

## Mastering Mentoring 14 Leveraging Referrals

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



A key benefit of mentoring is the ability to generate referrals that can be leveraged in both directions. While the primary benefit in mentoring is imparting new skills and knowledge from the mentor to the protégé, the ability to tap into the existing networks is extremely beneficial for each person.

### Benefits to the Protégé

Normally the protégé is younger and has established fewer contacts than the mentor. The ability to have a solid introduction and endorsement from the mentor allows the protégé to expand his or her network exponentially.

When you consider that each new contact has the ability to introduce the protégé to his or her own network, you can appreciate the geometrical nature of this networking phenomenon. It is incumbent on the protégé to follow up with each new contact and make a great impression, but the head start by having a solid endorsement from the mentor cannot be overstated.

The only caveat here is to not become so excited about the growing network that it crowds out some of the vital work that is going on at the same time. Just like any other good thing, too much of it can become a problem.

### Benefits to the Mentor

The reverse phenomenon is just as valuable to the mentor. Assuming the protégé is younger, the referral gives the mentor a chance to network with a different generation. The blessing is that the mentor can test whether some of his or her ideas are getting stale in terms of how the next generation thinks and acts.

The ability to consider shaping one's methods to remain more relevant as time goes on is very helpful. The mentor should be aware of this source of information and be alert to capture the benefits. It is part of the learning process that has great value for the mentor.

Additionally, the protégé can suggest contacts that will give mentors a fresh look at how they are being perceived in their own organization that is pretty hard to get through other channels. If people are starting to bad-mouth the mentor for a decision or action taken, then there is an easy way to find out about it.

If trust has been compromised, the mentor now has a way to pinpoint the cause and take corrective action before more damage is done. That benefit can be truly golden in some situations; it can literally save a career from ruin.

## **Conclusion**

The ability to make referrals benefits both parties in a mentoring relationship. Seek to use this advantage, but do apply it with some moderation and wisdom for the best impact.

*Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals, Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online, Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind, and Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.*