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mentor or coach can significantly improve your chances of success.

**Marc Staut** • Jul. 12, 2023



*By Marc Staut.*

The road to success is never easy, but having a mentor or a coach can make the journey much smoother. Many of the most well-known and respected leaders today will tell you they had role models along the way who helped them get to where they are now. Yet many managing partners and IT leaders in accounting firms say they didn't have anyone to learn from when they started out. That's a problem the next generation of leaders shouldn't have to face. So let's talk about the benefits of mentorship and why accounting firms need to make it a part of their succession planning.

# What is mentorship?

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your perspective, make connections and better understand the profession and where it's headed.

Many accounting firms realize the importance of mentorship in building their talent pipeline. They're making it a part of their succession planning by identifying high-potential staff and providing them with the training, coaching and exposure they need to become future leaders. This benefits the individuals being mentored and the firm as a whole. By developing talent throughout your career, you can create a more skilled and engaged workforce that can better handle future challenges.

## How to find a mentor

So how do you find a good mentor? Here are a few key things to look for.

- **They “get” you.** A mentor who understands who you are and your goals is critical for a successful mentorship. A good mentor will take the time to get to know you, your strengths and weaknesses, and provide tailored advice and guidance to help you reach your professional objectives. This kind of one-on-one interaction can be invaluable in helping you progress and achieve your goals.
- **They're respected in their field.** Look for someone who is respected in their field, has achieved success and can help you navigate career ups and downs. People who've gained respect from their peers have connections and a social network they can plug you into.
- **They have relevant real-world experience.** There's value in having role models in other industries, but a true mentor should have real-world experience that applies to your career. They can provide more helpful guidance if they've done what you're doing. They should also be familiar with the profession and understand current trends and best practices.
- **They're willing to challenge you.** The best way to learn is by pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone—which means having someone who will challenge

you and ensure you don't become complacent. A good mentor should be able to

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showed them what NOT to do. While that situation isn't ideal, don't discount the value of having an anti-role model as an example of the kind of leader you don't want to be. Think of the person who lacks trust in their team members, overworks people, avoids having crucial conversations, places blame or micromanages. Sometimes, you can develop your effective leadership style simply by being the opposite of the poor role models you've dealt with in your career.

Mentorship is essential to career development and something that all accounting firms should prioritize. Whether you're just starting or looking to take your career to the next level, having a mentor or coach can significantly improve your chances of success. So take the time to find someone who can help guide you along the way and be willing to invest in the development of others. Remember, mentorship is not just about developing skills—it's about developing leaders.

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