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Benefiting From a Mentor Relationship in Five Easy Steps. Joseph Oddo,
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Goose Creek, SC – October 2, 2021 - In business, and in life, finding a great mentor is something everyone needs to balance the chaos. In business it is useful in exploring the unknowns. To have the opportunity to hear firsthand from others who may have been on your path is empowering.

It doesn't matter whether you're an entrepreneur or a business leader, getting advice from someone that's already been in the same situation is priceless. Sometimes the answers of whether you're performing well, or if your business is growing the way it should be are not always clear. A mentor can help identify the hazy answers, clarify the questions, sharpen your focus on the core issues, and guide you toward a successful long-term outcome.

After engaging a mentor, success will be measured in terms of how empowered you are, how inspired you feel, and how clear you are about the path going forward. All that, according to mentor Valeria Alarcón should help keep you from being overwhelmed.

Finding an actual mentor is easier if you are willing to do your research. One productive source is MicroMentor, a free mentor service that does a good job taking you through the right questions to figure out why you need a mentor, then details what you can expect from the experience.

Consider these tips in preparing for your first conversation with the person you think might be the ideal mentor for you. Whether they are a business broker in South Carolina or a librarian in Virginia, it is up to you to maximize the benefit of having a mentor. So:

Don't be afraid to ask questions

That is the point. Dancing around certain issues will not produce the right results. You must be prepared to ask what you intended to ask so that you can get to a satisfying answer. Of course, this may take some courage to ask the important questions can really cement the relationship. But if you are in business, then you are already used to stepping out of the comfort zone, and plowing forward with questions. If you are unprepared to ask your questions, then the interaction is spoiled and you won't get sufficient answers. If that happens then you just move on.

Don't waste time

Being efficient with your own time is one thing. Wasting someone else's time is extremely disrespectful. That doesn't mean that you should rush. It does mean being prepared, and creating a good atmosphere, or quiet enough setting if meeting in person. Set up a room where you can talk clearly, and always have spare time before the call. Alarcón emphasizes working together holistically and comprehensively in a way that people, planet and profit are part of the equation. She meets with her mentees every 2 – 3 weeks via Zoom.

She adds, "Folks are engaged. They are keeping themselves accountable, and reaching out when they need help."

Be prepared about both the topic and the person

Do your homework in advance of the conversation. If you are discussing business topics with the mentor, be aware of how they approach those topics. A five-minute online search is a poor way to try to start a conversation. Ideally, you want to do as much research as you can beforehand. If time allows, read their articles and books. The more you know about your future mentor the easier it'll be for you to connect about the subjects that you need to discuss.

Figure out what to talk about besides the initial topics

Creating a meaningful conversation is ideally the best outcome for both you and your potential mentor. Investing in conversation skills is a smart move. Make your questions challenging. In other words, don't just ask simple questions that Google could immediately answer. Focus on talking about related subjects, underlying causes, related issues, unforeseen possibilities. You're on the right track if you make the conversation immersive.

Create a dynamic interaction

This means to always try to give as much as you take. It's a nuanced approach to an already serious matter. Simply asking your questions and then walking away is never enough. Try to add something to the conversation yourself. Something that the mentor could latch on to so that there will be an actual interaction, instead of something like an interview.

Mentors need support too. They are equally empowered by their mentees and share in their success. Valeria Alarcón states, "When we work together, we win together."

Always be polite while you're deep in a conversation. Even if you have to end it early, be as professional as possible. Most important of all, don't derail from the

subject at hand, especially if you've already settled what you're going to talk about.

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