

IT TAKES TWO

HRM asked eight leaders, executives and company heads to share with us what makes the mentoring relationship a special one.

PETER WILSON AM, CHAIRMAN, AHRI



For any mentoring relationship to work, there has to be trust and confidentiality. There also has to be mutual recognition the mentor has something to teach the mentee, and the mentee needs to be genuine in their interest to learn. A good mentor is an 80/20 listener – they should listen more than they speak, and ask considered questions aimed at guiding the mentee.

One thing I hear people often ask is, “How do I find a mentor if my workplace doesn’t have a formal program?”. It’s as simple as looking at the people around you. Who can you learn from? Approach that person, tell them you admire a number of things they have done and ask if they are free for a coffee. Once you’ve talked through some things, let them know you plan to put their insights into action, and ask to follow-up at a later date. There is so much generosity of spirit from leaders in organisations, that nine times out of 10 your request won’t be turned down.

When I was first starting out, I wish I had known the value of mentoring and what it means for modern leadership development. I have had eight key mentors in my life, and my parents were key influences in different ways. I am always looking for people to learn from because mentoring is a lifelong pursuit.

JEAN MARTIN, TALENT SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT, CEB



Although the majority of growth and development is done on the job, person-to-person learning is just as important.

When I first started in my career, I wish I had known that you can achieve more through collaboration than you can alone. There were so many opportunities I missed where I could have used others' experiences and knowledge to get the very best from myself, or the entire team.

Mentors have been essential to my career progression and have provided a holistic approach to my work-life balance. A mentor providing perspective on how to manage yourself through a series of challenges, or development opportunities, has a value that can't be replicated.

I have learned the most from leaders who have helped me understand where my strengths are and how to apply them to current business challenges. And just as important, they have helped me understand how to balance my energy so that I don't burn out.

As a mentor, one of the most important pieces of advice that I give mentees is always design your career around your natural passions. You need to ask yourself: If all these choices appeared as 'Help Wanted' advertisements in the newspaper, which one would I naturally gravitate towards?

TRACEY MCCOSKER, CEO, NSW HEALTH PATHOLOGY



The best mentoring relationships rely on both parties taking it seriously, wanting to make that connection and coming prepared. The mentee should come with considered questions, be prepared

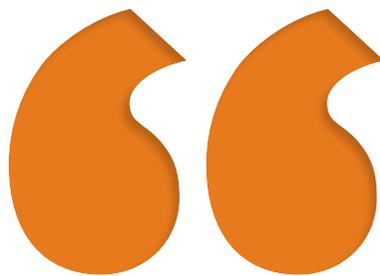
to listen, and ready to learn and actively engage with their mentor – you have to be in the conversation to get the most out of it.

With that in mind, mentors need to focus on the needs of the mentee and not just find every opportunity to talk about themselves. A mentee might come into the relationship thinking that the mentor is all-knowing, but understanding that your mentor has been there and struggled helps them to open up. It's useful for a mentor to say, 'I've been where you've been, so let's talk about it'.

Often a mentee might already know the answers but needs someone to talk it through, test the answers and then tweak them. It helps to talk with someone who has your best interest at heart, and it helps build confidence.

It's a privilege to be a mentee, but also a mentor. I love to hear people talk and make suggestions to them and see those ah-ha moments in the people you mentor. It's a real chance for you to learn from each other if you go in with the right attitude and aim to make the most of it.





“YOU NEED TO KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR REPUTATION WITH COLLEAGUES AND HAVE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THAT. I LEARNED THAT GRADUALLY, BY WATCHING OTHER PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS.”

PAUL WAPPETT, CEO, OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

SALLY LOANE, CEO, FINANCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA



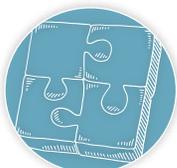
When I look back to my earlier career, I realise I had some critical mentors. Michelle Grattan is one who stands out from my time as a journalist 25 years ago. I learned from her through osmosis: by watching and listening and learning how she went about her job.

When I reached a more executive position in Coca-Cola Amatil, I became a mentor for some of the younger women at the company. The great value for people with high potential is that transfer of wisdom and experience.

In the past, I evaluated the leadership styles of people I worked with and admired. My time in media meant I was around mentors who made courageous decisions in the face of powerful influences. When I worked in a more corporate setting, I learned about business from people who had great ideas and weren't afraid to put them into action. Now, I talk with and learn from my peers: how they balance the real work of running a company, but also [deal with] a large amount of regulation and scrutiny, which is very challenging.

If anyone is offered the chance to have a mentor or be a mentor, grab it with both hands because you will learn so much. If you don't get that chance in an official capacity, look at someone you admire and watch how they work. Take the opportunity, and if it's not offered, ask for it.

JESSICA MAY, CEO, ENABLED EMPLOYMENT



In my experience, you have to go through both good and bad managers to know what you want. Both types have helped me understand that it's all about what you invest in your staff.

A great manager taught me that you should hang on to different ways of thinking. Another senior manager led by example, bringing her daughter to work, or working remotely if she needed to. She demonstrated that's how everyone should work, and I've implemented that here.

On difficult days, to have someone there who understands

what you are going through is great. You need people like that in your life for when it gets hard.

ED COOLEY, EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER – TALENT & PLANNING, PEOPLE EXPERIENCE, SUNCORP



For any mentor-mentee relationship to work, there has to be honesty and openness from both sides. It sounds counterintuitive, but a good mentor has to be a bit vulnerable. They have to be comfortable sharing experiences that

might not have been positive, because openness builds trust and confidence in you as a mentor. Especially since some of the challenges you have faced may be experienced by your mentee.

We use an external partner to select each mentor-mentee pair, and a lot of thought goes into that selection. Sometimes the matches look odd at first. For example, I was partnered with a young guy in IT and we had no idea who each other was. We both went in with apprehension, but it ended up being brilliant.

As a mentor or mentee, look for those unexpected pairings. Some of my best experiences have been with people I don't normally encounter. It's a challenge at first to see what you can give them, but it's rewarding as well.

PAUL WAPPETT, CEO, OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

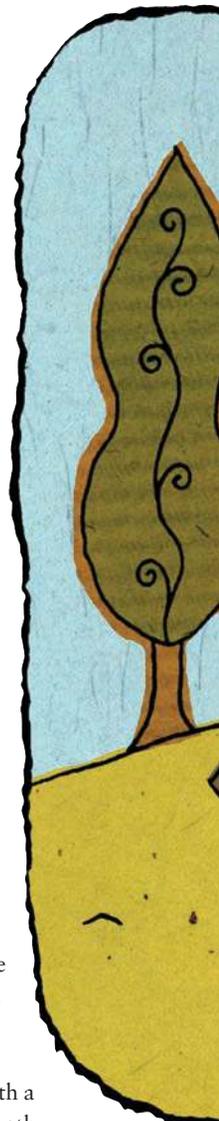


My most productive mentoring relationships have a couple of things at their heart. First, trust each other, because if you're going to provide constructive feedback, you need to know they are willing to be vulnerable. Secondly, you have to work on real issues and not just on the tasks

associated with them, but focus on the human dynamics involved.

On the part of the mentee, there has to be a commitment to try different things and stretch yourself. There is no point in a person just validating what you do.

Competence isn't enough. When you're young and idealistic you have this notion that all I need is to do a good job and people will notice. I learned it's important to manage your personal brand. You





need to know the importance of your reputation with colleagues and have an active role in that. I learned that gradually by watching other people in different environments.

When you're a manager, particularly in senior roles, you're always on. There is no downtime because the moment you let your guard down is the moment your personal brand gets shot. Everyone is always watching, and it has a big impact on culture and performance, and the way others behave.

SHAWN CALLAHAN, CEO, ANECDOTE



People need to share experiences with each other, not just talk about facts.

You definitely learn the most from your failures, especially when you've done dumb things. For example, I once organised a workshop at the Department of Defence in

Adelaide, and we thought it would be a great idea to fly in that morning. One thing after another fell over, and we arrived after the starting time. I learned that it's the small things that make the difference. 🗨️

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JEAN MARTIN, TALENT SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT, CEB

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