



## Choosing a Mentor

When looking for a mentor we tend to focus on finding someone who is in a high position and hope that their sponsorship will accelerate our career progress. Certainly finding someone with the relevant experience and influence can be important to a successful mentoring relationship. But not all experienced and influential people make good mentors, so it is important to look closely at the person as well as the position. Here are some important characteristics to look out for.

### **RESPECT**

Choose someone you respect. Look for achievements that impress you, but more importantly seek out behaviours and ways of working that you would like to emulate.

### **LISTENING & QUESTIONING SKILLS**

A positive mentoring experience should enable you to learn and grow. Avoid someone who continually offers their own solutions or pontificates on their own experiences. Look for someone who will take the time to listen, get to know you and encourage you to find your own solutions.

### **CHALLENGE**

Seek out a mentor who will challenge you. It may be best to avoid people you already know and have a comfortable relationship with, as this is unlikely to stretch you. It is often a good idea to look for someone who is different to you in some significant way, such as an extrovert if you are a shy person. In doing this you avoid reinforcing your own weaknesses and seek out new strengths.

### **COMMITMENT**

You need a mentor who is committed to the process and who you can trust to dedicate the time and attention the relationship demands. A good indicator is the potential mentor's track record in people development.

### **HONESTY**

Whilst you may be looking for encouragement from your mentor, you also require someone who can be brutally honest when necessary. Remember this relationship is about growth, not cheerleading.

### **SENSE OF HUMOUR**

It is important to partner with someone who has a solid sense of perspective and a good sense of humour. Personal development work can feel hard, so it is important that your mentor is someone with whom you can retain perspective and share a laugh.