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# Five factors to consider when choosing a mentor

In the September issue of BIC, I outlined five considerations to help you determine if you need a mentor. This month, I'll discuss five factors to consider when choosing a mentor.

John C. Maxwell, leadership expert, author and speaker says, "One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination." This quote leads us to the first of five factors to consider when choosing a mentor.

- Choose a mentor who has been there and done that. As Dan Gheesling, public speaker, author, coach, and reality TV star puts it, "Learn from someone who walks the walk." Gheesling goes on to say, "You are learning from someone who has already arrived at where you want to be. They know exactly what it takes to get there." They have the experience and can guide you in a direction that can help you minimize mistakes and move forward to achieve your goals at a quicker pace.

- Choose a mentor who is a great listener. John C. Crosby, a former politician from the state of Massachusetts, points out, "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction." A good mentor should be a sounding board, someone who asks questions, poses challenges, and demonstrates patience in spending time with you while listening and getting to know and understand your goals, personality, strengths, areas for development

and aspirations.

- Choose a mentor who complements you. Karen Burns, author of "The Amazing Adventures of Working Girl: Real-Life Career Advice You Can Actually Use," suggests that it's important for you to define your personality and communication style. Then consider what kind of mentor would best complement you, because you want someone who is going to complement your style, not clash with it. Burns mentions, "You may choose someone who's your opposite (an extrovert to your introvert, for example), or someone in whom you see yourself (and vice versa)." Steven Spielberg relates, "The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."

- Choose a mentor who is honest and upfront. When choosing a mentor, you want someone who is supportive, communicative, motivating, inspiring and challenging. You want a mentor who tells you the truth when you need to hear it. In "Ten Steps to Finding Your Mentor," written by Pat Williams with Jim Denney for the NIH Training Center, they indicate, "It is also a good sign if your mentor is candid and open about his or her own life. Anyone who has accomplished great things has made mistakes along the way and will share those experiences freely so that you can learn from them."

- Choose a mentor who challenges you. Benjamin Disraeli, for-

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mer British prime minister, states, "The greatest good you can do for another is not just share your riches but to reveal to him his own." To move forward in your career goals, you need to experience challenges. Debby Carreau, author and CEO/founder of Inspired HR, expresses, "... It's important that anyone seeking out a mentor understand the difference between some who deliberately teaches mentees by challenging their stances when it counts instead of dismissing their ideas routinely."

A few final thoughts: When deciding on the person to choose, consider what is important to you and what you want to achieve both professionally and personally. Then begin to assess your network and look for individuals who are role models, as well as epitomize the skills, leadership, character and level of success you would like to acquire. Keep in mind one size does not fit all. Based on what you are looking for in a mentoring relationship, you may discover you will need several mentors, one for each of the different facets of your life.

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