

Corporate “Mentoring” Tips: Habits of Highly Successful Mentors & Mentees

Two questions people often ask me:

- 1) **Can anyone be a mentor?**
- 2) **Can anyone be mentored?**

Let me start with the last question. I believe anyone can be mentored if the person is open to the concept and is willing to do the work. Regarding the first question: if someone wants to be a mentor, it's possible. Mentoring skills can be learned, developed, and nurtured. That said I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the most effective mentoring relationships take place when the mentors and mentees bring certain skill sets to the table. And that's the subject of this month's newsletter. Use some of these Habits of Highly Successful Mentors and Mentees to identify the perfect candidates in your organization for your existing mentoring program or to show upper management that you have the right mix of people to launch a program.

1. **Active Listeners.** Active listening takes energy. People who listen actively don't simply sit back and allow words to hit their eardrums. They sit up straight. They take notes. They ask questions. They repeat or "mirror back" what they've heard to ensure they've understood it properly. Active listeners are the ones who provide non-verbal gestures (e.g. eye contact, nodding, etc.) that indicate they're following (or not following) what you're saying. Why is this habit important? Mentors and mentees spend much of their relationship talking and listening to one another. Active listening is critical for both parties.

2. **Dedicated to Their Success.** I'm not suggesting that people should have a myopic view and are dedicated to only their own success. What I'm saying is that people who take pride in their work, who want to grow, and who truly care about their career trajectory are assets because of their high expectations. Why is this habit important? It stands to reason that people who are dedicated to their own career success will want to make the most out of their involvement in the corporate mentoring program. The most effective mentors and mentees are people who are dedicated to the idea of making their relationship work.

3. **Dedicated to Others' Success.** I put the "success" habits back to back so that it's clear they work in tandem. The most successful (and happiest) people in life are not in it just for themselves. They care about the organization and the people within that organization and have a genuine desire to see everyone and everything succeed: the company, the employees, and the mentoring program as a whole. Why is this habit important? People who realize that "it's not all about me" are much more willing to make a genuine investment in the mentoring relationship.

4. **Curious.** People who are naturally curious tend to follow the "if there's a will, there's a way" philosophy. If they don't know the answer or if they need help with something, they won't sit back and wait; they'll go looking for the answers. Why is this habit important? I've found that the "curious types" are the ones who'll take the time to read articles on mentoring best practices (or notes like this one), listen to tutorials, and seek out help from practising mentors, all of which help in making a successful mentoring relationship.

5. Engaged with their surroundings. These people view their work as more than just a job. They show interest in the industry, in the world around them, in the work that other departments are doing, and in the charitable events associated with their company. Why is this habit important? Having a "big picture" view of the world allows people to see how the success of their mentoring relationship affects more than just the two people in the relationship.

6. Willing to step out of their comfort zones. These people are willing to try new things, consider new thoughts, and think outside of the proverbial box for the sake of personal and professional growth. Why is this habit important? Prospective mentors and mentees who are willing to try something new and give it a "go" will have the best chance at reaping the most benefits from the mentoring relationship.

7. The 3 R's: Responsible, Respectful, & Ready. People who are responsible, respectful, and ready to get started with new projects help make the day-to-day work experience a better one not only for themselves, but also for everyone around them. Why is this habit important? Being a mentor (ZMC) or mentee requires diligence -- you need to commit to regular meetings (and actually meet), chart progress, and learn to navigate a new relationship (and all the ups and downs) with aplomb. Are there any other important "habits" that you've noticed or picked up from your involvement in corporate mentoring? We'd love to hear back!