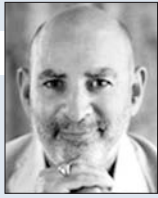


## Mentoring Leaders

What makes an effective mentor?



by Howard M. Guttman

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, people have gone to mentors for counseling and guidance. *Socrates* was mentor to *Plato*. *Julius Caesar* mentored *Marc Antony*. *Ralph Waldo Emerson* served as an inspiration to *Henry David Thoreau*.

In business, mentors have likewise had a dramatic influence on talent.

**In executive coaching, the mentor plays a critical role** by offering advice, lending moral support, observing, providing feedback on progress, smoothing the way when the road gets rough, and providing forward thrust as *coachees* move toward their Intention.

**Having the right person in this role is vital**; so, in our coaching assignments we ensure that mentors meet specific criteria. Whether you are a manager who is arranging coaching for one of your staff, a leader who is considering serving as a mentor, or a candidate for coaching, you should seek these same traits in a mentor.

**A mentor needs to be someone**: whom the coachee trusts and respects; with whom the coachee is comfortable; who is in a position to observe the coachee's on-the-job behavior consistently; who doesn't hold back and will not hesitate to give coachees candid feedback; and who has their best interests and success at heart.

When I first meet with a coachee, the mentor is present. The three of us discuss *observations* or *aspirations* that led to the coaching. Together, we project *what success will look like*. We either ask, *What new behaviors will replace old, dysfunctional ones?* or *What new capabilities do you want to possess at the end of the coaching experience?* We then select colleagues from whom we'll solicit *data* on the coachee's behaviors and *suggestions* for improving performance.

As the coach, I form questions to ask these colleagues and summarize the information that they give me and feed it back to the coachee. The mentor is present when I give feedback to the coachee, so that he or she has a *complete picture of what needs to be achieved*. The three of us then develop a plan to

either replace the behaviors in question or develop the needed capabilities.

Finally, we agree on a schedule of phone calls and visits to track progress.

One key role of the mentor is *shadow coach*. Since I'm present only at scheduled intervals, I have limited time to observe the coachee and provide real-time feedback. In my absence, the mentor acts as another set of eyes and ears, pointing out both progress and setbacks. In some cases, the mentor can provide suggestions for dealing with setbacks in real time; at other times, all the mentor can do is ensure that the issue is addressed in our next three-way phone call or face-to-face meeting.

As an executive coach, I've met several mentors who stand out because they added so much value:

- One executive required constant prodding to take action, and his first reaction was to make excuses for his inertia. When his boss, an excellent mentor, saw this, she would say, "It seems like you are still playing out the same game." Her feedback was timely, specific, and *focused on corrective action*.

- One coachee often *alienated coworkers* by his aggressive style. The first time I sat down with him and his mentor, he began to defend his behavior. His mentor countered with, "The way you're reacting to this feedback is the same way you behave with others. You believe that you need to *justify your behavior*, so you explain yourself rather than capture their point of view. Why is that?" She asked one provocative question after another until he stopped talking and started listening.

- When her company made an acquisition in Asia, a marketing executive realized that she needed to dial up her ability to *work cross-culturally*. She asked a VP who had worked abroad for years to serve as her mentor. He zeroed in on two capabilities that she needed to develop: *the ability to give feedback diplomatically* and *the ability to influence*. Through one-on-one *advice and practice sessions*, the executive learned to give feedback without it becoming *feedattack* and to get buy-in by raising questions.

I know a mentor is doing great when I deliver feedback and the coachee responds, "I know. *I've already talked about that with my mentor*," or when I check in and the coachee says, "My mentor suggested that you and I discuss . . ." LE

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**ACTION:** Become an effective mentor of others.

## Six Old Rules

Break them to lead out.



by Jill Flynn, Kathryn Heath and Mary Davis Holt

WHAT MOST THREATENS THE STRENGTH of your leadership pipeline may be a scarcity of senior-level women. To move into executive roles, women need to adjust their behavior, tell themselves a *new story*, and break *six old rules*:

**1. Focusing on others (instead, take center stage):** Many women focus too much of their attention on other people's needs—leaving little time and energy to focus on their career goals.

**2. Seeking approval (instead, proceed until apprehended):** Women need to retain their *core strength of collaboration* while acting decisively to make things happen. They need to *stop asking for permission* and *start putting forward big ideas* and campaigning for key roles.

**3. Being modest (instead, project personal power):** Many women are ambivalent about *projecting power* (*modesty* and *self-deprecation* come more naturally). *Some even act apologetic for success*—as if *it doesn't suit them* or *they don't deserve it*. To exude confidence, women need to hone their non-verbal messaging—stance, eye contact, tone of voice, and facial expressions—and receive credit.

**4. Working harder (instead, be politically savvy):** For their work to pay off in advancement, women need to be *politically savvy*, which is about *building relationships, achieving consensus, and networking*—things women excel at. They need to create a platform, develop a point of view, line up sponsors and a coalition—*every time their goals change*.

**5. Playing it safe (instead, play to win):** Women need to get out of their comfort zones, be bold, take risks, and make themselves visible by *taking the lead on high-stakes projects* and *bringing in new business* to build their credibility.

**6. It is all or nothing (instead, have a both/and perspective):** Avoiding black-and-white thinking, remaining flexible, and *learning to deal with ambiguity* help women establish *leadership credibility*. LE

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**ACTION:** Break these old rules and lead out.