

Mentoring 101: How to Find One, How to Be One

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I. INTRODUCTION

In September 2006, The National Law Journal reported that “mentoring programs in recent years have become a common strategy to woo would-be lawyers and to help acclimate new attorneys to large-firm life.”¹ However, despite the almost routine establishment of mentoring programs, associates (especially women) “continue to leave firms in droves.”² In 2005, associate attrition rates had risen as high as 78% by the time attorneys were in their fifth year of practice.³ This was an increase from the 53.4% attrition reported in 2003.⁴ An analysis of five years of attrition rates revealed that attrition of women was nearly always higher than for men in the same class and time frame. And, by 2005, the NALP data found that 81% of minority female associates had left their law firms within five years of being hired.⁵ Despite the increase in mentoring programs among law firms, the associate attrition rate appears to be inching upwards. While there is clearly more to mentoring relationships than their potential effect on associate attrition rates, many are asking: Can and does mentoring work?

Mentoring is a practice that has been around for many years and has evolved over time. Various terms have emerged to describe mentoring-type relationships such as career coaching or counseling. Some attorneys may question whether the mentoring relationship has any place in today’s legal profession, especially when the internet has made information so readily accessible. However, if you talk with successful lawyers about their career path, they will inevitably tell you a story about a more senior attorney who helped them along the way – perhaps by providing words of wisdom, encouragement, or active support as well as key information concerning the internal dynamics and operation of their respective workplace. As noted by Lauren Rikleem in *Ending the Gauntlet Removing Barriers to Women’s Success in the Law*, “[i]t is impossible to overemphasize the importance of a strong mentoring relationship to a young lawyer’s career.”⁶

Whatever form a mentoring relationship takes or whatever you choose to call it, a mentoring relationship depends on one fundamental concept – learning. A mentoring-type relationship generally occurs when one person passes on knowledge to another. Lawyers have learned from one another since the beginning of the legal profession and regardless of the term used to describe the relationship between attorneys learning from

¹ Leigh Jones, *Mentoring Plans Failing Associates*, NAT’L L. J., Sept., 2006.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms: Executive Summary*, ABA Comm’n on Women in the Profession 9, available at <http://www.abanet.org/women/VisibleInvisibility-ExecSummary.pdf>.

⁶ LAUREN STILLER RIKLEEM, *ENDING THE GAUNTLET REMOVING BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S SUCCESS IN THE LAW* 105 (Thomson/Legalworks) (2006).

each other, such learning will continue to shape the future of the legal workplace and thus the legal profession. As such, the mentoring relationship is here to stay and the relationship should be shaped to maximize the benefits to the mentor and the mentee, which will also result in collateral benefits to the employer.

Mentoring has received considerable attention over the years in many fields beyond the law. If you google the term “mentor” or “mentoring,” you discover many articles describing mentoring relationships and advising the best way to be a mentor. This paper is not an all-inclusive analysis of the mentoring relationship. Rather, the goal is to provide a general overview on this complex and ever growing topic. This paper attempts to provide a basic understanding of the mentoring concept. To determine whether mentoring can or does work for you, this paper also outlines some of the potential benefits of mentoring relationships. Finally, this paper provides some guidance to attorneys seeking a mentor and to those serving as mentors on how to establish effective mentoring relationships. The end of this paper provides a list of general resources consulted in researching this topic that provides in-depth information about the facets of mentoring relationships and a reference list of mentoring programs implemented by some state and local bar associations.⁷

II. MENTORING – THE BASICS

The word “Mentor” can be traced back to Greek mythology, where Mentor was the trusted friend of Odysseus who was left in charge of the household while Odysseus was away fighting the Trojan War.⁸ The first recorded modern usage of the term “Mentor” can be traced back to a book that published in 1699.⁹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide.”¹⁰ Although we are no longer in ancient Greece and have come along way since 1699, a trusted counselor or guide is still someone that can be beneficial to each and every one of us as we develop our legal careers.

If you were to ask a group of attorneys what is a mentor and what they would expect from a mentor, you would get a myriad of answers. Numerous articles and books have been written on the subject, none of which appear to agree upon a common definition. At a fundamental level, a mentor is someone that passes on knowledge to another; someone that you can learn from, or someone that provides wisdom and guidance to another.

At the heart of the mentoring relationship is the concept of learning. Young attorneys usually seek a mentor to help learn how to be a successful lawyer or for advice

⁷ See Appendices A and B.

⁸ Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentor>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ See Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mentor>

on how to do well within the law firm or corporation. A more senior attorney typically hopes to impart some knowledge and provide some teaching of his or her skills. However, other situations also give rise to a mentoring relationship. For example, a senior associate seeking to redefine his practice area or develop a specific expertise may seek out a mentor to assist in that process. The attorney seeking to build client relationships or explore marketing opportunities may seek out a younger attorney to serve as a mentor regarding e-discovery issues. Regardless of the actual dynamic, each scenario revolves around the concept of learning and the passing of knowledge from one attorney to another.

The character of the mentoring relationship in the legal profession has changed over time. Senior attorneys may recall a time when law firms were smaller and more personal relationships were developed. Attorneys also may recall a time when young attorneys sat with a senior partner and went over draft briefs line by line to learn how to present a stronger, more effective argument. The changes within the legal profession have resulted in changes to the role of mentoring. As one commentator states, “With law schools becoming the standard route to the trade and the profession becoming more of a business, mentoring has taken a back seat to other concerns.”¹¹ Yet, the increasing complexities and demands within the legal profession compound the need for a mentor source for practical insights to successfully navigate the workplace.

In today’s legal profession, mentoring relationships can be formal or informal. Many large law firms and corporations have instituted formal mentoring programs to assist in the professional development of their younger attorneys. In addition to employer-instituted mentoring programs, a number of national, state, and local associations have set up mentoring programs designed to provide advice and assistance to developing lawyers.¹² Further, mentoring occurs informally in all professions, including the legal profession. Junior attorneys often seek out the advice of more experienced attorneys to share invaluable information and assist in their career development. For in-house counsel, the mentoring relationship may also involve senior business leaders and other in-house counsel. It is clear there are numerous types of relationships that fall within the purview of “mentoring” and there is more to the concept than a forced, formal relationship between a senior partner and a first-year associate.

III. MENTORING – WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

Many younger attorneys may be disillusioned by the concept of mentoring and feel it is simply a waste of time. Attorneys may feel that it is an antiquated concept that is no longer needed in today’s legal society. Younger attorneys, feeling the pressure of

¹¹ See, e.g., Kathryn Alfisi, *Mentoring Opportunities for Today's Lawyers*, WASHINGTON LAWYER, August 2006, available at http://www.dcbbar.org/for_lawyers/resources/publications/washington_lawyer/august_2006/mentor.cfm (discussing mentoring during history of the legal profession).

¹² See Appendix B: State Mentoring Program Models.

billable hours, may feel that time spent on such relationships would be better spent gaining additional billable hours. Coupling such pressures with a formal mentoring program, where the only contact that the young attorney has with a mentor is a rare lunch invitation or a five minute conversation in the hallway, adds to the view that mentoring is no longer relevant. However, there are benefits to mentors, mentees, and employers when the mentoring relationship is successful.

A. Functions of the Mentoring Relationship.

In her book, *The Lawyers Guide to Mentoring*, Abbott delineates two functions served by mentoring relationships as (1) career functions, and (2) psychosocial functions.¹³ The “career function operates by virtue of the mentor’s greater experience and more influential position in the organization” and the mentor helps the mentee “navigate and rise” through the organization.¹⁴ In contrast, psychosocial functions “deal with the protégé’s self-image and comfort in a professional role.”¹⁵

Within a “typical” mentoring relationship – where a young attorney is the mentee and the senior attorney is the mentor – the mentor can assist the mentee with her professional growth and development within the lawfirm or corporation. For example, the senior attorney can provide the younger attorney with challenging work assignments, help the younger attorney gain recognition, provide opportunities for the younger attorney to meet senior attorneys within the law firm, and provide feedback to the younger attorney. The senior attorney can assist the younger attorney in climbing the career ladder and becoming a more successful lawyer. This has been referred to as “navigational guidance.”¹⁶

In addition to the effect that a mentoring relationship may have on the growth and development of the younger attorney within the firm, a mentoring relationship can provide crucial counseling and boost the attorney’s overall confidence. In the more trusted mentor/mentee relationships, the younger attorney has an independent source to vet more intrapersonal career issues such as converting to reduced time, announcing a pregnancy, or concerns of possible discrimination as a result of gender. This more social function of a mentor/mentee relationship can form a reference critical to an attorney’s overall development.

Clearly, the benefits of the mentoring relationship to both the senior and junior attorney will depend upon the character of the specific mentoring relationship. Both attorneys can benefit from the relationship, but the dynamics between the two may add to or detract from those benefits. Further, the culture of the organization or law firm may

¹³ IDA O. ABBOTT, *THE LAWYERS GUIDE TO MENTORING*, 27-29 (2000).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 27.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 28.

¹⁶ RICKLEEN, *supra* note 7 at 106.

assist in shaping the mentoring relationship to maximize the benefits to the mentor, mentee, and the organization/law firm.

B. Mentoring and Women's Advancement.

While women constitute almost half of the associates in private law firms, in 2004, only 17% of law partners were women.¹⁷ One of the factors commonly associated with this under representation of women in the top positions within the legal profession is a lack of mentoring. "Women who are not mentored are in fact less likely to advance."¹⁸ Without mentoring, "female lawyers remain out of the loop of career development. They aren't adequately educated in the organization's unstated practices and politics. They aren't given enough challenging, high visibility assignments. They aren't included in social events that yield professional opportunities. And they aren't helped to acquire the legal and marketing skills that are central to advancement."¹⁹ As a result of this exclusion, the women who do not advance are more likely to leave their employer, which reduces the available pool of female mentors to young female attorneys.

Women need mentors. Without a mentor, a female attorney is less likely to advance. Thus, while young female attorneys may not believe in the concept of "mentoring," they need to be aware of the potential detrimental effects that a lack of a mentoring relationship may have on their legal careers.

C. Other Benefits of Mentoring.

An effective mentoring relationship can also benefit the employer in numerous other ways including the following.²⁰

Improved associate satisfaction and retention. Young attorneys who are not mentored may feel that they have been abandoned or that no one has an interest in them. The lack of a personal connection to their firms or other colleagues may make these attorneys more willing to change jobs for better pay. Attrition rates are estimated at 9.2% in the first year of employment, 26.5% in the second year, and 43% in the third year.²¹ It has been estimated that "[a]ttrition costs firms between \$200,000 and \$500,000 per associate, including lost revenues, lost training expenses, lost institutional knowledge,

¹⁷ *Visible Invisibility: Women of Color in Law Firms: Executive Summary*, *supra* note 5.

¹⁸ Deborah L. Rhode, ABA Comm'n on Women in the Profession, *The Unfinished Agenda: Women and the Legal Profession* 16 (2001) available at http://womenlaw.stanford.edu/aba.unfinished_agenda.pdf.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of the potential benefits of a mentoring relationship, see Abbott *supra* note 14 at 32-57.

²¹ Abbott, *supra* note 13, at 36 (citing NALP Foundation, *Keeping the Keepers Study*).

and replacement costs.”²²

On the other hand, mentoring may increase the young attorney’s loyalty to the firm or corporation. Mentors can show younger attorneys why they should stay with the firm and why they should consider the firm as a place to have a long-term career. As Abbott explains:

Through individual attention to associate development, mentoring complements formal training programs and creates an environment where coaching and learning are ongoing. The effect is to reinforce the firm’s commitment to professional development, which results in less turnover, which translates into a greater return on the firm’s investment in recruiting.²³

Thus, mentoring relationships can let young attorneys know that they are valued and that the law firm or corporation is invested in them. Young attorneys who receive attention and feel cared for may feel an increased loyalty to the firm and a desire to continue their professional development within that firm rather than some other law firm. As a result, the law firm may experience an increase in associate satisfaction and retention.

Improved quality and quantity of attorney work product. Mentoring can provide younger attorneys with practical training and opportunities. Mentors can assist mentees to obtain challenging work assignments, provide direction on how to complete such assignments, and provide meaningful feedback. Such assistance can benefit the firm by developing the mentee’s legal skills. Further, the mentee who wants to excel in the firm may work harder on more challenging assignments and seek additional assignments to increase her depth of experience and productivity.

Enhancing recruitment. With the familiarity and regular use of the internet in conjunction with business, attorneys and law students researching potential employers have access to internet chat rooms, on-line articles, and surveys conducted about law firms and corporations. Summer associates talk to junior associates and other summer associates (both past and present). As a result, both law students and potential lateral recruits have access to information about the law firm beyond that provided by the law firm itself. If mentoring, job satisfaction, or associate development is discussed by the various outlets of information, law students and lateral attorneys can find this information. Accordingly, if a law firm has a good associate training and development program – including strong mentoring – a potential recruit may look more favorably upon that law firm. Junior attorneys with good mentoring relationships will often look more favorably upon their law firm and recruit law students and other young attorneys.

²² Daniel D. Barnhizer, *Mentoring as Duty and Privilege*, 82 Mich. Bar J. 46, 46-47 (Jan. 2003).

²³ Abbott, *supra* note 13, at 36.

Assist in diversity initiatives. Mentoring can support a law firm or corporation's diversity initiatives by attracting and retaining minority and women attorneys. As with associate retention and satisfaction, minority and women attorneys who feel that they are valued within the law firm or company may feel an increased loyalty to her employer. Further, mentoring relationships that include different cultures and genders may also help to breakdown stereotypical views of minority and women attorneys, assist in breaking down social barriers, and help minority and women attorneys feel accepted.

Improved firm culture and reputation. Law firms and corporations work hard to create a firm culture and build a reputation. Mentors can help in passing on the culture and values of the firm to more junior attorneys who in turn, can pass the values and culture to new attorneys and summer associates. Junior attorneys who are mentored may also go on to become great mentors and thus, continue the task of building and reinforcing the law firm's culture, values, and reputation. As one commentator explains, "A firm that strives to build positive mentoring relationships with its junior attorneys will have a strong edge in attracting and retaining new associates. And associates who leave firms for in-house general counsel positions likewise will be more inclined to seek outside counsel with whom they have strong personal and professional relationships."²⁴

IV. MENTORING – HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Before beginning a mentoring relationship, decisions must be made which will ultimately shape your experiences. You must decide what are your goals for that relationship, what type of relationship you want to have, and, when permissible, you must choose with whom you will enter this association.

A. Choosing the Type of Relationship.

The threshold decision is whether to participate in a formal or informal mentoring partnership.²⁵ Formal mentoring is the most common type of mentoring relationship in the legal profession. Most firms have some type of formal program in place to facilitate the mentoring process. One of the benefits of having a formal program is the ease provided by its inherently structured nature. There is usually no guess work needed in choosing a partner; these programs simply assign the individual a partner. Unfortunately, the person with whom you are paired might not be the best fit given differences in personalities and/or dispositions. The relationship can also be dampened by the strict nature of such programs which often takes the creativity out of the entire process. Formal

²⁴ Barnhizer, *supra* note 22.

²⁵ See, e.g., Adele B. Lynn, *Mentoring Programs: Is there a Difference in Formal vs. Informal? at* <http://www.lynnleadership.com/articles.htm> (discussing ways to improve formal mentoring).

mentoring can be effective if the individuals involved do not rely merely on the program as handed down but inject their own experiences and interests into the relationship.

The most effective formal mentoring programs provide guidance to the mentor and confidential mechanisms for feedback by the mentee, including year end reviews by both mentor and mentee. Also, many formal programs build in reassignment processes to allow adjustments for mismatches without consequences to the mentee. Internal firm mentorship programs assist in retention and recruitment efforts. Lawyers who receive good mentoring are more likely to stay with a firm than those who do not. Additionally, the development of close bonds between new lawyers and experienced lawyers, as facilitated by the successful implementation of a mentoring program, is attractive to future lawyers.

In contrast, informal mentoring is much more spontaneous. Informal mentoring often occurs without either person realizing that it is happening. Informal mentoring seems to do a better job of facilitating the creativity of those involved. It also seems that the bond and trust which are necessary between mentor and mentee is formed faster in the informal setting than with more traditional formal programs. However, what makes such relationships innovative and different can also be their downfall. Sometimes informal mentoring relationships can lack direction and motivation. Still, if the parties involved recognize the need for some amount of structure, then such relationships can be transformed into valuable experiences.

B. Choosing the Right Person.

Choosing the right individual to undertake a mentoring relationship is the most important step in the entire process. Hopefully, regardless of the type of relationship, you will have some input in this decision. Before beginning the search for the right person, you should answer the following questions:

- What do you want to accomplish from this relationship?
- What is your motivation?
- What can you contribute to the relationship?
- What are your time or resource constraints?

Once you have answered these questions, you will be in a position to find the individual that matches this description. In the formal mentoring setting, selection may be a mere request or listing of choices. In the informal setting, you may have to thoughtfully explore your workplace and when you think you have found the right person, plan to spend some time to get to know the person before asking her to be your mentor.

C. Diversity.

Mentoring has been viewed as essential for all lawyers' career development and advancement. However, it is especially instrumental in helping young women and minority attorneys navigate a majority operated workplace. A study by the Minority Corporate Counsel Association found this to be especially true with younger minority attorneys, who often expect to be promoted solely on merit and easily forget that personal relationships and social involvement are major factors in promotion decisions.²⁶ A mentoring relationship provides insights into the true operational structure and politics of the workplace, but it also provides a means to break through remaining barriers to diverse attorneys. This study also found that minority mentees were more comfortable talking about race and diversity issues with minority mentors, even if such mentors were from different minority groups.²⁷

Unfortunately, due to the gap in the pipeline, often there are not enough minority partners available to act as mentors to every minority attorney who enters the workforce. Therefore, one step that firms and companies can take to support or supplement is to establish formal affinity groups which share common connections. This will provide the opportunity for minority attorneys to develop informal mentors. Additional options include encouraging minority attorneys to join minority bar associates and attend minority-focused legal conferences, which can also provide sources for informal mentors of the same race, gender, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation.

D. Time to Begin.

Arguably, law students can and should have a mentor, but clearly once you are embarking into the legal profession, you should have at least one mentor. The first activity that occurs should be the initial meeting. This should be a relatively candid meeting in which both parties establish their goals, logistics, and responsibilities. A decision should be made regarding the parameters of the relationship in both time and subject matter. If you do not know your mentor well, this can be awkward, but it is necessary for launching the relationship. Once the parameters of the mentoring relationship are established, the actual experience can begin.

E. How to Thrive.

Maintaining the relationship is the most challenging aspect of the entire experience. It seems that the number one killer of a great mentoring experience is time. One of the parties needs too much while the other has too little. Like all obstacles, the best way to overcome and move on is to anticipate the problem and face it. The mentor and mentee must be able to address such limitations for the relationship to survive. It

²⁶ *Mentoring Across Differences: A Guide to Cross-Gender and Cross-Race Mentoring*, Corporate Counsel Association, available at <http://www.mcca.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=document.showDocumentByYID&DocumentID=55&varuniqueuserid=92572117093>.

²⁷ *Id.*

may help to schedule meetings at different intervals throughout the relationship to monitor the status of the affiliation.²⁸ Continual nurturing and communication will surely help maintain the status quo. The key is to always focus on the goals, needs, and desires previously established by both parties, and attempt to reconnect on those issues. It may not always be easy, but it will always be rewarding.

F. Ending the Mentor Relationship.

Mentoring relationships can end for many reasons. Some are established with a defined end point while others may end simply because they have run their course. If the mentor/mentee relationship simply has lost energy or purpose, do not hesitate to formally end it so both parties can move on and not burdened with any awkwardness or by inefficient use of everyone's time. Regardless of the reason for the split, both parties should take the time to meet and review the accomplishments of the time spent together.

V. **BEING A MENTEE**

So, how do you become a great mentee? The first step is making the decision to enter a mentoring relationship. This may occur at different career points for different individuals, and you must find the time that is right for you. Next, you must determine what your needs are and find a mentor that fits those parameters. As noted earlier, this step is sometimes completed for you. Finally, you must find out how to make the mentoring relationship work. This will be the most difficult and most rewarding part of the entire experience.

A. When to Become a Mentee.

The traditional way of thinking about legal mentoring is that the mentor must be an experienced attorney and the mentee must be a new attorney. These conventional rules no longer apply. Rather, there are many points during an attorney's career in which having a mentor can be beneficial.

New Attorney. As all attorneys entering the workplace quickly discover, law school provides the intellectual tools to be attorneys, but it does not explain how to navigate the profession on a day-to-day basis. One of the simplest and most effective ways to do this is by finding and using a quality mentor.²⁹ Often, finding a mentor is the easy part because mentoring relationships are facilitated by firm formal mentoring programs. The real effort should be placed in the commitment and the mutual trust between the mentor and the mentee.

Experienced Attorney. In the past, it was unusual to see an experienced attorney seeking a mentor. However, with the recent movement in the legal profession to improve the quality of life for attorneys, there are several situations which warrant entering a

²⁸ *Managing a Mentoring Relationship*, Lawyers' Professional Indemnity Co., available at www.lawpro.ca, 23.

²⁹ Christopher J. Masoner, *Find and Use Your Mentor*, 75 J. KAN. B.A. 6 Feb. 2006.

mentoring relationship as a mentee later in a career. Any time there is a significant change in the life of an attorney, it is prudent to seek out another who has experienced a similar change. Whether it is work-related adjustments, such as changing jobs or making partner, or personal modifications, such as starting a family or going through a separation, finding someone to receive guidance from is extremely wise and often essential. Simply put, there is no longer an age restriction on having a mentor.

B. How to be a Great Mentee.

Some of the following recommendations were put forth for mentees after a recent study conducted by the Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA).³⁰ These recommendations apply to anyone interested in entering a mentoring relationship as a mentee.

1. *Focus on being an excellent lawyer* – If a potential mentee wants to find the best possible mentor, she must show that she is both competent and serious about being a lawyer. One cannot become an excellent lawyer simply by putting her head down and working hard. An excellent lawyer observes, listens, and participates in their environment to better understand the workplace culture. Establishing yourself as a good lawyer will set the stage for a productive mentor relationship.
2. *Approach mentoring strategically* – A mentee should develop a strategic plan to accomplish her mentoring goals. The first step is to decide on which development and career goals to become the focus of the mentoring relationship. Once these goals are set, a potential mentee should identify the best potential mentors to help her achieve these goals. This should include an expansive search for a mentor, including attorneys outside of your current work organization.
3. *Prioritize the Relationship* – Treat your mentor as a client, valuing his or her time. Do not cancel at the last minute. Prepare for your time with your mentor, collecting your questions and when you meet be focused and ready to interact (leave your Blackberry off).
4. *Be the best mentee you can be* - Being a great mentee is an ongoing process which requires work and dedication to the commitment you have made. Mentees should treat the mentoring relationship as they would any other aspect of their career development.

C. How Many Mentors.

No one has ever said that you can have only one mentor. In fact, it may prove beneficial to have many different types of mentors in your career. This selection and possible shifting process should be ongoing and last throughout your career. An example

³⁰ *Mentoring Across Differences: A Guide to Cross-Gender and Cross-Race Mentoring, supra note 26.*

of how to have many different types of mentors is described by Sandra Phillips, assistant general counsel at Pfizer, Inc.³¹ Phillips believes that mentoring can take place in five different dimensions, with several mentors fulfilling different roles.

These different facets of mentoring include the technical advisor (the person who helps you with the technical aspects of a job, from research and writing to presentation skills); the champion, who makes it his or her business to sing your praises to others and help you navigate the maze of your organization's internal politics; the navigator or strategic advisor, often someone outside your organization, who will help advise you over the course of your career; the personal mentor, who is a friend who knows you perhaps even better than you know yourself and can provide a perspective no one else can; and the en masse or peer-to-peer mentors whom one encounters in networking organizations.

D. Finding the Right Mentor(s).

As previously referenced, once a potential mentee has decided that it is the right time in her career for a mentor and has formulated her goals accordingly, she is in a position to seek a mentor or mentors. This process begins with identifying potential mentors, and an invaluable way to do this is through networking. This pool of potential mentors should include attorneys both inside and outside your workplace. It should also include both lawyers and non-lawyers.

After several potential mentors have been identified, you still need to select and begin the process of gaining knowledge about the mentor to establish definite suitability. Once you have decided that you would like to approach a particular individual about becoming your mentor, you must decide the best method of doing so. Whether you know the individual or need an introduction, it is important to be as prepared and specific regarding your goals for the relationship. Regardless of whether he or she ultimately accepts, be courteous and thank the individual for his or her consideration.

VI. BEING A MENTOR

Being a successful mentor can benefit a mentor's professional and personal development. If you include mentoring in your training or coaching of young attorneys, you can help support retention and build a cadre of smart, motivated junior attorneys who will be interested in staying at the firm.

In the article, "Establish a Reputation as Good Mentor," Kathleen Brady explains the benefits to a new partner of becoming a mentor:

As a new partner, additional responsibilities will require your immediate attention. There are many new things to learn. In addition to continuing to develop your legal skills, you will be expected to learn the

³¹ Lloyd M. Johnson, Jr., Sandra Phillips: *The Five Dimensions of Mentoring, Diversity & the Bar*, July/Aug 2005, available at <http://www.mcca.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.Viewpage&pageid=979>.

mechanics of leading a business enterprise. There are business plans to write, partner meetings to attend and marketing events to arrange.

By establishing yourself as a “go to” partner, you will ensure that you always have a cadre of smart, motivated associates at your disposal to service your clients while you master these new tasks. . . .

The best way to become the “go to” partner is to develop a reputation as a good mentor. . . .³²

The role of a mentor can “equate to reciprocal learning, recognition and respect of one’s peers, personal satisfaction, nurturing a bond of loyalty to a co-worker and the firm, a sense of giving back to the profession, new perspectives to established duties, and validation.”³³ Being a mentor is not some kind of sacrifice that senior attorneys need to make solely to help a junior attorney. Being a mentor can also help a senior attorney and there are self-serving reasons why a senior attorney should encourage mentoring relationships and make such relationships successful.

A. Myths of Being a Mentor.

Many successful attorneys may avoid becoming a mentor because of a number of concerns about the role of a mentor. For example, some attorneys believe that a mentoring relationship will take too much time. While mentoring is time consuming, the time invested in being a mentor can save you time down the road. As you mentor younger attorneys, you will feel more confident in delegating assignments, which will give you time for other projects. Your investment in your mentee also strengthens the overall work environment. And, by your efforts, you are investing in the development of a person and that alone is rewarding.

It is often suggested that only senior partners make good mentors. Junior partners can have as much, if not more, to offer than a senior partner. A more junior mentor may be able to recall more easily her handling of issues that are pertinent to the young attorney. The mentee also may be more comfortable confiding in a junior partner who may not seem as intimidating as a senior partner.

B. How to Become a Mentor.

To become a good mentor, analyze your mentors, and consider what kind of management style they displayed and why you considered them to be good or bad mentors. Take the best parts of each senior partner’s management and mentoring styles and try to incorporate those into your own style. Also, consider what abilities and skills you have to offer to a mentee and consider what attributes you would like to see in a mentee. You may prefer a mentee with a similar attitude and work ethic to you. Determine what you want out of the mentoring relationship and try to identify a mentee or a number of mentees that can help you while you can help them.

³² Kathleen Brady, *Establish a Reputation as Good Mentor: Become the 'Go To' Partner for Whom Every Associate Wants to Work*, 235 N.Y.L.J. S9 (col. 1), Feb. 2006.

³³ Mary H. Black, *Mentoring Legal Professionals*, 18 FEB. UTAH B.J. 45 (2005).

You should also take your role as a mentor seriously, make the time to be an effective mentor, and approach the mentoring relationship with a positive attitude. Remember that being a mentor is a privilege and that you have the opportunity to help shape a young attorney's legal career.

C. How to Mentor Younger Attorneys.

There is no one right way to mentor. The mentoring relationship is defined by the individual mentor and mentee who must work together to establish not only articulated goals, but a level of trust. As a mentor the primary charge should be to listen to what your mentee says and does not say. Then ask questions and listen more. Additional mechanisms for successful mentoring of younger attorneys include:

1. Draft a plan for the mentoring relationship to include goals and expectations of both the mentor and the mentee.
2. Conduct regular meetings to discuss the mentee's interests.
3. Discuss workload to ensure the mentee has quality work.
4. Discuss performance expectations including billable hour issues.
5. Identify performance problems and develop corrective action plans.
6. Provide opportunities to learn, be recognized, and increase the mentee's visibility within the organization. For example, introduce the mentee to clients and other lawyers within the firm, take the mentee to bar association meetings, and encourage the mentee to publish articles.³⁴

VII. CONCLUSION

Remember that the key to a successful mentoring relationship is learning. Whether you are serving as a mentor facilitating the practical education of a mentee, or you are a mentee working to gain insight and experience, the most important goal is to learn. If you begin with the ideas discussed in this paper and the sample of sources provided in the attached appendices, and add information gained through your own workplace environment, you will be on your way to becoming a part of a successful mentoring relationship and undoubtedly, a successful lawyer.

³⁴ See Comm'n on Racial & Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, Goal IX Newsletter vol. 6 no. 3 (Summer 2000) at <http://www.abanet.org/minorities/publications>; Brady, *supra* note 33.

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Appendix B: **State Mentoring Program Models**

Mentoring programs have been widely established by state bar associations and county bar associations. Often, state mentoring programs come in two varieties: mandatory or optional. Participation in such programs occurs pursuant to the type of program that a particular state offers. However, a unique alternative is beginning to become available and has been seen in at least one state.³⁵ This alternative is an internet-based program available to attorneys within that jurisdiction seeking assistance or consultation from their colleagues. Both mentors and mentees must agree to certain terms to become eligible to participate. Once an attorney signs up for the program as a mentor, they may be contacted by a mentee who picks them from a list of possible mentors. The parameters of the relationship, whether it be a one-time communication or an ongoing mentoring relationship, is determined by the preferences of both the mentor and the mentee.

Below is a list of websites to some of the state bar association mentoring programs:

Connecticut

- Optional
- www.ctbar.org/articleview/207

Georgia

- Mandatory
- www.gabar.org/programs/transition_into_law_practice_program

Idaho

- Optional, one year commitment
- www2.state.id.us/isb/gen/mentor.htm

Illinois

- Internet
- www.isba.org/mentorcenter

Indiana

- Optional
- www.inbar.org/content/Mentor/login.asp

Houston

- Optional
- www.hba.org/membership-mentor.html

Maryland

³⁵ Illinois' "MentorCenter" at www.isba.org/mentorcenter.

- Optional
- www.msba.org/sec_comm/mentor/mentor.asp

Massachusetts

- Optional, communication by telephone only
- www.massbar.org/for-attorneys/publications/lawyers-journal/2002/january

Missouri

- Optional, one year commitment
- <http://newsite.mobar.org>

New Orleans

- Optional, 6 month commitment
- www.neworleansbar.org/MentorProgram.html

New York

- Optional
- www.nysba.org (go to young lawyers section)

Oakland County, Michigan

- Optional, communication by phone only
- www.ocbar.org/benefits.htm

Ohio

- Optional, one year commitment
- www.sconet.state.oh.us/mentoring/about.asp

Oregon

- Optional, one year commitment
- www.osbar.org/nld/mentorprogram.html

Philadelphia

- Optional
- www.philadelphiabar.org

San Diego

- Optional
- www.sdcba.org/mentor_program

South Carolina

- Mandatory for last names A-F (pilot program), one year commitment
- www.sccourts.org/bar/pilotmentoringprogram.htm

St. Petersburg

- Optional
- www.stpetebar.com/?MentorProg

Vermont

- Optional
- www.vtbar.org/intus/cms/display-page.asp?pageID=195

Wisconsin

- Optional
- www.wisbar.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section+Programs&template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=36271