

5 Ways to Find a Mentor

Welcome to *The Workforce Link Podcast*, where we're offering forward-thinking conversations for the workforce, linking employers and job seekers to a brighter tomorrow. I'm your host Sundi Jo Graham from the Central Workforce Development Region, and I'm happy to be back with you for another episode.

Oprah Winfrey says this about mentorship, "A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself." I love that quote because it's so true. Sometimes we need others in our lives to see things about us we can't necessarily see ourselves.

We need people in our lives we can look up to, people who will support us as we pursue our dreams, careers, relationships, etc. And no matter where we are in life, we need someone to keep seeing that hope in us.

Oprah was mentored by May Angelou. Leadership expert Simon Sinek was mentored by Entrepreneur Ron Bruders. Steve Jobs mentored Mark Zuckerberg. You're never too successful to need someone to help you keep growing.

In today's episode of *The Workforce Link*, we're going to talk about exactly how to find a mentor. Before we dive in, I want to quickly remind you to share this podcast with friends, neighbors, coworkers, and hey... even that co-worker you don't like. The more you spread the word, the more we get to help others. And if I haven't said it already, thank you in advance.

Alright, now let's dive into today's episode.

So, now, maybe you're thinking, *Alright, Sundi Jo, I'm interested! But how do I find a mentor?* Here are five steps on how to do just that.

1) Be Someone Who Someone Else Wants to Mentor

It's important for you to put effort into your relationship with your mentor. They aren't just going to make everything happen for you. They are there to encourage you, push you, and help you grow. In order to do that, you have to do your part.

If you've agreed to a specific meeting time, make sure you show up on time, and don't overstay your welcome. Let's use Oprah as an example of this. She met Maya Angelou in the '70s when Oprah was in her 20s and was a young news anchor with big dreams. She was a huge fan, and they connected through a book Angelou had written, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

Oprah asked for five minutes of Angelou's time, and when she agreed, Oprah honored that. When her five minutes were over, she ended the conversation and thanked Angelou for her time. That left a lasting impression on Angelou, and from that day forward, they built a strong friendship.

Was Oprah successful because of her willingness to do her part and be someone Angelou wanted to mentor? I'd say so. And we all know that Oprah built a pretty large empire and has a few dollars in her pocket. She didn't get there by being unteachable. Which is something we all need to be - teachable.

Be humble. Be open. Listen. Those three things will go a long way in building a solid relationship between you and your mentor. When you ask questions, sit back and be quiet. Make sure you're really listening to what they say. If you're striving for a promotion and you want to know exactly what your mentor did to do the same, grab a notebook and pen, then be quiet and listen and take notes. Don't interject with things you know; there will be a time for that.

And don't be afraid to ask for tips on how you can do better. And again, when you do, take notes and listen. Don't just nod your head. Your willingness to write things down is a sign of great integrity and humility, and it's going to make your mentor take note and make he/she want to get to know you more.

2) Make Sure You're Ready To Be Mentored

How do you know if you're ready to be mentored? This goes back to something we talked about in the first step: you're teachable. What are you already learning? Are you reading? Listening to podcasts? Are you learning from your friends? Your co-workers? Your boss? If the answer is yes, then you're probably ready to find a mentor. If not, then start there. Become a student. Starting learning every chance you get.

As you get ready, set some goals for what you're looking for. Are you looking for someone to help you become a better parent? Looking for someone to teach you how to move up the ladder in your career? Decide that now, then you'll know the right person to look for.

And then get even more specific. How often do you want to meet with your mentor? Do you have the time to commit? Are you looking for someone for a set amount of time, or are you seeking an open-ended relationship?

Knowing these things in advance will help you find the right person when you're ready. And if you reach out to someone and they ask, "What are you looking for?" then you already have the answers. That already sets you up for success.

3) Choose The Right Mentor

So, you have the right characteristics to be mentored, you're ready to be mentored, and you have all your ducks in a row. Now it's time to choose the right person to mentor you.

This is where you get to allow yourself to dream for a minute. Get a notebook, your phone notes, Evernote, or whatever works for you. And ask yourself some questions...

What do I want my life to look like in 5 years? 10 years? 20 years?

What do I want my family to look like?

Where do I want to be in my career?

What do I most want to accomplish?

Based on your answers, you now have a better idea of a mentor you want to find. You want to find someone to mentor you who has lived the life you want to live - someone who has already paved the way for where you want to be.

And you don't have to settle on just one mentor. If you want to find someone to help you with your career goals, great. If you want to help someone to help you be a better wife or husband, great. They don't have to be the same person. Have a health goal you want to reach? Find a mentor to help you achieve your weight loss goals.

Again, when you're searching for that perfect mentor, make sure it's someone who has walked the path you're wanting to walk - someone who is accomplished in that area.

Find someone who won't just tell you what to do but someone who will walk through steps with you. Not every step necessarily, but some steps for sure. Find someone who is kind and empathetic. Someone who will encourage you when you fail because you will fail in life. We all do.

Find someone who is willing to be honest with you but can be nice while they're doing it. Someone with compassion, not who is harsh and brutal. There will come a time when we all need to hear the hard truth, but how we hear it is important.

Then make a list of people you know who might be a great mentor. Don't be afraid to write down everyone who comes to your mind. Don't get discouraged in the process and say, "Well, that's a far stretch, they'll never mentor me." You don't know that. Write down whoever comes to mind. This is just the first draft. Go through your phone contacts, emails, Facebook friends, and LinkedIn.

And remember this... Your mentor doesn't have to be local. With the power of Zoom or the phone, you can meet with people across the world.

Are you looking for career training without even having to leave the house? Good news for you! We've recently launched *The Career Club*, a virtual work experience for job seekers ages 14-24.

Here's how it works:

We assist you with job-seeking skills, personal management skills, how to meet employer expectations, money management principles, good work habits, and more.

After training is complete, you'll receive job placement, allowing you to implement your newly developed skills.

And here's the cool part... **You get paid while you learn.** That's right. You'll receive \$13/hr while participating in the virtual training, with a possible transition to a higher wage upon job placement.

This is an exciting opportunity to earn while you learn. To sign up or learn more, visit cwdregion.com/careerclub, or you can find the link in the show notes.

4) Make the Ask

I would say make the ask and do it afraid! You might hear this step and start freaking out. *There's no way I can reach out to these people!* Yes, you can! You're just going to have to step outside of your comfort zone and do it. It's worth the risk. They might say yes; they might say no. You can control how they respond, but you'll never know if you're not willing to try.

But don't just reach out to someone and say, "Hey, will you mentor me?" Get to know them first and give them time to get to know you. You want to make sure you both have a level of respect for each other. There might be someone you really admire, but once you get to know them, you're like, *Whoa! They aren't who I thought they were. No thanks!* And they need some time to get to know you, too. After all, they're going to be investing hours of their life into your life, so they're going to want to know if you'll be a good fit, too.

Now, if you already know the person, then go ahead and ask. Dive right in and say, “Hey, I’m looking for a mentor. Would you be interested?” And don’t give up if people say no. Go back to your list and keep going.

When you get your yes, give yourself a pat on the back and get back to the plan you originally created before you went looking for a mentor. Share your goals and expectations with your new mentor.

Share where you’re wanting to grow. Nail down a plan for how often you will meet. When? Where? How long? Share some specific questions if you have them.

And here’s an extra step I recommend. Send that person a card (yes, an actual card in the mail) thanking them for their willingness to invest in your life, and tell them you can’t wait to get started. If you don’t send a card, at least send a nice thank you email. Let them know you’re honored and so grateful for their time.

5) Reach out To Your Local Job Center

If you need some help finding a mentor, specifically for your career dreams and goals, reach out to your Job Center. We have staff who can meet with you to discuss your needs and goals, then connect you with someone who can walk through them with you.

You can find the job center closest to you on our website at cwdregion.com/jobcenters or learn more at cwdregion.com/mentor. I’ll share the link to both of those in the show notes.

Bonus #6) Look for Someone You Can Mentor

It might be a while before you’re ready for this step, but it’s never too early to start thinking about it. As you look for a mentor yourself, you’re going to be looking for qualities in them you admire.

Part of the reason you’re getting mentored is probably because you want to continue to build your character. Hold onto that as you gauge what kind of character you’re becoming. Are you becoming someone who someone else would want to be mentored by you? That takes us back to the first step we covered on how to find a mentor: be someone else someone wants to mentor.

You’re going to have the opportunity to pass the torch of what you’ve learned onto someone else. That’s a great feeling!

Let’s do a quick recap of the five ways you can find a mentor:

1. Be someone who someone else wants to mentor.
2. Make sure you’re ready to be mentored.

3. Choose the right mentor.
4. Make the ask.
5. Reach out to your local job center.

Want to build the brightest future you can? Get with the right people to help you do that. Learn from those who've already achieved the dreams you're striving for.

That's it for today, my friend. If you've enjoyed today's episode, would you mind sharing it with someone else you think could benefit? And head on over to wherever you listen to this show and let us know what you enjoy about the show. It means a lot to us, and it helps us stay visible so that others can easily find us.

Have a great week, and we'll meet again in the next episode. Until then. Remember this... There's always a brighter tomorrow if you're willing to find it.