Ask Debby: I Need a Mentor



Question

I have been encouraged to get a mentor, will not having a mentor limit my career growth and what can I do about it?

Answer

I often hear people lamenting that they would only be more successful if they could find the right mentor.

Rather than hoping for the right person to show you the way, here are 4 things you can focus on in lieu of a mentor.

1. **Get value from your peers.**

Even though a mentor is not necessary to success does not mean that you should ignore the opportunity of turning to your peers for guidance. In fact, I advise joining a peer-mentoring group. “Getting feedback from not just one, but many people, is much more valuable, and leads to better solutions and ideas. The dialogue in these groups consistently impresses me. And the business outcomes I see from promotions to career changes to overcoming major career challenges are substantial.”

2. **Become a better networker.**

Building a network is not an intuitive skill for most people. It is also an iterative process; you are never finished, and the way you develop your network will change as your career progresses. When you begin networking, you are still figuring out your interests and career goals. Because of this, you must cast as large a net as possible among the people you can contact-family friends, school alumni and more. Instead of over networking and wasting your time on superficial contacts, ensure you are engaging in an authentic and helpful way with them both online and in person.

3. **Create a life strategy.**

When coaching people on their careers, I focus on six elements: passion, lifestyle, values, economics, skill and demand. Thinking strategically about each of these elements lets you create a framework for a solid career map. Having a well-considered career plan will help you navigate your way to your professional goals.”

4. **Attract a sponsor.**

Even more valuable than a traditional mentor is a sponsor-someone who will actively promote you and your work. These are your champions, your biggest fans, who don’t hesitate to tell others how great you are and vouch for you