

Seek out a mentor in the new year

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By Denise Lee Yohn Published: December 12, 2023



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Want to take your leadership to the next level in 2024? Brand leadership expert Denise Lee Yohn, in this video, explains what to consider when seeking a mentor — and serving as one.

A mentor can share insights from their expertise and experiences to help you grow and develop — and being a mentor can help you achieve clarity and focus as you reflect on your own development. A few pointers to get the most out of mentoring:

- Start with reflecting on your goals — be clear and specific about what you want to achieve.

- Set clear expectations so each party knows how to engage.
- Make it two-way — older mentors can benefit from reverse mentoring.

Video Transcript:

As you think about changes you'd like to make in your professional life next year, consider mentorship. All leaders, at any age and level, can benefit from mentoring — both getting a mentor and being one.

To make sure we're on the same page, when I say mentor, I mean an experienced and trusted advisor, ideally someone in your company or at least your field of work. Mentors differ from coaches in that a good coach doesn't have to share your skills or experience to give you valuable guidance and feedback, whereas an ideal mentor has gone before you and knows the field well enough to give you specific insights from their personal experience. Also, coaching tends to last for a defined period of time or be focused on a particularly challenge or issue, whereas mentoring usually involves a longer-term relationship.

To find a mentor, start with self-reflection. Identify your goals, strengths and areas for development. Knowing what you're looking to achieve will help you find a mentor whose expertise aligns with your needs. For example, I've sought out mentors who have vibrant, healthy relationships with co-workers, family members and friends so that I can grow in those areas as well.

In addition to seeking out a mentor, consider serving as one, too. You may not think you have the time to serve as a mentor, but doing so can be a valuable experience. As you reflect on what you've learned and how you've grown and developed through the years, you may discover new insights about yourself and the priorities you want to bring forward. Being a mentor often challenges me in a good way to take my own advice — and I'm regularly inspired to be more grateful for and faithful to the opportunities I've been given.

And don't overlook the value of reverse mentoring — that is, the ways in which a younger or more junior person can help someone who is more experienced. For example, older mentors can become more digitally savvy by learning from younger mentees. The younger people I mentor have helped me understand generational differences in lifestyles, values and perceptions about work. In this way, mentoring can be mutually beneficial.

Once you begin a mentoring relationship, set clear expectations for how each of you will engage — who will initiate meetings, how you will decide on topics to discuss, what confidentiality is expected. Commit to listening well, being transparent and providing constructive feedback.

Mentorship can be fulfilling for both parties — and a valuable path toward growth and development for both as well.

To book Denise Lee Yohn to share leadership lessons and tips with your organization, see her [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

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