

6 Characteristics the Best Mentors Have in Common

By Sam Nayman

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If your career is a vehicle, then great mentors are your GPS. Mentors help you locate your destination and determine the most efficient route. They help you steer clear of danger and develop the confidence to embark on the journey. They show you how to enjoy the ride and navigate uncharted territory—all the while helpfully getting you back on track when you lose your way.

But where, you're probably asking, do I find a "great mentor?" Great mentors are everywhere and in most every organization. Below are a few ways to test if you've found one of the good ones. The best mentors, those most able to guide you on your journey, possess the six characteristics below:

1st Characteristic: Admirable

Purpose: Help you locate your destination and chart a route.

Test: Do you admire this person and his/her work? Does his/her career align with your interests?

2nd Characteristic: Reflective

Purpose: Help you determine the most efficient route and steer clear of danger.

Test: Has this person reflected on and examined how his or her career has unfolded? Can they enhance your level of self-awareness through their own?

3rd Characteristic: Respectful

Purpose: Help you develop the confidence to embark on this journey and persevere.

Test: Do you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts, questions, and fears, or do you feel like the person will judge every word you say?

4th Characteristic: Connected

Purpose: Help you become acquainted with E-ZPass.

Test: Has this person spent time cultivating relationships in his or her field of work?

5th Characteristic: Relatable

Purpose: Help you enjoy the ride and refuel.

Test: Do you share an interest in the general career space you're focused on? Do you feel reenergized after talking with them?

6th Characteristic: Rational

Purpose: Help you navigate uncharted territory and recalibrate.

Test: Is this person a critical thinker? Do they look at things from multiple perspectives? Do they leave open the possibility of there being various paths to success? Do they ask probing questions to help you think through what you're considering?

These are the six qualities I've found great mentors possess—what characteristics do you look for in a mentor?

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