

## [Young Lawyers: How Can You Get the Most from Mentoring?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on February 13th, 2014

As you know, I am posting some thoughts on mentoring, since I believe it is a valuable tool that has gone by the wayside in many law firms.

Some time ago I did a mentoring program for a group of junior associates. During the program I was asked:

1. How can you attract the attention of a mentor without damaging your image within the firm by appearing that you are needy and desperate for career help?
2. How do you find a mentor when no one has a shingle outside their door that says "Mentor available"?
3. What is the best way to develop a meaningful mentoring relationship?

### **My Thoughts on Mentoring from Mentees' Perspective**

Many lawyers are not well suited to be mentors. So if you get to choose your mentor, determine who would be a good one. I have always had more than one mentor. I may have a mentor for substantive legal work, a different mentor for client development and a different mentor for life questions.

Most lawyers who are senior to you frankly love to talk about themselves and their successes. So I think you can attract the attention of a mentor without damaging your image by how you ask the question. "When you were at my stage in your career and... came up, what did you do?" "I know you became very successful with..., I would love to hear how you did it."

I also recommend you have some ideas of your own so you might say: "I am dealing with...I have given thought to what to do and I think I want to... What do you think of my approach?"

Mentors actually do have signs, but they are not on the door. Good mentors are generally interested in people and show it. They are generally outgoing. They love to teach. They take time to explain things.

There is a very interesting 1993 Study referenced in *In the Blink of an Eye: Estimates of Teacher Effectiveness from a 24-second Thin-Slice of Behavior*. Researchers had a group of students look at professors teaching for six seconds with no sound and then rate the professors.

The researchers were fairly surprised that the ratings almost matched those of students who had been in the classes all semester. If students can tell in six seconds with no sound who the better professors are then I know you can tell who would be the best mentors.

I think the best way for a mentee to develop a meaningful mentoring relationship is to have the fire in the belly to be the best he or she can be. [Seth Godin](#) wrote about this idea recently in a blog titled: [On the hook](#). In the blog he said:

But mostly, it works because the person with a mentor has a responsibility to stand up and actually get moving. The only way to repay your mentor is by showing the guts it takes to grow and to matter.

During my career I loved to mentor young lawyers who were striving to learn and become a better lawyer. So, convey you have the desire to be coached and get feedback and take interest in the mentor as a person as well as a lawyer. Learn his or her spouse's name, children's names, where the children go to school and so forth.

Mentors have made a big difference in my career and they will in your career also. But, as Seth Godin says you have the responsibility to stand up and actually get moving.

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