

Making the Most out of Mentoring

Mentors understand the industry, their part in the organization, and they have a great deal to teach you. If you are open to learning, mentors can share the things they did right, the mistakes they made along the way, and the benefit of their wisdom to help you avoid the same errors.

The best thing you can do for yourself is to tell your mentor exactly what you want in life. If you tell your mentor about your dreams and your vision, you'll have a much harder time explaining your subsequent lack of progress. To avoid having to do that, you'll work harder, and you'll achieve success—and you'll be eager and proud to let your mentor know.

When choosing your mentor, be on the lookout for someone you admire who is open, successful, and someone you feel you can trust and turn to for advice. Other important characteristics include humility, the ability to listen, and an insatiable curiosity.

To make the most of your mentoring relationship, keep these guidelines in mind:

- *Understand your strengths and weaknesses.* This will help you and your mentor to create action plans that address areas of need.
- *Share your goals.* Your mentor can't help you achieve them if he or she doesn't know what they are.
- *Set an agenda.* Decide how much time you and your mentor will spend together and agree about what you will accomplish during those times.
- *Keep in contact.* Between the times you and your mentor get together, stay in touch through phone calls and e-mail. Tell your mentor about your progress and ask for help when you feel you're not making progress.

COMPANIES WITH MENTORING PROGRAMS

- AT&T (<http://www.att.job>)
- Merrill Lynch (<http://www.ml.com>)
- Federal Express (<http://www.fedex.com>)
- General Motors (<http://www.gm.com>)
- J.C. Penney (<http://www.jcpenneycareers.com>)
- Bell Labs (<http://www.bell-labs.com>)
- DuPont (<http://www2.dupont.com>)
- Sun Microsystems (<http://www.sun.com>)
- Charles Schwab (<http://www.aboutschwab.com>)
- BellSouth Corp. (<http://www.bellsouth.com>)
- Intel (<http://www.intel.com>)
- Southwest Airlines (<http://www.southwest.com>)