

Mastering Mentoring 17 Expand Networks

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



It is important for each participant in a mentoring relationship to seek to expand the networks of the other person. Do not make the mistake of picturing the relationship as a one-on-one situation.

Each person knows numerous other people who might be helpful to the other. Spend some time going over your particular network of friends and associates. Sit with the other party and go over your list to identify

which people might be most helpful.

Make introductions

Once you have put a priority on the various individuals, take the opportunity to make some introductions. I usually use email for these brief introductions. Since I operate mostly as a mentor due to my many years of leading, I write to my friends about the protégé I am working with and give enough background so that person can relate to why I think they should meet.

I copy the protégé on the note so that each person has the address of the other. Usually, they both respond and figure out when and how they can meet. I back off and let nature take its course.

Include influential people whom you follow but have not met

I also introduce my protégé to the authors I follow in social networking. There are several people whom I monitor and converse with on LinkedIn and other media networks. I leave it up to the protégé to subscribe to that person's material or not.

Pursue the reverse situation as well

I also seek to find out who the protégé knows and ask for introductions. The process works well in both directions. The only precaution is to watch the volume of network contacts you are trying to manage at one time. If you find that the networking effort takes up so much time and energy that your overall balance is impacted, then you

should check your priorities. It is easy to get so excited with meeting new people that you forget some other duties or put them on the back burner.

Conclusion

We are all seeking to expand our networks so we gain the advantage of broader reach and new ideas to pursue. The mentor/protégé relationship is built on mutual trust and respect, so both parties are in a position to be incredibly helpful as a super-networker.

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