

## A Career Strategy with a Big Payoff

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### *Mentors Educate, Encourage and Offer Positive Reinforcement*



Mentors are often an **underused resource** inside many firms.

Why?

So many young lawyers are either too shy to seek one out, or they don't know how to.

But, the effort it takes to **find the right mentor** can lead to big pay offs. Considering they are masters at their crafts, mentors can educate in a way that is sometimes better than anything you may receive inside a classroom. Mentors can help you navigate the political culture of the law firm. They can shield you from saboteurs and show you how to tap into competition. **You will gain knowledge, understanding, and expertise** under the watchful eye of a mentor.

Finding a mentor is not as difficult as it may seem. But, it does take time. Here are two mentor-seeking strategies to get you started.

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## 1. Look within the firm.

Many firms offer mentoring programs. If yours doesn't, make a list of people you'd like to have as your mentor. Include people who have the job you'd like to have and people who know what you'd like - and *need* - to learn.

## 2. Look within the industry.

If, let's say, you're returning to work after time away, or just starting out, look for someone within the industry itself who can guide you. Look for that person in trade magazines and at industry conventions. Be sure to make a list of your prospects.

Once you've identified a person whom you know would make an **ideal mentor**, it's time to reach out and make contact. You should:

- **Contact the prospect** by letter, e-mail, phone, or in-person to arrange a meeting.
- **Let the potential mentor know about your background.** Send your bio and other pertinent material before your meeting.
- **Make a pitch.** Make the prospect feel as if you'd be worth his or her time. But, remember that mentoring is a two-way street, so you must be able to explain how your apprenticeship will benefit him or her.
- **Write a thank you note** after the meeting.
- **Don't take it personally if the prospect turns you down.** Mentoring is a time-intensive commitment and many professionals regretfully decline a protege. Pump yourself back up and start the process all over again.

Once you've found a mentor, don't take him or her for granted. Learn all you can. Listen to his or her advice and then **put that advice into action!**

Remember, your mentor will want you to succeed, too!

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