

The many benefits of mentorships

Exploring job boards and online resources is only one part of your job-search process; it is just as important to connect with other professionals in your field, build your network, and join in the BI community. A great way to accomplish these goals is by building a relationship with a mentor. In this reading, you will learn more about mentors, the benefits of mentorship, and how to connect with potential mentors.

Considering mentorship

Mentors are professionals who share knowledge, skills, and experiences to help you grow and develop. These people can come in many different forms at different points in your career. They can be advisors, sounding boards, honest critics, resources, or all of those things. You can even have multiple mentors to gain more diverse perspectives!

There are a few things to consider along the way:

- **Decide what you are searching for in a mentor.** Think about your strengths and weaknesses, what challenges you have encountered, and how you would like to grow as a BI professional. Share these ideas with potential mentors who might have had similar experiences and have guidance to share.
- **Consider common ground.** Often you can find great mentorships with people who share interests and backgrounds with you. This could include someone who had a similar career path or even someone from your hometown.
- **Respect their time.** Often, mentors are busy! Make sure the person you are asking to mentor you has time to support your growth. It's also important for you to put in the effort necessary to maintain the relationship and stay connected with them.

Note that mentors don't have to be directly related to BI. It depends on what you want to focus on with each individual. Mentors can be friends of friends, more experienced coworkers, former colleagues, or even teammates. For example, if you find a family friend who has a lot of experience in their own non-BI field, but shares a similar background as you and understands what you're trying to achieve, that person may become an invaluable mentor to you. Or, you might fortuitously meet someone at a casual work outing with whom you develop an instant rapport. Again, even if they are not in the BI field, they may be able to connect you to someone in their company or network who is in BI.

How to build the relationship

Once you have considered what you're looking for in a mentor and found someone with time and experience to share, you'll need to build that relationship. Sometimes, the connection happens naturally, but usually you need to formally ask them to mentor you.

One great way to reach out is with a friendly email or a message on a professional networking website. Describe your career goals, explain how you think those goals align with their own experiences, and talk about something you admire about them professionally. Then you can suggest a coffee chat, virtual meetup, or email exchange as a first step.

Be sure to check in with yourself. It's important that you feel like it is a natural fit and that you're getting the mentorship you need. Mentor-mentee relationships are equal partnerships, so the more

honest you are with them, the more they can help you. And remember to thank them for their time and effort!

As you get in touch with potential mentors, you might feel nervous about being a bother or taking up too much of their time. But mentorship is meaningful for mentors too. They often genuinely want to help you succeed and are invested in your growth. Your success brings them joy! Many mentors enjoy recounting their experiences and sharing their successes with you, as well. And mentors often learn a lot from their mentees. Both sides of the mentoring relationship are meaningful!

Resources

There are a lot of great resources you can use to help you connect with potential mentors. Here are just a few:

- **Mentoring websites** such as Score.org, MicroMentor.org, or the Mentorship app allow you to search for mentors with specific credentials that match your needs. You can then arrange dedicated times to meet up or talk on the phone.
- **Meetups**, or online meetings that are usually local to your geography. Enter a search for “business intelligence meetups near me” to check out what results you get. There is usually a posted schedule for upcoming meetings so you can attend virtually. Find out more information about [meetups happening around the world](#).
- **Platforms** including LinkedIn and Twitter. Use a search on either platform to find data science or data analysis hashtags to follow. Post your own questions or articles to generate responses and build connections that way.
- **Webinars** may showcase a panel of speakers and are usually recorded for convenient access and playback. You can see who is on a webinar panel and follow them too. Plus, a lot of webinars are free. One interesting pick is the [Tableau on Tableau webinar series](#). Find out how Tableau has used Tableau in its internal departments.
- **Conferences** present innovative ideas and topics. The cost varies, and some are pricey. But many offer discounts to students, and some conferences like [Women in Analytics](#) aim to increase the number of under-represented groups in the field.
- **Associations** or **societies** gather members to promote a field such as business intelligence. Many memberships are free. The [Digital Analytics Association](#) is one example. The [Cape Fear Community College Library](#) also has a list of professional associations for analytics, business intelligence, and business analysis.
- **User communities** and **summits** offer events for users of professional tools; this is a chance to learn from the best. Have you seen the [Tableau community](#)?
- **Nonprofit organizations** that promote the ethical use of data science and might offer events for the professional advancement of their members. The [Data Science Association](#) is one example.

Finding and connecting with a mentor is a great way to build your network, access career opportunities, and learn from someone who has already experienced some of the challenges you’re facing in your career. Whether your mentor is a senior coworker, someone you connect with on LinkedIn, or someone from home on a similar career path, mentorship can bring you great benefits as a BI professional.