

CAREER SUCCESS: BECOME A MENTOR

Lisa Quast

Even though the economy has recently shown small signs of improvement, it still appears that a full, global economic recovery will take several years. That means more people are competing for fewer jobs – so what can a woman do to improve her chances of career success? Become a mentor! Why? Because becoming a mentor could actually boost your career. Here's how to mentor your way to success.



MENTORING PROGRAMS

Career mentoring programs can help both mentor and mentee, according to an article by *Fortune* senior writer Anne Fisher. According to the article, Sun Microsystems compared the career progress of approximately 1,000 employees over a 5-year period and found:

- Both mentors and mentees were approximately 20 percent more likely to get a raise than people who did not participate in a mentoring program.
- Twenty-five percent of mentees and 28 percent of mentors received a raise, versus only 5 percent of managers who were not mentors.
- Employees who received mentoring were promoted five times more often than people who didn't have mentors.
- Mentors were six times more likely to have been promoted to a higher-level job.

Not only can mentoring help your career, it's one of the greatest gifts you can give another person—and like most gifts, the more you give, the more you can get.

WHY BECOME A CAREER MENTOR

- **You will better understand the business:** "My mentee helped me see issues in the company that I didn't know existed."
- **You will better understand how people perceive you:** "I was able to see the perception others held of me, through the eyes of my mentee."
- **You will create a larger network:** "By helping others I've also created a network of allies I can rely upon when I need help."
- **You will help solve issues:** "I've been able to step out of my own shoes and help my mentees see things from other perspectives. This, in turn, has helped me in resolving issues within my own department."
- **You will gain personal satisfaction:** "It's such a wonderful feeling to help another person succeed!"


HOW TO BECOME A CAREER MENTOR

- **Look around for women with potential for career success:** Amazing women can be found in a variety of places, including your workplace, church groups, nonprofit organizations such as the YWCA and Dress for Success, and community groups.
- **Offer your career expertise:** Once you've identified someone, sit down and discuss your offer to become a mentor.
- **Discuss career expectations:** Outline the expectations your mentee has of you as well as the expectations you have of your mentee.
- **Agree on details:** This should include how much time you'll be available for your mentee, when and where you'll hold discussions, the need for confidentiality, career areas where you can help, etc.
- **Begin mentoring:** Topics that can be discussed during mentoring sessions are as varied as the people themselves. Discussions usually focus on areas of the highest priority to the mentee, such as: defining career aspirations, goals and objectives; overcoming career issues/hurdles; dealing with difficult people; and other keys to career success.
- **Ask the right questions:** Instead of telling your mentee what to do, use your own experience, successes and failures to help her learn, and ask the kinds of questions that allow her to explore her situation. For example, try saying "What do you think are some ways you could ..." instead of "You need to do this in order to ..."
- **Provide networking opportunities:** Introduce your mentee to key people so she can build her list of contacts.

For more information on starting a workplace mentoring program, including a free downloadable mentoring guide, visit www.wing2wingproject.com.

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Lisa Quast is the founder and President of Career Woman, Inc., and the mentoring resource Wing to Wing Women's Mentoring Project. She is also an award-winning author of the book, *Your Career, Your Way!*, and a professional speaker. She draws on her steady, 20-year climb through the business world – from the lowest rung of the career ladder, to executive positions at multi-billion dollar global companies – to help women achieve their career dreams. Lisa is a frequent contributor of articles to a variety of publications on the topic of career development including *HR Now*, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and *Working Woman*.