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# Recruiting Effective Mentors

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Recruiting mentors is really quite simple and positive. I have often sought out mentors for myself in the past with great success. Many are in fact honored by the request to help others. I often think of a question with which I need some direction or information. Then I find someone who would be considered an expert in that area. It simply takes a phone call and time to set some meeting dates.

When trying to begin a program, most companies start small (usually 10 - 20 mentors). One company that I have worked with started with four and then it became 21 the following year as the word got out. Word of mouth is and has always been the best form of advertising. So, in beginning anything new, “how you do something” is as important, if not more important than “what you do”.

Consider carefully how you will go about recruiting the best possible mentors at the outset. Design the language that you will use. It is as important as the mentoring process. Plan what size of program you will need to start. Guarantee success of the program before you begin.

This article outlines three questions that mentors need answered before they can commit to a program:



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1. Why Choose Me?
2. How Much Time Is Involved?
3. Why Is This Important?

### 1. Why did you choose me?

Mentors need to know why they are being invited to be part of the Mentor Leadership Program. How did you come to pick me? Specifically, they need to know:

1. How they can be useful or contribute to a mentoring partner's development, and
2. What will be expected of them.

Provide specifics. For example, if the invitation says, “Paul, you have solid background in the areas that others want to learn.”

It’s not as personal as this: “Paul, your years of experience as a manager have given you valuable insights that mentoring partners, who are seeking a management/entrepreneurial track, would find very valuable.”

If a generic invite is sent to potential mentors to participate, it may not be possible to address a specific quality for each potential mentor.

However, the general request can say something like this: “You're being asked to participate because you have valuable experience in leadership, communication skills, and networking—skills that many of the people who desire mentors are seeking in career development.”



## 2. How much time and commitment is involved?

For most of us, when we are asked to do something, we immediately think, “What will be involved in terms of my time or how will this impact or intrude on the rest of my life?” Mentors have the same concerns. In addition, the busiest people often make the best mentors. They often have excellent time management skills and they are very cautious about engaging in anything that doesn’t match their own priorities for the use of their time. Since there is so much misinformation about mentoring, these quality recruits most likely have an idea in mind of the time commitment. And, that idea is likely to be inaccurate.

Addressing this issue head-on enables the removal of the imagined time dilemma at the earliest possible moment and gives the mentor an opportunity to see that the commitment is clear and limited. There needs to be a clear beginning and end to the program. Then the program needs to be assessed and re-started.

One way of expressing this is to say, “We recognize you are busy, so this Mentor Leadership Program<sup>1</sup> is very precise about the limited commitment involved. You would be expected to meet with your mentoring partner no more than once every other week for one hour or so, and the relationship would last for no more than 9-12 months.”

This time commitment may change from one company to another. However, at the outset, set the limits and be clear about the start-stop time of the program, how often you will meet as a minimum, and how long these meetings will be.

## 3. Why should this be important to me?

(WIIFM Principle. What is in it for me?)

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<sup>1</sup> Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. Kitchener, ON. CA. 2006.



Mentors gain from mentoring, a fact that's not highlighted nearly enough. Mentors don't usually consider what they'll get out of corporate mentoring because they've been led to believe that mentoring is about selflessly helping another person.

This is why it's important to point out the benefits to the mentors.<sup>2</sup> Repeated studies on mentoring and our own experience at Peer Mentor.net supports the data that mentors gain just as much from mentoring as their mentoring partners.

Here are some examples:

- The mentor builds a relationship with a mentoring partner from another part of the company; the insights the mentor acquires from learning about this other part of the company could be helpful when dealing with other people in that area.
- The mentor gains a strong sense of personal accomplishment and satisfaction in seeing how his or her assistance has helped the mentoring partner grow in significant ways.
- The mentor can apply the freshly-honed mentoring skills to his or her own staff.
- The mentor will likely learn new skills and insights from the mentoring partner; this is especially true when pairs are from different disciplines or departments within the organization.
- The mentor gains an ally within the organization (this is a mutual benefit).

Sometimes you simply need to just start a program with a small number to guarantee success of the program. Both the mentors and partners will do the talking. The following year, augment the program by recruiting more vigorously. Do not try to grow too quickly.

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<sup>2</sup> Benefits of Mentoring. Article. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. Kitchener, ON. CA. 2006.





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**I've learned that people will forget  
what you said, and what you did;  
but, people will never forget  
how you made them feel.**

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