



Timely Information for Personal Success

Must-Haves in a Great Mentor

By Joel Peterson

As originally published in *Inc.* magazine, over the years, I have seen thousands of Millennials in the classroom and in various business roles, and, not surprisingly, I disagree with those who stereotype the generation as lazy, entitled job hoppers.

Instead, I find they possess many highly desirable workplace traits. They're technologically adept, mission-driven, caring, and inclusive – just to name a few.

That said, even the best of them could get even better if they had a good mentor. The truth is everyone needs someone to show them the ropes, to help them understand what organizations value and the best ways to get ahead in a job, corporation or even life.

But mentors don't come easy. Many of the good ones have already been snapped up. The ones still available and willing to share their wisdom don't have signs around their necks. You do not just walk up to someone and ask them, "May I be your protegee?"

Quite frankly, finding that special teacher will come down to luck and resolve. Be patient and let the relationship develop.

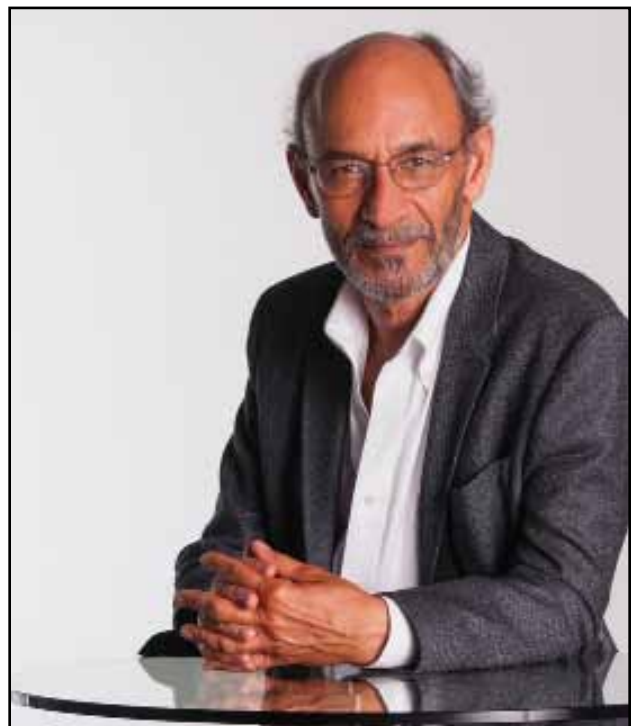
A reasonable approach is simply to observe a person whose career and standing you admire. Take notes, do what they do, read what they read. In short, make them a role model without them even knowing it. If by chance you attract the attention of

him or her, and mentorship is a result, consider it a gift from the career gods.

Understand that not every leader is a good mentor. To be fair, successful leaders are very busy people and some are just not good at translating their success to others.

But, still, you can improve your odds of finding a great career guide and life coach by focusing on a few key qualities:

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Healthy Recipe: Grilled, Glazed Turkey Cutlets

INGREDIENTS:

4 turkey cutlets, 4 to 6 oz. each
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 2 tablespoons sugar
 ½ cup raspberry jam or preserves
 1 teaspoon lime zest

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Calories per serving: 283
 Carbohydrates: 33 g.
 Protein: 28 g.
 Fat: 4 g.
 Saturated fat: 1 g.

Serving size: 1 turkey cutlet

DIRECTIONS:

For the glaze: 1) In a small saucepan, heat the vinegar and sugar over medium heat until the mixture boils and the sugar dissolves. 2) Add the jam or preserves, lime zest, and bring to a boil. 3) Remove from heat. 4) Season with salt and pepper to taste.

For the grilled turkey: 1) Preheat grill to medium. 2) Sprinkle turkey cutlets with salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil. 3) Place turkey on grill and cook until juices run clear, about 6 minutes per side. 4) Place cutlets on serving platter and brush with the raspberry-lime glaze.

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Must-Haves in a Great Mentor

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1. Someone who is respected.

Choose someone who you believe does things the right way for the right reasons; someone who is widely admired for being honest and fair. Then study how they handle difficult situations, tough conversations and setbacks.

If you can get with this person and have them deconstruct their thinking, it will be the equivalent of getting a graduate degree in leadership. You also want to align yourself with people who have great values, who reinforce the good things you are doing and can help you develop even better habits around how you spend your time, money, and your mental energy.

2. Someone who is generous.

Look for someone who enjoys imparting knowledge and is delighted to teach you some skills. You want a person willing to share their contacts and expertise.

And it is even better if, from time to time, the person is agreeable to critique your handling of a problem or assignment. You have to be able to accept some straight talk, obviously, but those brutally honest conversations can lead to tremendous growth.

The great mentors also tend to show patience and be good listeners. They ask follow-up questions and they make sure they've understood your dilemma before they react. Sometimes a mentor is just a good sounding board for what you are thinking.

3. Someone who is positive.

These type of people tend to see opportunity

everywhere, they attract other positive people, are pretty good problem solvers and get a lot done. When things get tough for you they will have your back and help you find answers – crucial traits for the perfect mentor. That type of cheerleader who will be there for you through thick and thin is hard to find, but when you do you have a real asset.

I was blessed. Trammell Crow, the real estate magnate, was my first mentor in business.

Most young professionals, however, won't be as fortunate. But keep in mind that every mentor is not always in the flesh. There are historical figures from whom you can learn a great deal. Read about leaders and thinkers and draw wisdom from them. There are a lot of them out there. Winston Churchill, Peter Drucker, and Marvin Bower are three of mine.

Summary

Soon, today's 83 million Millennials – those entering the workforce and those gliding into mid-career – will be in charge, taking over the business world from Baby Boomers like me.

If they are well mentored now – if they pattern themselves after trusted and successful leaders – they increase the chances of becoming terrific mentors themselves. And with that, a virtuous circle can keep giving and giving. ■

Joel Peterson is the chairman of JetBlue Airways, professor at Stanford University, and a LinkedIn influencer.