

3 pieces of advice for successful office mentorships

by Team Ceridian on January 13, 2014



There's a growing sentiment in human resource circles that mentorship can have a profound effect on [employee retention and productivity](#).

By pairing employees with workplace leaders who can help them develop their professional skills, organizations can benefit both parties. The mentors often enjoy the chance to impart wisdom to younger, less experienced members of the workforce, and the mentees benefit because they get additional learning

on the job.

That leaves one question, though – how exactly should mentor-mentee partnerships be formed? Should HR offices make it a point to force pairings between employees that they think would be a good match? Or instead, should workers take it upon themselves to pair up as they see fit, with the mentors taking the lead?

According to Forbes, there's a growing tide of support for a new strategy – newer employees [can take matters into their own hands](#) and find mentors. Entering a new workplace, surrounded by unfamiliar people and practices, can be difficult, but Lisa Quast argues that finding a mentor is easier than you think. Quast, a career coach with experience as a Fortune 500 executive, believes that people should take initiative when they first enter a workplace. If you want to have a mentor, the first step is simple – set up a meeting.

"Once you've identified a potential mentor, ask to meet and discuss a possible mentoring relationship," Quast advises. "Asking for mentoring is an important step to make certain you're both clear on the terms. This meeting should take place somewhere that is mutually comfortable and where you can speak in confidence."

Asking for such a meeting might sound intimidating to inexperienced employees, but it's really not so bad. It's just an informal conversation – worst-case scenario, the person says no, and best-case, the meeting leads to a long-lasting professional relationship. There's nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Here are three more tidbits of advice on establishing relationships based on mentorship.

Think outside your cubicle

Great mentors can be found in a variety of places. Employees should be creative about where they look to find leadership figures – the best person for the job might not be across the desk from you, or down the hall, or even in the same department. It depends on the people's personalities and the specific skills that mentees are trying to develop.

Clarify your needs

When working to establish a mentorship, it's important for employees to spell out clearly what they're looking for. What are they expecting from the partnership? What skills or intangible traits are they looking to gain? By establishing goals from the start, workers ensure that they don't waste time focusing on the wrong idea.

Be clear and honest

Workers must be frank with their mentors. What type of time commitment and emotional investment are they expecting? It's best not only to define these parameters from the start, but to check up regularly and make sure they're constantly being met. Mentors and mentees need to be honest with each other throughout the ongoing process.

