

# Diverse Perspectives on Mentorship

Selected by Roger Neugebauer

## Do:

- build a cadre of people you can turn to for advice when you need it.
- nurture relationships with people whose perspectives you respect.
- think of mentoring as both a long-term and short-term arrangement.

## Don't:

- assume that because you are successful or experienced in your field that you don't need a mentor.
- rely on one person to help guide you in your career.
- expect to receive mentoring without providing anything in return.

— Amy Gallo, business consultant, from “Demystifying Mentoring,” HBR Blog Network

## Live Role Models

“When a young person, even a gifted one, grows up without proximate living

examples of what she may aspire to become — whether lawyer, scientist, artist, or leader in any realm — her goal remains abstract. Such models as appear in books or on the news, however inspiring or revered, are ultimately too remote to be real, let alone influential. But a role model in the flesh provides more than inspiration; his or her very existence is confirmation of possibilities one may have every reason to doubt, saying, ‘Yes, someone like me can do this.’”

— Sonia Sotomayor,  
Associate Justice of the Supreme Court

*“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”*

Steven Spielberg

## Teach Them Kindly

“Teach them the quiet words of kindness, to live beyond themselves. Urge them toward excellence, drive them toward gentleness, pull them deep into yourself, pull them upward toward

manhood, but softly like an angel arranging clouds. Let your spirit move through them softly.”

— Pat Conroy,  
author of *The Prince of Tides*

## Three Main Benefits of Being Mentored in Business

1. Mentors open doors. A good mentor will introduce you to the right people to accelerate your business objectives.
  2. Mentors are great coaches. Instead of ‘giving advice,’ mentors encourage and coach, giving you an outside perspective and fresh eyes to a problem or challenge.
  3. Mentors hold you accountable. Instead of ‘telling you what to do,’ mentors help you set key objectives and then hold you accountable to executing against them.
- Amy Errett, business professor, writing in *Wharton Blog Network*

## The Importance of Role Models

“You never stop needing role models. The Bannisters [first to break the four-minute mile barrier] and the superstars in every other field keep right on holding role models in front of their eyes

long after they've become role models themselves. They study them, copy them, compete with them, and even try to surpass them. . . . What better way to measure yourself, to feel good about yourself, and to achieve than trying to be like people whom you admire."

— *Harvey Mackay, CEO and author of Swim with the Sharks*

*"Mentoring is a brain to pick,  
an ear to listen,  
and a push in the  
right direction."*

John C. Crosby

## Asking Questions

"There's a reason why many people feel most loved and cared for in the therapist's or counselor's office: few people ask us questions as well as they do, with the interest that they do. We should consider de-professionalizing that task, though, and restore it to the context of friendship and mentorship where it originally belonged."

— *Matthew Lee Anderson, theological scholar*

## Offering Advice

"Your job of offering correction is to help people look at themselves and take responsibility for their own improvement. Provide support and praise them when they improve. Encourage others to ask for your guidance. Get involved when others ask. Listen, pay attention, and show the same sincerity and cooperation you expect from them. Make your point simply and directly. Make sure that you both are talking about the same subject. Restate your opinion and be done with it."

— *David Viscott, psychiatrist and author of Taking Care of Business*

*"Example is not the  
main thing in influencing others.  
It is the only thing."*

Albert Schweitzer

## Mentoring as Community Building

"Mentoring brings us together — across generation, class, and often race — in a manner that forces us to acknowledge our interdependence, to appreciate, in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words, that 'we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny.' In this way, mentoring enables us to participate in the essential but unfinished drama of reinventing community, while reaffirming that there is an important role for each of us in it."

— *Marc Freedman, CEO and founder of Encore.org*

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

Maya Angelou

## Make the Most of Strengths

"To identify a person's strengths, first ask, 'What was the best day at work you've had in the past three months?' Find out what the person was doing and why he enjoyed it so much. Remember: A strength is not merely something you are good at. In fact, it might be something you are not good at yet. It might be just a predilection,

something you find so intrinsically satisfying that you look forward to doing it again and getting better at it over time. This question will prompt your employee to start thinking about his interests and abilities from this perspective. . . .

"Great managers . . . know that their job is not to arm each employee with a dispassionately accurate understanding of the limits of her strengths and the liabilities of her weaknesses, but to reinforce her self-assurance. That's why great managers focus on strengths. When a person succeeds, the great manager doesn't praise her hard work. Even if there is some exaggeration in the statement, he tells her that she succeeds because she has become good at deploying her specific strengths. This, the manager knows, will strengthen the employee's self-assurance and make her more optimistic and more resilient in the face of the challenges to come."

— *Marcus Buckingham, business consultant writing in HBR's On Managing People*

*"A mentor is  
someone who allows you to see  
the hope inside yourself."*

Oprah Winfrey

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