

Finding the Right Mentor Workbook



by Michael G. Neece
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Finding the Right Mentor

Workbook



As you navigate your career, difficult decisions will arise, moral dilemmas will require your focus, and moments of self-doubt must be conquered. The good news is that some colleagues would gladly help you through it all as your mentors.

A mentor cannot do your job for you, but they can act as a thought partner and a confidant as you sort through key situations at work. They can keep you company as you wrestle with difficult situations that seem quite new to you but familiar to them. These more experienced guides might remember when they got help and hope to provide the same for you, or they could just want to help younger colleagues.

In this exercise, you will list out your most trusted, supportive, and aligned work colleagues and write notes about them. It is key to identify those who are farther along in their career path than you and then weigh whether they could make a good mentor for you.

This exercise is analytical in nature and can feel at odds with the emotions you have for the people you list. Remember, your notes during this exercise could be sensitive, and you should guard them well. In finding a mentor, you must consider the nature of your work relationships and the impacts that each can have on your life's course. If your supervisors and the seasoned workers at your workplace bring positivity, support, humor, and joy into your life, then this exercise should be straightforward. What you might find, though, is that some of your candidates for mentorship come from prior experiences, like previous jobs or school. Just because you never thought to put the label "mentor" on someone doesn't mean you should overlook them now.

I highly recommend doing these exercises in a journal dedicated to your career progress, but space is also provided in this workbook in case you don't have a journal handy yet.

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Step One: In your journal, list seasoned colleagues in your current company, even those in other work groups, and any others who stand out from prior jobs you have had. These should be connections who have had the power to influence your projects, your daily work, but who are typically not in your direct reporting line, like a supervisor or their supervisor. Note that they could be someone completely apart from your specific workflow, but stood out to you as special, knowledgeable, and kind nonetheless.

The people you list should be someone who stands out in your mind because they always interact with you and others in kind ways. Add the names of any teachers you have had who seemed genuinely interested in your success. Take no more than ten minutes for this step. Special note: There is no need to list anyone who has similar or less experience than you do. You should only be listing potential mentors, which means that they have more years of experience than you do. One notable exception is if you have been in the workforce for 20 years or more, then it is worth looking at those who have made big gains in the working world as a more significant factor.

Step Two: Next to each name, create Positives and Negatives columns. Under Positives, rate how big the positives are from this person from 0 to 5, where 5 means they understand your industry, the roles you aspire to, and have mastery of their own higher position; 0 means they are unlikely to provide anything you need in terms of advice and insight; and numbers between giving you flexibility to give weight to that person's positives. Under Negatives, rate the negatives in similar fashion, with 5 meaning that they leave wreckage and disharmony in their wake; 0 meaning they are flawless in their

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kindness practice and don't appear to bring negative issues to a potential mentorship; and the numbers in between allowing flexibility in your rating.

Total the points for each colleague using this equation: Positives minus Negatives. Special Note: If you expect the negative impacts rating to be poor or if you have a gut instinct about a potential mentor that tells you not to list them, either put them in a special list off to the side and indicate that they are not under consideration or don't list them anywhere. If, at some point, you reevaluate them and they appear to have shifted toward the positive and your gut instinct has settled into a more positive feeling, reconsider. Until that time, be satisfied that you have other choices.

Names	Positives (0 – 5)	Negatives (0 – 5)	Total (Positives – Negatives)

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Example 1: Naomi is rising through the company fast, has great skills, and understands the work in great detail in the areas you care about. She also treats others above her incredibly well, but those who report to her say she is not the best listener and does not foster growth. For Naomi, you might give apply a 4 in the Positives and a 3 in the negatives, giving her with a total score of $4 - 3 = 1$.

Example 2: Your supervisor always stops to show you why things are being done. He solicits your input. Others who have reported to him for years really like his ability to listen, explain and motivate. For your supervisor, you might rank Positives as 2, Negatives as 0 for a total of $2 - 0 = 2$.

Example 3: Your college professor, Dr. Janeway, worked in your current industry for 25 years, rising to a role five titles above yours. She always showed deep interest in your progress at school and invited you to keep in touch. It has been a long time but step past any worries to see how promising she might be as a mentor. You might rank Positives as 4, Negatives as 1, for a total of $4 - 1 = 3$.

Final Step: Create a new list of your best potential mentors with the highest scores at the top, lowest scores at the bottom.

Names	Total	Notes

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Consider the top of the list and make an action list. Which great candidate do you reach out to first? Having more than one mentor is always worthwhile, but you will need to drive the conversations and the mentor-mentee relationship, so perhaps start with one, then build up to two or even three.

Start by setting up a time with your mentor candidates and see how they “fit” you and your situation. Once the timing feels right, ask if they will formally take on the role of mentoring you.

Tips:

- Keeping your mentor close requires planning, such as regularly reaching out to them with regular touchpoints on your calendar.
- It is recommended that you go through a set of exercises with your mentor, such as:
 - Goal-setting
 - Taking and discussing personality surveys (such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI))
 - Uncovering your limiting beliefs and planning how to harness their positives and sidestep their negatives.
- The book, *In Kind: Consciously Craft a Meaningful Life and Career* can act as the basis for a mentor-mentee program. Reach out to Michael@michaelgneece.com for more information about a free six-month mentorship program outline that leverages the power of the book!

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Even mentors who have worked with you previously but have no formal connection to you should be kept close. Create a regular check-in at least once per quarter and probably no more frequent than biweekly. By sending a text, email, or having a regular phone, video, or in-person coffee date, you can remind yourself that you have a resource in the form of a mentor who cares about your career progress and probably about you personally as well.

Mentors can have a profound positive impact on your career growth and likely on your personal growth as well. I hope you seize the opportunity to get guidance and support throughout your career, even as you grow through some mentors and pick others up along the way. Congratulations on taking this significant step in your career journey by completing this workbook! Now go reach out to those potential mentors and get the support you deserve!

Need assistance? Schedule a free call with me:



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