

Power Up by Creating Your Mentoring Network

When most people hear the word mentoring, they think of either intense, long-term mutually-beneficial relationships or sporadic advice given on-the-go after a meeting by a colleague in management. Both can be beneficial.

However, it is important to understand that there is no one person who will be your “perfect mentor.” Instead your approach should be to view yourself as an individual corporation that requires its own board of directors or cabinet team, so to speak.

Whether you have access to a formal mentoring structure or not, work to create your own board both inside and outside of the workplace that will point you in the right direction and set the performance bar higher. Invest in the time to set up this mentoring model so that for example, if you have five questions or challenges in a certain area, you know this is who you are going to go to for advice and counsel.”

Creating such a network of advisors and mentors will give you a unique advantage in overall career development and planning.

As your career progresses you will have the opportunity to shape that board, so that it evolves with your career providing you very diverse, far-reaching knowledge inside and outside of your industry. Your mentoring board should be very strategic and not at all a rubber stamp board. You should feel questioned, challenged and forced to think and approach work more strategically. Recognize that you cannot go to every board member with every issue. For example, you may not be able to go to mentors in your organization with personal issues or about job hunting. You need a whole separate group of friends and trusted people in your life who you admire and know that you can go to for more personal mentoring.”

You need people around you who are going to help you be the best you can be at everything you do. We all have blind spots, so we need reality checks via people who are going to hold us accountable, push us, move us and challenge us at work and personally in ways that we are not able to do on our own. These relationships are important because we all want to be the best human being, best CEO, best employee and best family member we can be

I'm sure certain individuals come to mind when thinking of creating your own personal board of directors. Think in terms of diversity of personality, occupation and outlooks for a successful board. "Even if you have your sights set on one person you admire, that one person, no matter how successful, will not bring all the dimensions you will need to grow, develop and move to the next step. That comes from a diversity of advisers.

Most importantly you need your mentoring board to help you chart and regularly weigh in on your plan for the future. They can help you determine what success looks like for you in three, five and ten years from now – personally and professionally. You can even ask some of your mentors to teach you the skills you need to build a network or to create a development plan.

If you're still not convinced, perhaps the results of a recent McKinsey study will give you the nudge you need to start building your network. The study found that men are more acculturated to building networks that are reciprocal. Women have fewer albeit deeper relationships, but are reluctant to use them.

Of particular note, it also found that people with the best mentoring networks make the most money and get the highest promotions.

Make this your year to Power Up by building strong mentoring networks!