

FIVE MYTHS ABOUT MENTORING

- 1) **“Mentoring doesn’t add value.”** Research continually supports countless tangible and intangible benefits for the mentor, the mentee, and the organization. Organizations have a powerful tool for succession planning, improving retention and recruitment, managing organizational change and encouraging professional development. Mentors experience a sense of organizational trust and commitment to fostering professional and personal development. In addition to ongoing career development and increased job satisfaction, mentees enjoy increased productivity since they have the access and support to information, an outlet for bouncing critical decisions and an opportunity to emulate role models.

Also, you are never too old, too smart, too seasoned, nor too “wise” to not need a mentor. Almost all CEOs and world leaders could tell you one person they actively use as a mentor to this day. Follow this link (http://www.mentors.ca/mp_business.html) to view a list of over 200 famous ‘mentor-mentee’ pairs from Business, Industry, Education, and Science).

- 2) **“There’s no one who could/would be interested in mentoring me.”** Mentoring is an extremely mutually beneficial relationship for both parties. Many people look forward to being a mentor, but they won’t do it until they are asked. Mentors feel entrusted with helping foster career and professional development, an expanded purpose within the organization, and sharing learned business principles and perspectives. Many of the people you might have your eye on as a potential mentor have likely been mentored themselves at some stage of their career.
- 3) **“My company doesn’t provide mentoring.”** The vast majority of companies support mentoring, and 71% of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs. While some companies might not have formal processes in place, that doesn’t mean they don’t want you to seek mentors from within/outside the organization. Informal mentoring can be just as beneficial as formal mentoring. Seek out colleagues and organizational leaders with the specific skills you are seeking to acquire/develop and approach them individually about an informal mentor relationship. Alternately, you can discuss with your manager or someone in your company’s HR organization or Training & Development group how to get started.
- 4) **“I don’t have time.”** Mentoring does not have to be a time vortex. It can be as simple as a weekly 5-minute discussion. It can occur over a much-needed lunch away from the office. The critical point to remember is it is not the time spent in the mentoring sessions, but the consistency of the sessions. One-off meetings every six months are not going to grow and develop the relationship or produce any type of sustainable benefits.
- 5) **“I don’t know how to get started.”** The best way is to identify someone who has a skill set you admire, a job you’d like to have, or a strength you’d like to develop. Approach that person and let them know you feel that way – they will be complimented, to be sure! Then ask them if they might be able to help you develop skill sets, competencies, etc. by being a mentor. Come equipped with a specific list of your goals from the relationship and be sure to prioritize them. Also be concrete and specific about what you are looking for re: time spent, frequency of contact, etc. Ask your mentor if he/she is comfortable using other communication tools – ie. e-mail, LinkedIn, Twitter, or the like- in addition to meeting in person. You may also find that you have to do a lot of the initiating to keep

mentoring active. It is not a lack of desire from your mentor but simply the ability to keep it on the radar. The more active you are, the more invested they will be.