

## Mastering Mentoring & Networking

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Mentoring and networking are not the same concepts, but I think the two actions can be synergistic such that the power of each is enhanced. The purpose of this article is to share my thoughts on both mentoring and networking and solicit alternate views or enhancements to my points.

### **Directional**

Most people believe that mentoring is directional in nature. One person acts as the mentor and the other as the protégé. My own opinion is that in a good mentor relationship, both people are gaining in different ways. Both people have the advantage of seeing their points through the lens of another person, so there is an opportunity for growth for both people.

Frequently, the mentor has more years of experience than the protégé, so there is substantial content knowledge being passed along in one direction. The younger person has value to add as well because he or she is from a different generation and can help the mentor understand how actions are being interpreted by others.

### **Non-Directional**

Networking is rarely directional in nature. It is two people who have become interested in getting to know each other for purposes of expanding their network of acquaintances. The conversations take the form of “getting to know you,” where substantial background information is shared. Also, these meetings center on who the other person knows.

Good networking practices can expand the reach of both people exponentially. It does take time to nurture a network of friends, but the reward is that both parties gain far more exposure. One tip about effective networking is to grab onto a person who is highly into the technique. That one person can open dozens of doors for you that would otherwise not be available.

Using the LinkedIn system is an excellent way to increase your network, especially if you use the “Groups” function to reach people who share your views and interests.

### **Using Both Simultaneously**

I have been lucky to have several people in my life who look to me as a mentor but who also bolster my network by introducing me to their friends. Likewise, I introduce these people to folks in my network who I believe can benefit from knowing them. This ever-expanding circle of acquaintances and knowledge sharing is a most rewarding combination.

Several of the people who have been introduced through networking have become close enough to consider me a mentor. That is why I believe the two practices are synergistic.

### **Conclusion**

Both mentoring and networking can be significant enhancements to the life and career of any professional. While these two techniques have different purposes, using them in tandem leads to the most rapid progress.

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