

8 qualities of strong mentors

By [Naphtali Hoff](#) on October 20th, 2015

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” ~ John C. Crosby

One of the most important roles of a leader is to provide workplace supervision. It is our duty to manage others in their work – particularly those who are newer and/or less experienced — and ensure that they perform their duties correctly and on schedule. Without such supervision, it is generally assumed that workers will slack and underperform.

But if we want our people to grow in their positions and achieve optimal job satisfaction and retention then we need to also provide mentorship. (A 2013 Vestrics study found that employee-retention rates in their sample group of mentors and mentees climbed 69% for the mentors and 72% for the mentees over a seven-year period.)

Mentorship is a relationship that is created between an experienced professional and a less experienced mentee or protege. Its primary purpose is to build a support system that allows for the natural exchange of ideas, a forum for constructive advice, and a recipe for success.



"Mentors must be able
to analyze
what needs to get done
and then help
the mentee create
an action plan for success."

Naphtali Hoff

Superior mentors possess most if not all of the following qualities:

1. **Skilled and knowledgeable.** Good mentors possess current and relevant knowledge, expertise, and/or skills.
2. **Trust builder.** The mentor establishes a high level of trust. He/she indicates that their relationship is about building capacity and offering support, not “zapping” the mentee for poor decisions or performances.
3. **Active listener.** A strong mentor knows how to listen. This includes using eyes and body posture to convey interest and attention. More about strong listening skills can be found [here](#).
4. **Strong analyst.** Mentors must be able to analyze what needs to get done and then help the mentee create an action plan for success. They also need to be able to see how the worker’s abilities align with the task and help him/her optimize his/her strengths towards that end.
5. **Honest, clear communicator.** It is important for mentors to be super clear about what the job entails as well as what they are observing. Be honest and specific about what is or is not working and use measurable criteria to assess performance.
6. **Committed and reliable.** Mentees should know that they can trust their mentor to be there for them and help them through until the very end. On a related note, good mentors are sincerely interested in helping someone else without any “official” reward. They do it because they genuinely want to see someone else succeed.
7. **Role model.** Ideally, the mentor should be everything that the mentee needs to become, as an employee and as a person. Realize that the mentee will be studying you closely and will draw deeply from your actions and values.
8. **Cheerleader.** This is perhaps the most important quality of all. Mentors need to be a source of inspiration for their mentees, especially when the pressure to perform mounts. Guidance coupled with a healthy dose of encouragement can be the magic formula to ensure a mentee’s short and long-term success.



Naphtali Hoff ([@impactfulcoach](#)) became an executive coach and consultant following a 15 year career as an educator and school administrator. Read his blog at impactfulcoaching.com/blog.