

Tips for  
mentors

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## Are you meant to mentor Five attributes of best-in-class mentors

By Lonnie Pacelli

**W**hether for personal or professional reasons, having a mentor to turn to for advice and counsel is a very effective means of transforming knowledge into wisdom. Knowledge + Experience = Wisdom.

For mentoring relationships to work well, several items are important:

- The mentor should not have a direct reporting relationship with the mentoree. The mentoree can feel free to speak about issues, which may be plaguing him or her without fear of retribution from a boss.
- The mentor must want to be a mentor. Mentoring is an incredibly important responsibility that is likely over and above any other existing responsibilities. If the leader doesn't want to be a mentor, he or she is going to view the time spent mentoring as a nuisance.
- The mentoree should have a desire for a mentor. The mentoree needs to see the value in the relationship and have a desire to benefit from the relationship; otherwise both parties will just go through the motions until their time is over.

Be a best-in-class mentor by zeroing in on these five attributes:

**1. Be available for your mentoree** – You need to define how much time you are able to spend in a mentoring relationship and commit the time to do it. If you're just too busy to mentor, don't do it.


**2. Make listening a priority** – A mentor who listens will understand the struggles and issues a mentoree experiences and can better help him or her with a solution. The best listening mentor assumes little when talking with the mentoree; they let the mentorees communicate their struggles and issues, then target what is most important. Just as important, a listening mentor builds trust with the mentoree.

**3. Keep confidences** – Any particulars about the mentoring relationship are between the mentor and the mentoree, period. As a mentor, assume that everything about the relationship is off limits for others and ensure that if anything about the relationship is found out it is because the mentoree has divulged it, not you as the mentor.

**4. Tell it straight** – Mentoring relationships where the mentor and mentoree can have direct and constructive discussions are highly beneficial to the mentoree's growth. Telling it straight means discussions are constructive, respectful and specific. Just remember to build trust in the relationship first by being a good listener and keeping confidences.

**5. Have the courage to stop if the relationship isn't working** – If you're having a difficult time connecting on common interests, if meetings with the mentoree feel like more of an obligation vs. something you look forward to, or if mentorees don't pursue meeting, it may be time to call it quits. Some relationships just aren't meant to be, so accept it and move on. Do look at the reasons the relationship didn't work out and look for patterns you as a mentor should address that maybe you can work on with your mentor.

Put these five attributes into action to help you be a best-in-class mentor. Do this well and you give something priceless to your mentoree: wisdom.



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The Chamber and Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW) are collaborating on a new project called BoardConnect SE. One of the program's primary goals is to connect nonprofits with community members from small to midsize businesses and corporations. For more information, visit [www.BoardConnect.org](http://www.BoardConnect.org).



**Lonnie Pacelli** is the creator of Leading on the Edge™ Action Guides and author of "The Project Management Advisor – 18 Major Project Screw-Ups and How to Cut Them Off at the Pass."