

2024-03-02 - Mentorship - Heartbeat of Growth

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Do you actually need a mentor? Here are some tell-tale signs:

- **Feeling stuck:** You want to move up in your career but don't know how. You're not getting promotions, and the big chances to grow in your career aren't coming your way.
- **Unsure of your next step:** Whether you want to switch to a new job, learn a new technology, or improve your people skills, you need someone experienced to guide you.
- **Yearning for feedback:** You believe in your abilities, but getting advice from someone experienced can help you improve even more.
- **Limited network:** Your professional connections don't include people who can help you find new opportunities or give you insider information.

Types of Mentorships

- **Micro mentorships:** Runs 2-3 months very targeted to specific goal, The mentor is highly specialized in the area, mentor could be your peer or even junior.
 - Examples:
 - You are new to GenAI and want to build some project. Identify a colleague in GenAI who can provide you tips, help you build sample projects.
 - You are new to GenAI and are trying to build a project. Your colleague has a lot of experience in it and is actively giving you tips and helping you through the process of building your project.
- **Long term mentorship:** Mentor is experienced professional and can cover a breadth of topics for your overall growth.
 - You should still have specific short term and long term goals to make sure you are making progress.
- **Career sponsors**
 - The mentors and coaches generally give you advice and help you show new paths. Career sponsors also do some work for you e.g. open new opportunities.

How to be successful as mentee

- Define clear goals you want to achieve (what type of mentorship you want)
- Identify the person who has skills to help you
- Reach out, people are generally open to help
- Set specific goals or specific questions for your mentor
- Takes notes in each meeting on what you discussed, specific action items, and updates from past action items

How to find a mentor

- In the team mentor
 - Pros:
 - Knows about the team culture, dynamics and needs very well.
 - They can guide you while working closely with you.

- May show you opportunities within the team that you might be missing
 - May give you instant feedback as will have good visibility on day to day work
- Cons:
 - Knows too much about the team and may not bring fresh perspective due to team baggage.
 - There is a risk of sharing your weaknesses as they can reach your manager.
- Outside the team
 - Pros:
 - Knows overall company culture
 - Can bring fresh perspective on how things are done in a different team
 - A bit more safe as outside of your management chain
 - Network outside of the team for new opportunities
 - Cons:
 - May need your help in understanding specific context
 - Will not observe day to day work so guidance/feedback will be a bit generic
 - Nuance:
 - You may find someone who left the team in past so get some pros of team mentor
- External mentor
 - Pros:
 - May bring overall industry knowledge and a fresh perspective
 - Network outside of the company for new opportunities
 - Cons:
 - Guidance may not work in your company or team culture
 - Nuance:
 - May find someone who has worked in your company before so can be same as outside the team mentor but could have a bit old context.

How to ask someone to be your mentor?

- People are generally happy to help wherever they can
- Reach out with specific goals in mind and ask for help
- Ask how they can help and what works best for them
- Set expectations on how frequently you want to meet
- Can there be win-win?
 - They get some social credits (some companies have incentives for mentors e.g. Amazon: Hire and develop the best, Meta: People axes).
 - They may be exploring manager path and get experience while mentoring you.
 - For team mentors, you help them achieve their project goals.