

FASTCOMPANY

Women's Ways Of Mentoring

Call it "wo-mentoring"-- a new approach that's more about commitment and learning than about chemistry and power. And, by the way, it also works for men.

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Lourdes Townsend is a career-focused businesswoman who knows exactly what she wants. At 35, Townsend is an international marketing manager for Stride Rite, based in Lexington, Massachusetts, where she has worked for the past six years. Born in the Philippines and raised in Michigan, Townsend describes herself as having "a midwestern work ethic" - but what comes across when she talks about herself is a kind of restless energy. "I'm the kind of person who likes to learn," Townsend says. So when her most recent promotion interrupted her pursuit of an MBA at nearby Suffolk University, Townsend asked for advice from Denise Lockaby, 39, Stride Rite's director of professional development.

Lockaby recommended a mentoring program run by WOMEN Unlimited Inc., a New York City-based, four-year-old career-development company for women only. The program paired Townsend with a senior executive outside of Stride Rite who would be her mentor for a year - but it also gave her something she never would have thought to ask for: 20 peers-as-mentors who taught her more than either her MBA courses or her formal mentor would.

"I never thought about learning from someone on my level," Townsend says. "I always looked two to four levels above me and wondered what I had to do to get there. But the people who have the best solutions to the problems I face are often the people facing those problems themselves."

By attending monthly workshops with smart, ambitious women from various companies in the Boston area, Townsend discovered a new style of learning. And she found out about the new world of mentoring - a world where the old rules, written and practiced largely by men mentoring men, have been redrafted by women mentoring women. Call it "wo-mentoring" - a natural reaction to a system that was so badly broken, it no longer worked for either sex.

Consider the problem. The way mentoring used to work, a senior male executive would anoint a younger version of himself as his protege. The operative assumption: Mentoring was all about chemistry between two people who had a lot in common. It was also about connections - the mentor, who was several rungs higher up the ladder, could steer the lower man toward career-enhancing projects or plum assignments.

Fast forward to the present. Women have poured into the new world of work, and they've found they aren't welcome in the old boys' club of mentoring. They can't rely on men to pick female proteges. They can't depend on being able to socialize in the old style - on the golf course or over a cigar - to form

personal bonds. So women have changed the rules. They've invented formal practices where none existed before, making mentoring more organized and focused.

Women's mentoring is also more about commitment than about chemistry. It's about personal growth and development rather than about promotions and plums. And it's more about learning than power. Says Jean Otte, 59, founder and CEO of WOMEN Unlimited, "It's not about who you know. It's about who knows what you know."

You don't have to be a woman to practice the new way of mentoring. But if you want to see it in action, look at how women do it.

Old Rule : Mentors and proteges should have a lot in common.

New Rule : The best matches are mismatches.

In the old style of mentoring, the best relationships between proteges and mentors were built on commonalities. Not so today, says Gayle Holmes, 51, founder, president, and CEO of Mentium Corp., a Minneapolis-based mentoring service. Mentium, founded in 1991, offers its Mentium 100 program - matching mentors and "mentees" from different companies - in six cities. "If you're matched with someone like you," she says, "the potential for discovery is negated. You should pair with someone who, by her very nature, will challenge you."

Take the example of Kathy Higgins Victor, 42, who was matched as a mentor to Ann Latendresse, 47, by Mentium in Minneapolis. After the two met for the first time, Higgins Victor had just one question: "What were they thinking?" The two could not have been more different. Higgins Victor has always put her career first. Latendresse, on the other hand, had begun her career almost by accident. And the two women couldn't have been more different in style and personality. Higgins Victor has two small children at home. Latendresse has four grown children and recently became a grandmother. "We would never have found each other in a crowd," Higgins Victor says.

Despite the lack of instant chemistry, the two stuck it out - and ultimately discovered that their differences were the best part of the match. "Kathy helped me see how I could be more objective and do what I needed to do to succeed," says Latendresse. "I tend not to be open to others' feedback," Higgins Victor says. "Ann was so unconditionally open, she made me see that I could gain a lot from being more like her."

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Old Rule : Look for your mentor higher-up on the food chain.

New Rule : A good mentor is anyone you can learn from.

Everyone knows what an old-style mentor looked like: someone who had a little gray hair and an air of wisdom - a seasoned executive who was several promotions ahead of you. In the new world of mentoring, however, the ideal mentor is impossible to visualize - it could be anyone from anywhere inside or outside of the organization.

Peers can serve as handy mentors when you have no obvious senior role models to look to. Take

Christine Comaford, 36, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur with five successful startups to her credit, including planet U (a Web-based marketing company) and her current business, Artemis Ventures, a venture-capital company that itself provides mentoring for startups.

As a woman running high-tech companies, Comaford found that mentors were scarce. So in 1996, she founded and organized Digital Dames, a peer-mentoring group for women who are top executives in technology companies.

So far, the group of about 30 women has kept its meetings informal and casual, gathering for occasional potlucks at Comaford's house. The strength of the group: Its members have a wealth of experience in a wide range of entrepreneurial issues. "Our industry changes so fast, only someone inside it knows what's going on," Comaford says.

Coordinates: Christine Comaford, cc@artemisventures.com

Old Rule : Mentoring is one-on-one.

New Rule : Mentoring works best when you mix and match.

Sure, it would be great if you could find a mentor who would shower you with attention. But not many people have the time to be a one-on-one professional trainer. Don't worry, says Tara Levine, 27, director of research and advisory services for New York-based Catalyst, a nonprofit group that works with companies to advance women within their organizations. In fact, you're better off diversifying your mentor portfolio.

"Get creative about how you set up mentoring groups," Levine says. "You can have a mentoring quad, with two mentors and two mentees, or a mentoring circle, with two mentors and from 6 to 10 mentees."

One of the programs offered by Menttium is a service called Circles, an approach to mentoring that brings together mixed-gender groups within companies. At Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Co. (BNSF), based in Fort Worth, Richard Dennison, 57, an assistant vice president in the mechanical division, has been participating as a mentor in a Circles group for six months.

Dennison meets monthly with six mentees. In the group's first meeting, mentees outlined their career goals. Next, Dennison found speakers who could address topics that the mentees had expressed an interest in. The company also organized sessions on basic skills, such as budgeting and conflict management.

Coordinates: Tara Levine, info@catalystwomen.org; Richard Dennison, richardtdennison@bnsf.com

Old Rule : Mentors pick their proteges.

New Rule : Proteges pick their mentors.

Everyone knows how old-style mentoring was supposed to work: It started when a mentor picked a protege or the company sanctioned a formal mentoring program. Not anymore. Women don't ask permission, and they don't wait for mentors to find them. They've started grassroots mentoring programs on their own.

At Apple, for example, the company's women took the initiative in 1994, when Apple scaled back its

mentoring program, its formal staff development, and its diversity activities. A few determined women, including Subhana Ansari, 47, decided that if Apple would not bring mentoring to them, they would bring mentoring to Apple. Ansari, an area administrator, approached other women at Apple with a proposal: With no funding, no support, and no materials, Ansari and other volunteers would build a formal mentoring program in a matter of weeks, starting in March 1996.

The classes, which ran for six weeks every Tuesday afternoon, attracted 20 people - 15 women and 5 men - and taught them how to recruit their own mentors. Two people dropped out, but the remaining 18 all had mentors by the fourth week of class. Within four months after the program was completed, six of the group's members had been promoted.

The mentoring program helped its participants reach new career heights - and for Ansari, it opened up a new career. She left Apple to become a training project manager for Adecco Employment Services in Redwood City, California. "Creating the program redirected my career," Ansari says. "It was the most fun I ever had at work."

Coordinates: Subhana Ansari, subhana.ansari@adecco.com

Old Rule : You're a mentor or a mentee.

New Rule : Everyone needs mentors.

The old school taught that mentoring was for the young. The new style adamantly rejects such an antiquated notion. Procter & Gamble, for example, has created a breakthrough "reverse mentoring" program to tutor senior executives about issues facing women.

And it's not just men who benefit from the mentoring-in-reverse program. Deb Henretta, 37, the leader of P&G's advancement of women task force, learned from her younger "reverse mentor" about false assumptions that were affecting young female staff members. "At P&G, we used to discuss issues of 'work-family balance,'" says Henretta. "By labeling it that way, we didn't acknowledge that single people had life commitments outside the company."

One measure of the program's success: P&G has vastly improved its retention rate of talented women. In 1991, the advertising division was losing twice as many women as men. Since the launch of several mentoring initiatives in 1994, the rates have evened out.

Coordinates: Deb Henretta, henretta.da@pg.com

The most important lesson that the women's approach to mentoring has to teach: It's not about a mentoring relationship. It's about a mentoring mentality. "You don't need a single mentor who you keep throughout your career," says Otte. "What happens when your company downsizes and your mentor leaves? What you need is a mind-set that allows you to learn from those around you, no matter who they are."



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Mentor networks and career success: Lessons for turbulent times

Suzanne C. de Janasz, Sherry E. Sullivan, and Vicki Whiting

Executive Overview

Many managers credit key professional achievements to the guidance of a mentor. Past research supports such anecdotal evidence, reporting that traditional one-on-one mentoring has been an integral component of protégé advancement, compensation, and satisfaction within traditional organizations. However, because organizational structures have changed and careers have become boundaryless, the aspiring manager today must make use of an intelligent network of multiple mentors in order to flourish in a changing workplace. This is especially true in turbulent business environments where layoffs, career plateaus, and limited promotion opportunities can derail the careers of even the most promising managers. Using support from interviews with executives, we detail the advantages of a diverse mentor network and the significant roles which multiple mentors can play in the enrichment of a protégé's professional life. We demonstrate how multiple mentors have the potential to help protégés continuously acquire knowledge (e.g., knowing why, how, and whom competencies) which they can leverage for career and personal success within and across organizational boundaries. Finally, we offer five specific strategies for creating effective developmental relationships and building intelligent career networks.

What made a difference for me was having different kinds of people who served as mentors. These were individuals whose ideas resonated with me. What they said made sense to me personally. They were not necessarily senior people in the organization. They included my employees, my peers, and senior management.

—D. McDonough, Managing Shareholder,
Retired, Lozano Smith Professional
Corporation

Simply put, mentors matter. Experts agree that individuals with mentors earn higher salaries, have higher job satisfaction, get more promotions, and have greater organizational commitment. In addition to these career-related benefits, protégés receive support that enhances their sense of personal identity, role clarity, and interpersonal competence.¹ It has been well documented that individuals, especially women and minorities, miss an important career developmental experience if they do not have a mentor.² Similarly, mentors reap

benefits from the mentoring process including: career rejuvenation; rekindling of creativity, energy and satisfaction; new knowledge and technical expertise contributed by protégés; organizational rewards, status, and recognition for talent development; social and emotional learning; and feedback and support from protégés.³ Mentors enter into these relationships for reasons ranging from the selfish (e.g., increased organizational visibility and political allies as loyal protégés mature) to the altruistic (e.g., wishing to leave a legacy and contribute to the community). Even organizations benefit from mentoring, as mentoring facilitates the socialization process and helps acculturate junior members of the organization.⁴

Simply put, mentors matter.

While recent best-selling books such as Lois Zachary's 2000 *The Mentor's Guide* and Jack Carew's 1999 *The Mentor: 15 Keys to Success in*

Sales, Business and Life expound the values of having a senior person guide a newcomer's development, the idea of mentoring isn't new. The first documented example of mentoring dates back to the ancient Greeks when King Odysseus asked Mentor to guide the growth of his son Telemachus. What is new, however, are the recent and sweeping changes that have shaken long-held beliefs about careers and organizational life, necessitating a shift in thinking about the process of mentoring.⁵ Turbulent times, as evidenced by undervalued stock options, court cases questioning corporate ethics, and rising unemployment rates, are causing professionals to rethink their career strategies. The career, once synonymous with a well-defined ladder and advancement in one or two paternalistic organizations, has become boundaryless, with individuals continually updating and remarketing their skills and changing jobs on an average of every four and one-half years.⁶

While much recent research has focused on how individuals survive and navigate this boundaryless career landscape, most of these writings have been more descriptive than prescriptive. The purpose of this article is to provide specific recommendations on how executives can build and utilize a network of mentors to aid in the development of the competencies needed for career success and satisfaction in these turbulent times. We begin by exploring the role of mentor networks—what they are, and why they are important—and reinforce this discussion with excerpts from our interviews with 15 executives. Next, we discuss intelligent careers and the different types of knowledge that mentors can assist executives in gaining. Finally, we discuss the intelligent network and offer strategies for building a diverse network of mentors to facilitate knowledge acquisition and career success.

Multiple Mentors for Turbulent Times

One mentor is not enough. You have to rely on a number of mentors to allow you to see values in action, to develop business acumen and product knowledge. If you choose to rely on one mentor, that mentor had better know everything. Otherwise you will end up with their bad habits along with the good. From my mentors, I learned concepts that work across boundaries. These ideas apply to me in all aspects of my life. Of course, I had some mentors that taught me values that didn't work, which taught me that if you choose the wrong mentor, you might derail.

—Bill Radiger, President, Karma Media, LLC

When asked to identify mentors, we often think of one outstanding, caring individual who provided career guidance and support. People typically describe their mentors as someone older, more experienced, and higher in organizational or professional rank. Traditionally, a mentor recognizes a protégé's potential and offers to take the novice "under his/her wing" for instruction and protection. This relationship benefits the protégé with updated skills and knowledge while at the same time providing synergy and new ideas to the mentor. In many professions, such as academia, medicine, and the skilled crafts, the mentor/protégé relationship is part of the learning process. The apprentice works side by side with the master, getting hands-on instruction for an extended period of time.

This traditional mentoring model—a stable, long-term master-apprentice relationship—may no longer be viable. Forces such as rapidly changing technology, shifting organizational structures, and global marketplace dynamics have transformed mentoring into a process that by necessity extends beyond the services of a single mentor. As knowledge continuously changes and evolves, it becomes difficult if not impossible for individuals—or individual mentors—to possess all the requisite knowledge within themselves. Having multiple mentors facilitates the building of knowledge in the people who then become the primary assets and sources of competitive advantage to the firm.⁷

Forces such as rapidly changing technology, shifting organizational structures, and global marketplace dynamics have transformed mentoring into a process that by necessity extends beyond the services of a single mentor.

One workforce change necessitating multiple mentors is the proliferation of boundaryless work practices. Ceridian Group reported that 90 per cent of firms use boundaryless work arrangements including telecommuting (i.e., completing all or most of one's work from a home office), flexible scheduling, and project work.⁸ Furthermore, the International Telework Association and Council reports that in 1999, nearly 20 million workers telecommuted,⁹ and that number is expected to increase to 137 million in 2003.¹⁰ Organizations implementing teleworking arrangements are realizing significant gains through reduced real estate expenses, increased productivity, increased access to global

markets, reduced pollution, and greater ability to attract and retain high-quality workers.¹¹

However, this technology-facilitated, boundary-less working arrangement presents a unique set of challenges to executives and managers whose experience is limited to traditional office environments. Today's managers are challenged to establish organizational and individual goals, provide performance feedback, and lead culturally and geographically diverse teams and meetings, while simultaneously maintaining a positive work climate and tracking productivity, quality, costs, and adherence to regulations with minimal if any face-to-face interaction.¹² These skills were likely not part of managers' formal education; thus, they would benefit from associating with mentors who have the technological and managerial expertise to succeed in a boundaryless venue.

Another reason for creating a multiple mentor network involves the dramatic shifts in organizational structures and the concurrent shift in job mobility over the last 25 years. Organizational downsizing, mergers and acquisitions, global competition, and the growth of small entrepreneurial startups have altered the "company man" ideal of stability and upward mobility. Today, people have careers characterized by flexibility, project work across multiple firms, and an emphasis on learning rather than promotions and salary increases.¹³ Managers change jobs, industries, and even careers, as they seek to maintain or improve their standard of living while developing new, more marketable skills. In such an environment where change is the norm and continuous knowledge acquisition is critical, the traditional single mentor-protégé model is being replaced by the guidance and assistance of a diverse cadre of mentors.¹⁴

Today, people have careers characterized by flexibility, project work across multiple firms, and an emphasis on learning rather than promotions and salary increases.

However, the demand for mentors is likely to outpace the supply. Because organizational downsizing and layering have amplified workload pressures on the dwindling supply of mid- and upper-level managers, these potential mentors may lack the ability or desire to provide the time and attention needed to build a quality mentoring relationship with junior employees. These countervailing forces—need for continuously updating skills and reduced supply of mentors—require to-

day's managers to search for multiple mentors who can provide career and psychosocial support that varies in duration and intensity. What once was accomplished by a single mentor over many years is now available only to protégés who search out multiple mentors.¹⁵

In tandem with changes in organizational and job structures are major changes in the demographic makeup of the global workplace. William Johnston, author of *Global Workforce 2000*, notes that there are "massive relocations of people including immigrants, temporary workers, retirees, and visitors. The greatest relocations will involve young, well-educated workers flocking to the cities of the developed world."¹⁶ These immigrants are expected to flock to Japan, Germany, and the United States; in addition, millions of women in industrializing nations are entering the paid workforce.¹⁷ In this new, diverse global context, multiple perspectives provided by a diverse set of mentors will help bridge the variety of employee expectations, values, and work habits and allow executives to take advantage of the diversity which this new workforce offers.

These changing workforce demographics have altered the work of and created additional challenges for today's manager. For example, as the number of dual-career and single-parent employees continues to grow, organizations are increasingly adopting family-friendly policies and expecting their managers to implement these and other supportive company practices.¹⁸ The changing composition of employees and the work they do creates two challenges necessitating a new type of mentor guidance: how to deal with employees' diverse employment expectations and how to balance one's own work and family roles and responsibilities. As these phenomena are fairly recent, it is likely that minimal guidance is available through human resource or other formalized functions. A mentor who has successfully addressed these challenges can provide valuable knowledge and support for today's executive.

The expected mass global migration of workers suggests increasingly diverse work populations who face challenges emanating from minority status. However, the limited supply of minorities in high-level positions requires that protégés seek the services of multiple mentors to provide the needed advice and support. To find these multiple mentors, a protégé must search beyond organizational and geographic boundaries—non-face-to-face means of communication—for mentor support.¹⁹ In addition, each new mentor in a protégé's developmental network provides potential access to an exponentially greater number of individuals,

creating even more opportunities to build a mentor relationship with individuals who share similar or compatible values and characteristics. The more diverse the workforce becomes, the greater the need for individuals to build a diverse mentor network.

In sum, mentoring has become an effective means for coping with organizational change. A collection of mentors is invaluable, providing different perspectives, knowledge, and skills while serving multiple mentoring functions. They can provide emotional support or protection from political enemies in a way no one individual can.²⁰ Where firms use organizational networks to facilitate increased knowledge for a competitive advantage,²¹ individuals can utilize mentor networks to facilitate access to the knowledge and experiences of others for a competitive career advantage. Moreover, individuals with multiple mentors to rely on for career assistance are less affected by a dysfunctional or unavailable mentor. Protégés with multiple mentors realize that they cannot rely on a single mentor for career development;²² instead, they must manage their own careers by developing and maintaining many relationships that will enable them to achieve career success and satisfaction.

Mentoring has become an effective means for coping with organizational change.

To better understand how mentor networks are successfully developed and applied, we conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen successful executives. These executives mirror the gender mix in upper-management ranks (twelve men, three women) and represent diverse industries (e.g., healthcare, media, food) and upper-level job positions (e.g., president, CEO, division manager). (See the Appendix for more details about the methodology.) From these fifteen interviews, convergent themes emerged which form the basis of this article. We use the intelligent-career framework and the interview themes to suggest specific strategies for employing mentor networks to enhance three career competencies, specified below.

Intelligent Careers

I had female mentors, the few women who had gone before me. These women taught me what it took to be a female in a man's world. One woman, the first female pilot in the Navy,

helped me understand that I just had to prove myself. She gave me practical, hard-hitting facts. I had men who showed me how to navigate through the political arena of Navy pilots. A master chief with 23 years of experience taught me how to gain the respect of an all-male crew. I needed his perspective and his experience to be successful in leading troops of soldiers. I had people who taught me how to act, others who taught me who to know. Each of these mentors allowed me to be successful in a world where women had not had much of an opportunity to succeed before.

—Elizabeth Williams, Lieutenant, and one of the 2 per cent of female pilots in the U.S. Navy in 1986

Respected career scholars Robert DeFillippi and Michael Arthur developed the concept of the intelligent career to complement the work of strategic management scholars studying intelligent enterprises and competency driven firms.²³ DeFillippi and Arthur suggest that personal competencies, like organizational competencies, in turbulent environments reflect different forms of knowledge that can be applied and adapted to the shifting career opportunities in today's workplace.²⁴ This approach reflects the shift from the long-term loyalty of professionals to a firm, wherein competencies were built according to organizational needs, to a model of occupational excellence, wherein professionals seek to continually upgrade the skills they offer to the marketplace. Each form of knowledge, and the accumulation of knowledge, changes in response to shifting environmental, employment, and personal factors, independent of a single firm.

The Three Career Competencies

The intelligent career comprises three career competencies that are manifested in people's beliefs and identities (knowing why), knowledge and skills (knowing how), and networks or relationships (knowing whom).²⁵ Specifically, the knowing-why competency reflects a professional's values and motivation—his/her career passion. Knowing why answers the question: Who am I? It relates to an individual's identity and the fit between this identity and choices made relative to tasks, projects, and organizations.

Knowing how answers the question: What can I do? It refers to the skills and knowledge needed for job performance—a person's level of expertise. Individuals may use their various employment settings and experiences on different projects as well

as the mentor network that has been developed to both apply and enlarge the skills and knowledge they possess.

Knowing whom answers the question: Who do I know? It reflects the relationships that contribute to an individual's networking. The friends, colleagues, and professional associations with whom individuals network can help build a reputation, provide needed visibility and access to opportunities, and provide new learning resources independent of the firm. Mentors serve as a knowledge bank to support professionals in the growth and enhancement of all three career competencies.

Terri Scandura and Ethlyn Williams, noted mentoring researchers, provide a detailed conceptualization of how one type of mentor, the leader, can assist in the development of his/her subordinates' intelligent careers amidst increasing interorganizational mobility. They suggest that leaders serve as mentors by providing vocational support for knowing how, psychological support for knowing whom, and role modeling for knowing why.²⁵ By providing protection, challenging assignments, and visibility, leaders help protégés enhance self-efficacy and promotability, and thus their knowing-how competency. Leaders provide counseling, encouragement, and emotional support to facilitate the building of networks and the enhancement of knowing-whom competencies. Through their example, leaders help protégés learn, understand, and internalize the organization's culture, thereby engaging the knowing-why competency.

By providing protection, challenging assignments, and visibility, leaders help protégés enhance self-efficacy and promotability.

Two authors of this article, Suzanne de Janasz and Sherry Sullivan, have applied the intelligent-career concept to examine how professors must go beyond the traditional dissertation advisor/mentor apprenticeship model and build a portfolio of mentor relationships to enhance career progression and satisfaction.²⁷ By mapping the knowing competencies across the professorial ranks (e.g., doctoral student, assistant, associate, full professor), they provide a framework for guiding professors in the construction of a network of developmental relationships. They suggest that professors who recognize the need for an intelligent career will actively seek out relationships to help them develop the three knowing competencies.

Developing these different career competencies makes relying on different types of mentoring re-

lationships essential. Drawing on the ideas of the intelligent career, we examine how the career competencies of knowing why, how, and whom interact with learning demands to produce the need for different types of mentoring.

Knowing Why: Who Am I?

I really don't have an authority figure who serves as my mentor, but I do have people to get advice from. These are people whose opinions I value, so I turn to them to get their thoughts. It seems to me that almost everyone who makes it to the executive level at Frito Lay has someone who helps them figure out their career path and how to match who they are to the organization.

—John Swenson, Division Warehouse Performance Manager, Starfleet Captain Warehousing, Frito Lay Incorporated

Knowing why relates to our identity, which relates to our career-related choices. This identity begins to form at a young age, evolves through educational and work experiences, and translates into early career choices. New entrants into the workforce might ask themselves: Do I enjoy working for a large, prestigious corporation or a smaller, more close-knit firm? Am I better suited to this industry or another? Am I on the right path? They might also seek the counsel of mentors in their personal or professional networks for information and support in making difficult career decisions.

During this time, the knowing-why competency continues to be tested and developed. Was the right profession chosen? Is the work satisfying? Junior professionals may seek the advice of their peers or supervisors for help with these questions. They may seek out new mentors within their firms for more organization-specific knowledge about performance standards, how to get promoted, and learning the ropes.²⁸ They also begin to build reputations about who they are and for what they will be known.

As time passes, trigger events such as a blocked promotion, job layoff, divorce, or illness may cause professionals to reevaluate their career paths.²⁹ Many of the executives we interviewed recounted how they sought the advice of one or more mentors when they reached a career or life transition. Based on their mentor's advice and their own re-assessment, some professionals veered off the fast track or took a lower-level position with less prestige. Some may strategize their eventual move up

through the company's ranks, while others may leave the corporation and start their own firms.

Upon achieving career success, the need for mentoring continues. Formal networking, as well as informal conversations with other seasoned professionals, may assist in making decisions about work/family balance, midlife renewal, career changes, updating skills, and retirement options. For example, Dan Caulfield, CEO of HQ Group in Oceanside, California sought advice from another CEO on how to manage work/nonwork balance. From this interaction, he gained a new perspective and adopted a new work style. He states: "Now I work a three-and-a-half-day week . . . I never work on the weekends anymore . . . I'm so in love with the business, I could end up talking about it all the time . . . What's amazing is that I get a lot more work done this way."³⁰

In sum, answering the "Who am I?" question relates to individuals' search and development of their identity and the fit between this identity and choices made relative to tasks, projects, and organizations. As individuals change career directions and need to develop new skills and abilities to support changes in their self-concept, they will need to seek out new mentors to help guide them.

Knowing How: What Can I Do?

Initially, NCR Corporation provided a senior salesman to show me the ropes. As I moved up into management, I found that I needed additional mentors as I was developing new skills. As managing partner for AT&T's Metis Business Unit, I turned to a subordinate in a collaborative role. Still today I have mentors who help me with the demands of my new job—negotiating company acquisitions and selling business units. As my skill demands changed, my mentors necessarily changed as well. I don't suppose I will ever outgrow my need for strong mentors.

—Jeff Whiting, President, Entervault Incorporated

Throughout and beyond formal schooling, individuals continue to build new skills and identify those skills that require polishing through feedback from self and others. This learning process enhances individuals' self-esteem and their beliefs that they can perform a task.³¹ Regardless of education, experience, or career stage, people need to learn continuously—that is, develop their knowing-how competency—particularly in turbulent times.³² For example, many firms lament that despite their advanced degrees, MBA graduates lack the soft skills

(i.e., communications, interpersonal relations) and hands-on experience needed to succeed in business.³³ Even as individual proficiencies are developed, demands shift, requiring a need for additional mentor help with new technologies or markets. Such mentors not only provide career guidance but also psychosocial or emotional support—an important and helpful function of mentoring.³⁴ In addition to work demands, professionals must cope with simultaneous and often-conflicting personal demands and obligations.³⁵ Mentors may listen and advise protégés, helping them cope with personal stress as well as work stress, such as heavy workloads, unfair treatment, inadequate feedback, problem coworkers, and unreasonable bosses.³⁵

Given the rapid changes in today's business environment, professionals need a diverse portfolio of mentors possessing sufficient breadth and depth of expertise to help them learn the ropes of their specific firm, gain knowledge of new technologies, and assist in the development of interpersonal skills (e.g., communication and conflict resolution techniques) as well as numerous other skills that may arise unexpectedly from the changing environment. Some of these mentors may be internal to the firm while others may be members of professional organizations, volunteer groups, or even paid executive career coaches.

Given the rapid changes in today's business environment, professionals need a diverse portfolio of mentors.

In sum, knowing how relates to the skills and knowledge needed for people to do their current jobs as well as any future jobs. Employees, especially temporary or project workers who often move between boundaries, need several mentors to assist in their continuous learning and development of new expertise. These mentors may be coworkers, friends, or formal mentors established through professional organizations.

Knowing Whom: Who Do I Know?

I have had several mentors throughout my career at GE. I relied most on mentors at transition points, though individuals helped me navigate the corporate landscape throughout my tenure. One mentor in particular helped me make the transition from a GE subsidiary to a big corporate job with GE. This particular mentor taught me how to pitch ideas to Jack

[Welch], gave me inside tips on the players, and, most importantly, opened doors for me. He knew folks all over the world and would ask them to give me five minutes. Without his introduction I wouldn't have been able to get an appointment.

—Jeff Dye, CEO, GE Corporate Payment Services

According to Execunet, a career management and recruiting resource center for executives and recruiters, the old rule of thumb that it takes one month per \$10,000 of salary expected to find a new job has changed, with recent findings suggesting that one's age and ease of finding a new job are inversely correlated.³⁷ Executive search firms capitalize on the growing difficulties in finding appropriate positions for executives and utilize their networks (in addition to workshops and coaching) to hasten executives' search. In especially tight labor markets, job hunters realize that it's not always what you know but who you know that facilitates job acquisition.

Having an extensive network of contacts also makes the individual more valuable to organizations.

Individuals who have knowing-whom competency may increase their mobility both within and outside the firm based on the reputation they have built through their mentor networks. Of the 3,652 executives surveyed by Drake Beam Morin, 61 per cent said they had found new positions in the previous year through networking.³⁸ Having an extensive network of contacts also makes the individual more valuable to organizations. Management scholar Rosalie Tung writes about the organization's need "to attract and retain people who are well connected or who excel in collaborative teamwork in order to become or remain world class."³⁹ For example, without *guanxi*, international firms in China would have great difficulty gaining access and approval for just about everything.⁴⁰ *Guanxi* includes having connections, leveraging power and trust, and knowing the right people who can grant special favors. It is also the granting of favors to others to pave the way for future business. This type of connection that implies a reciprocal obligation to provide assistance when needed exists to varying degrees in every culture.⁴¹

Knowing whom refers to the depth and breadth of relationships within the networks that people build to facilitate their career development. These

friends, coworkers, and colleagues in professional associations may come from different organizations, occupations, or parts of the globe, but together they provide people with networks of information and emotional support to increase their mobility and improve their job skills. Building and continuously developing such networks allows individuals to stay connected and opens doors to new opportunities.

In order to develop the knowing who, how, and why competencies in an increasingly complex and changing environment, individuals must develop relationships with multiple mentors who can assist in different aspects of their careers. In the next section, using information gleaned from our interviews with top executives as well as recent mentoring research, we provide five specific strategies for building and maintaining an intelligent career network. Such a network should provide a portfolio of "mentors of the moment" who can help protégés develop across a variety of learning experiences and over the phases of their careers.⁴²

Building an Intelligent Mentoring Network

Recent research and current realities support the idea of constructing an intelligent mentor network. But how do professionals actually build such networks, and how can executives help professionals in their firms develop these networks? We suggest the following five steps:

1. Become the Perfect Protégé.

Linda Hill, in her well-known Harvard Business School article "Beyond the Myth of the Perfect Mentor," suggests that instead of searching for the mythical perfect mentor, an individual should become the "perfect protégé" by investing the time and energy needed to develop and maintain a network of developmental relationships.⁴³ Because of the give-and-take aspects of the mentoring process, protégés must be careful to invest enough time to permit the mentoring relationship to grow and mature, so that trust and respect can develop. Andy Winston, a sponsoring editor at Irwin McGraw Hill, commented on developing such relationships:

In my experience, mentoring often occurs as an ad hoc process of relationship building that lacks direction and definition. While these networks (if you can call them that) are helpful, I have found that when I have taken the time to cultivate a mentor relationship,