When choosing a mentor, make sure the person is someone you can trust and who will push you in your career. (Getty Images)
A mentor, simply put, is an adviser. And on your professional path (https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-03-28/how-to-transition-to-a-new-career), having someone to advise you and cheer you on is a critical piece of career success. While many experienced professionals and even organizations recommend having mentors, many still seem stumped about how to find a mentor and work with one effectively. Try these easy steps to find and work with a mentor.

[See: 8 Ways Millennials Can Build Leadership Skills (https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/slideshows/8-ways-millennials-can-build-leadership-skills).]

First, it’s important to determine what areas you need help with. Sometimes professionals want to pick a career mentor before knowing exactly what they want one for, and as a result they feel frustrated when they don’t get the help they really need. But when you start by analyzing your career needs (https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-03-23/why-and-how-you-should-be-exploring-your-career-options-this-year), you can make sure you look for a mentor with the qualities and strengths that will propel you in the right direction. Ask yourself:

- Where do I want to be in five to 10 years?
- What strengths do I need to acquire or work on to get there?
- Is there a certain part of the business world I would like to learn more about?
- In what areas of my career could I most benefit from an adviser? (These could be areas such as professional relationships, leadership qualities (https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-03-07/3-ways-your-phone-is-hurting-your-leadership-ability) or effective networking.)

Next, create a list of candidates to be your mentor. Your candidates should ultimately be able to help you with the areas in which you have specific needs. They should already have reached similar career goals or used the strengths you want to have effectively. Your list can come from different sources. For example, you might find possible mentors in:

- The organization you work for
- Your current network
- Your university alumni program
A social group you take part in

Don't assume that the person with the most professional experience will automatically be the best fit for you as a mentor. You will want to make sure the person is someone you can trust and who will push you in your career. Another thing to keep in mind is that you don't just have to choose one mentor for your whole professional life.


You can choose more than one mentor at a time, and work with different mentors at different stages in your career. Perhaps one person can help you cultivate leadership skills while another person could help you learn more about a certain aspect of your industry (https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-03-19/spring-clean-your-career). Once you have created your list, select the top three people you would like to be your mentors.

Finally, make the request. The best way to ask someone to be your mentor is to be straightforward. If the person works in the same company, set up a brief in-person meeting to see if they would be willing to be your mentor. If it's someone from your network, schedule a phone call. Let them know what strengths or goals they have reached that you admire and that you would like to be able to cultivate those same strengths or goals. Ask them if they would be willing to mentor you and be specific about the areas you would like help with.

For example: "I would like to ask you to be my mentor to help me reach my career goals. I admire how you became a leader so early in your career and I would love to know how to cultivate those strengths. I feel that I need help with my decision-making and communication skills."
How to Ask for a Leave of Absence

What to Wear to Work
(https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/company-culture/articles/what-to-wear-to-work)

How to Call in Sick

How to Quit Your Job
(https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/applying-for-a-job/slideshows/how-to-quit-your-job)

(https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-01-30/can-you-benefit-from-an-executive-coach). Would you be willing to help and mentor me in those areas?"

Remember that you are essentially asking for a favor, so don't feel offended if the person doesn't have the time or doesn't feel they could help you. Even if they decline to be a mentor, make sure to thank them for their time.

[See: How to Quit Your Job (https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/applying-for-a-job/slideshows/how-to-quit-your-job).]

Once you have found a mentor, determine how you will work together. Take the initiative to draw up a meeting plan that works with your current schedule but that also shows you take this new relationship seriously. You may decide to check in with each other weekly or monthly. Ask for input on your plan and be flexible based on your mentor's availability. Make sure to be respectful of your mentor's time and privacy.

If you do choose to work with multiple mentors at the same time, let them know that someone is helping you in other areas. This will help them to better target how they specifically can help you succeed.

Best Social Services Jobs

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