
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE THREE "Fs" OF MENTORING

According to Kathy Morris, Chief Training and Professional Development Officer at Sidley Austin LLP, finding mentors, fostering the mentor relationship and facilitating your career through mentoring make up the three "Fs" of mentoring. Speaking to a group of midlevel associates at the program, *Maximizing Mentoring Relationships: Enhancing Your Practice and Professional Reputation*, Morris advised attendees that with a little effort they can develop and use mentoring relationships to help them succeed in the workplace.

Finding a Mentor

Many work places offer formal mentor programs. These assigned mentor relationships may or may not be successful or may only serve only a limited purpose. Although it is important to welcome these relationships the key, says Morris, is to have more than one mentor as each serves a different purpose.

There are four types of mentors which make up a "mentor panel", says Morris:

- The loyal mentor, someone in your firm, often a partner who can guide you with your professional development;
- A peer mentor, a fellow associate, who can provide candid informal advice;
- A personal life mentor, a role model who has achieved the work/life balance goals you are striving for; and
- A civilian mentor, someone from outside the firm who can give you a fresh perspective.

When seeking out a mentor, many make the mistake of only looking to a direct supervisor or someone in the same department or practice area. It is important, notes Morris, to look beyond this group and seek mentors who are both like and different from you. Look to people who work on your floor, who are in the same affinity group, or on a committee with you. Then take it further, think outside the workplace: social events, CLE programs, bar association committees and alumni networks are all great places to find mentors.

Often where you least expect it is where you will find your mentor, says Morris. So push yourself, get out and mingle.

Fostering the Mentor Relationship

Too often mentor relationships fail because the mentee is reluctant to play an active role and thinks it is the mentor's job to move the relationship forward. Rather, says Morris, mentoring is a two-way exchange. You play a huge part in the success of a mentor relationship. Be communicative. Take the time to speak to your mentor. You may find that he or she is relieved you sought out their counsel. But remember, advised Morris, don't communicate only when you want something.

Be appreciative of your mentor's time. Senior lawyers can feel as overworked as junior lawyers and it is important to express your gratitude for the time the mentor is taking to guide you. In consideration of your mentor's time, suggests Morris, offer to talk during an elevator ride down to the first floor or a walk around the block to get coffee. Conversations don't nec-

essarily have to be scheduled or take place across a desk.

It is also important to learn to be a good mentee, advises Morris. Keep requests simple and ask for small favors. Have key issues ready to discuss when you meet with the mentor. Be willing to be guided by your mentor. Listen, really listen to your mentor. You may not always like what you hear but you still need to receive the advice and guidance graciously, says Morris, or the mentor relationship will break down. Finally, always remember, says Morris, to respect the confidentiality of the relationship.

Facilitating Your Career

Early in your career mentors can help you learn your way around the office, answer basic questions and assist with your early professional development. Later, as you progress in your career, your mentor's role transforms as well.

No longer, says Morris, is the role of the mentor to let you know where the bathrooms are; rather, the mentor's role should evolve to being an ally and advocate. By the time you are a mid-level associate your mentor should become your champion; someone who helps you gain visibility and opens up leadership and promotional opportunities. He or she should encourage your independence but still remain available to help in times of trouble.

The goal of a successful mentor relationship, says Morris, is to help you, help promote you and guide you now and for years to come no matter where you work.

NEW YORK
CITY BAR

PERIODICALS