2024-03-02 - Mentorship - Heartbeat of Growth

**Authors**: [Navneet Gupta](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hellonavneet/), [Medha Gupta](https://www.linkedin.com/in/immedha/)

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.