connection to the person that you're with, and be unafraid to say if you don't. Don't be afraid to just have one coffee and move on from there to work with someone else... you're going to be able to connect with. ”



RHIANNON TRAIL
President and CEO,
The Economic Club of
Canada



REMEMBER:

Mentorship is voluntary and the results are directly proportional to the effort spent on the relationship.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

While each mentoring relationship is unique, there are certain roles and responsibilities that the mentor and mentee should take on to make it work. If those roles and responsibilities are acknowledged and adhered to, the mentoring relationship has a much better chance of being successful, for both people involved.

► The Mentor

As the one who is usually more senior or more experienced, the mentor takes the lead in guiding the mentee, but not in driving the relationship.

Here are a mentor's main responsibilities:

- ✓ Accept meeting invitations, show up on time and be fully engaged. (No smart phones at the table!)
- ✓ Offer guidance and support, but not prescriptive advice.
- ✓ Take a long-range view of the mentee's career path, helping them plan for the coming years and decades, not days and weeks.
- ✓ Introduce the mentee to other people who might be beneficial in helping them achieve their career goals.
- ✓ Listen to the mentee. Ensuring that mentor-mentee conversations are dialogues, not lectures, is important.



ANGELA SIMO BROWN
Head of Social Change,
Strategy and Innovation,
LoyaltyOne



If you want to become a mentor, you have to put yourself in a vulnerable position. You have to be open and honest about your mistakes or about challenges that you've faced, because that's how people learn, by watching how you overcame those challenges. ”



I thought you had to be a CEO to be a mentor, but I've really come to realise that even just my simple experiences – my journeys, my triumphs, my struggles – they can be comfort or advice or support for somebody else. ”



REEGANNE DUNCAN
Canadian Talent
Acquisition Leader,
PwC

► The Mentee

While both parties benefit from a mentoring relationship, as the less experienced party, the mentee often has more to gain.

These are a mentee's main responsibilities:

- ✓ Drive the relationship by identifying goals, setting up meetings, being on time and fully engaged. (Again – put away the smart phone!)
- ✓ Offer feedback to the mentor and share learnings that might be of interest, to ensure the relationship isn't just a one-way street.
- ✓ Following up after meetings.
- ✓ Listen to the mentor. But don't treat mentorship meetings as classes or lectures – participate, converse and challenge.
- ✓ Willingly receive guidance related to career goals and, when appropriate, acting on it.

► Goal Setting in Mentorship

To get the most out of mentorship, mentees should set goals for what they want to achieve. Some goals could be:



Transitioning from one industry to another.



Navigating a particularly challenging professional situation.



Adding certain new skills to your offering.



Learning about different organizations where you could advance your career.



Adding three high-quality connections to your LinkedIn network per month.



Brainstorming about industry organizations you could join.



Inviting two people from your network out for coffee each month.



ANGELA SIMO BROWN
Head of Social Change,
Strategy and Innovation,
LoyaltyOne



You need the support of your mentor and your support network but you can't depend on them. It's up to you to figure out where you want to go in your career and have that vision. ”



We both came to the table willing to be very candid. So I welcomed it when she gave me tough feedback and honest opinions. Setting that level of honesty early on was crucial for us to build a relationship. ”



CANDY LEE
Senior Brand Manager,
Labatt Breweries

MAKE MENTORSHIP HAPPEN

Mentorship allows you to learn from someone you admire and view as successful in the things that you want to succeed in. It creates networking opportunities that you might not get otherwise, and ultimately, it helps you meet your career and personal goals.



Make Mentorship Happen for Yourself.

It's important to be proactive and manage your career with intent; don't wait for opportunities to come to you. Connect with a mentor (or mentors) and make the most of this relationship by following the best practices outlined in this guide.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was produced jointly by American Express and the Women's Executive Network (WXN). Both organizations value mentorship highly and have seen first-hand how mentorship can accelerate careers and enrich personal lives. We sincerely hope you're able to make mentorship a part of your life, and feel empowered and rewarded by doing so.



About the Women's Executive Network (WXN)

WXN creates and delivers innovative networking, mentoring, professional and personal development to inform, inspire, connect and recognize our community of 22,000 smart women and their organizations in the pursuit of excellence. WXN enables our Partners and Corporate Members to become and to be recognized as employers of choice and leaders in the advancement of women.



About American Express

American Express is a global services company that provides customers with access to products, insights and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. The company provides innovative payment, travel and expense management solutions for individuals and businesses of all sizes. In Canada, American Express proudly employs over 1,600 Canadians, and is the recipient of the 2017 Canada's Best Diversity Employers award for its exceptional workplace diversity, inclusion programs and initiatives to support the career advancement for women.

