

Effective mentors and sponsors



A mentor or sponsor is someone you can depend on for help and advice. You learn from them and benefit from their generosity and guidance. But you need to remember that the price of having an effective mentor or sponsor is an obligation to pay that forward, according to an opinion piece published in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*.

The fundamental skill you need to develop to create an effective “kitchen cabinet” of mentors and sponsors is networking, the article says. Once you’ve met someone with whom you have made a connection, you should nurture that connection like the precious resource it is.

“Not every person in your network will become a mentor or sponsor; far from it. But by tending these relationships carefully, you’ll find that mentors and sponsors emerge organically, and, perhaps most satisfying of all, you’ll realise when you can assume that role for someone else,” explains Geraldine McGinty, MD, MBA, of the Department of Radiology, Weill Cornell Medicine (New York, NY), author of the article.

In addition, many organisations now have formal mentoring programmes. You’d be foolish not to avail yourself of such programmes if they are offered, says the author, who narrates her own personal experience to illustrate her point.

“Although I have always had supportive mentors and active sponsors, I didn’t really recognise the importance of those relationships until later in my career. I’m delighted that my alma mater now has a robust mentoring culture, but when I was a student, the thought that one would approach the august professors for career advice was unthinkable. Each mentoring and sponsoring experience has taught me valuable lessons,” says Dr. McGinty.

It’s important to remember that mentoring and sponsoring require a time commitment and effort. These activities are not typically rewarded, even though their value is recognised.

“Be grateful and know that your performance reflects not just on you but also on your sponsor,” the author points out. “Think about ways in which you can pay your mentor’s effort both forward and back.”

Mentors are not friends. That’s what friends are for. Friends can be mentors, but the latter should be viewed as largely professional relationships. Maintaining appropriate boundaries, the author says, makes for clearer communication and avoids any uncomfortable moments. The fact that a mentoring relationship might go awry only underscores the importance of not relying on one person but assembling that diverse kitchen cabinet, she adds.

Having a diverse group of mentors and sponsors does not mean you abdicate your own decision-making capability. As Dr. McGinty points out: “When you know what you’re being offered is not right for you, it’s important not to feel as if you are obliged to accept it just to please your adviser.”

Source: [Journal of the American College of Radiology](#)

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Published on : Thu, 14 Sep 2017