

Who's Who

Refer to this cheat sheet on connecting with mentors and sponsors and how to approach them. There are many out there that you may not realize you have a connection with! Leverage this worksheet on finding out where to hunt for them both online and offline!

This is a cheat sheet which outlines three key roles in any organization / company / institution which can help you accelerate. Usually you don't find all three in one person, however if you have an eye for "who's who" at your organization even "who's who" in other companies externally, this should get you thinking about areas you can directly ask their help in. Think about those you know now, those you have known, those you have yet to meet – on or offline.

Immediately after reading this cheat sheet, please write down whoever comes to mind who fits one of these three roles and whom you will contact this week.

A Connection (easiest to find)	A Mentor	A Sponsor
-Will tell you of an opening in another company, department etc.; knows of unpublished opportunities.	-Can educate you on areas of the business.	-Paints a big picture strategy for the firm. Discusses areas of risk, competitors.
-Passes on invites to upcoming events you should attend.	-Offers their advice on how they would handle your problem.	-Gives insight into the type of people they look for to grow the company.
-Introduces or refers you on to someone that can potentially open a door.	-Assesses your strengths and areas you should work on.	-Can talk about how things get done in the company. i.e. "the system".

As an example, let's take a sponsor who holds a high position in a company. If you wanted to learn what kind of people they like to hire you can ask something like:

"I'd really love to hear your thoughts on the kind of culture and people you look for."

Now, these are just my words; you will have your own way of approaching this question. Asking their opinion or a compelling question makes you memorable. Now if you ran into him or her again in the hallway or on an elevator, do you think they'll remember you? Absolutely. This then opens up another opportunity to ask something else when you run into them again, maybe:

- a meet for coffee.
- five minutes of their time in a month from now.
- consent to drop them a line in e-mail asking for an introduction to someone.

- an invitation to an upcoming event you learned of.

This keeps you top of mind and creates meaningful connections. You're not in anyone's face. You're slowly navigating towards what you need to advance your career, keeping your needs up front. Is this sticking your neck out a little more than the norm? Yes, but when you think about how you had nothing to lose before you took action compared to all the possibilities once you do, you start to see things a bit differently.

You're not going anywhere lying under the radar.

These are subtle ways to get you out there in a bigger way. Often sponsors are reachable at company events, speaker panels and even online.

Where to hunt for a mentor

The truth is, they're not that hard to find once you open yourself up to it. Most people would love to be asked for their advice to support someone else. But if they aren't, that's ok too.

Tip: Let them know the time commitment. It can be one e-mail / private message you send every few months or every year - just a check-in to be able to seek their guidance, not a full-time thing which will take more of their time. The reality is, people love to share their experience and advice. However, time constraints may limit that, so be up front about how much of their time you are really asking.

Externally

Retirees: former executives, former directors, even professors.

Family of friends. Always keep an ear out for someone with a business expertise.

Women who lead events, meetups or groups.

Personal growth meetups.

Internally

Note: mentors are not always your direct manager. It could be someone else. That's ok too.

Someone you are impressed with at the company.

Someone you can job shadow.

Virtually:

LinkedIn Discussions. To give you an idea of the power of online discussions and the feedback you can get from strangers (who are safe to tap into), I once posted a topic on LinkedIn called "Getting to the Point." This was a discussion I started on whether professionals know how to talk to managers and "get to the point" enough? It took off like wildfire, with lots of people chiming in on their personal opinions. This could easily be a discussion that you started on whatever topic you choose! This is a perfect example of how conversations start online naturally!

- Attending webinars.
- Attending tele-seminars. They are often recorded for a later more convenient time.

- Private Groups you can join.
- Forums and reading people's opinions are all considered indirect mentoring with styles you can 'pick up'.

Reach out to Referral Sources, Centers of Influence with a subject line of: "Hi, I'm just thinking of you" or "I thought of you." People typically don't ignore genuineness.