



Keyword: Non Traditional

Getting Mentoring Help from Non-Traditional Places

by Kevin Eikenberry

Typical people think of a mentor as someone older, or someone who has achieved something they would like to achieve. Often these mentors are found in the workplace, and in most cases they are people we know or have had the opportunity to get to know. While this approach will certainly lead you to great mentors in your life, it is an unnecessarily limited approach.

This Bonus Byte offers several other avenues to explore to find great mentors. Open your mind to the possibilities, and read on.

As I said above, most people unnecessarily limit their pool of mentors to people who:

- Are older than they are
- They know
- Are nearby or accessible

When you break free of those limitations you can add:

- Younger people
- Famous people
- Authors and experts
- Other people you don't yet know
- Historical figures

The first one on this list is easy. Chances are there are people younger than you who could mentor you in any number of areas – think of those areas and those people and ask them for their help!

Now let's talk about how these other groups of people can mentor you, even though you don't know them and can't talk to them. Here are six ways to claim these other people as your mentors.

Study and observe them. Notice what they do, how they handle themselves, and the decisions that they make.



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Read what they write or what has been written about them. This may be the best (or only) way to study them. It can be a very valuable way to do that. Think about what you can learn about leadership from Lincoln, Churchill, Gandhi or Mandela. Through reading, anyone can be your mentor.

Make it a goal to meet them. If they are still alive, make it a goal to meet them. Look for people who might be able to introduce you to them directly, or get you one degree of separation closer. Go to places where they go – and give serendipity a nudge.

Send them a note. Did they do something special? Win an award? Celebrate a birthday? Send them a note. Or just send them a note of thanks for what you have learned from them. Everyone likes to be appreciated and thanked.

Offer to help them. Find out what their goals or passions are. Then offer to help. Sure you'd love to be mentored by them, but don't squander your first meeting or communication with "will you mentor me?" Start by offering to help them. Volunteer, or offer a connection or resource they might need and value.

Ask them a question. When the time is right, ask them a question – something that plays into their expertise and knowledge. You are building a relationship, whether by blog, email, phone or in person. As you have built a relationship, you might be surprised how willing they are, regardless of how "famous" they might be to help.

While not everyone will work in every case (it is hard to ask a dead person a question), these are powerful ways to add additional mentors in your life. Some of these steps will take time. But the time is going to pass either way, but the value of the mentoring you will receive lasts forever.



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