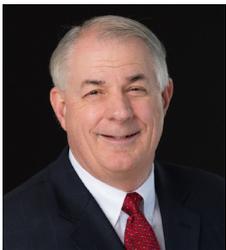




Choosing a Mentor



Art Waskey

Art Waskey is a speaker who truly delivers. In addition to a 45 year career in sales and marketing, Art is the author of multiple books on selling and a monthly column The Art of Sales. He shares these insights as an in demand event and conference speaker as well as leadership coach.

Choosing a Mentor

Are you interested in being mentored? I have had the honor of advising several highly talented executives, all of whom share certain characteristics. They tend to be open to teaching, have a passion for learning, and ask a lot of good questions. Their other attributes include humility and a willingness to make sacrifices in order to succeed. Those characteristics enable a good coach to do his job. When choosing your mentor, be sure to seek someone that suits your needs.

What to look for

Here are some qualities I suggest you look for in a mentor:

- **Chemistry** – The first consideration when looking for a mentor is personality fit. Do you have shared interests with this person? Is

he or she suited to your approach to learning? A person with a very dominant attitude recently sought my help as a mentor. I almost had to get hostile, something I do not like to do, in order for my point to be heard. I realized a mentor relationship with this individual would be too emotionally draining for me. I kindly suggested that he find someone who was more of a polemist and could engage with him in a manner more suited to his personality.

- **Competency** – Choose mentors that are the most qualified people you can find and invite them to pour their knowledge into you. Don't worry about finding everything you need in one person. Successful people tend to have multiple mentors who offer different competencies. Currently, I have mentors for four areas of my life – professional, educational, spiritual, and physical. My professional guide is Ken Thompson, an industry senior



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statesman. We meet weekly to discuss the strategic changes in the welding and gas distribution business, where we have both enjoyed long careers.

- **Humility** – Choose a coach who is humble and willing to share his/her failures. Vulnerabilities provide valuable lessons and illustrate how new paths can be forged. The right mentor will want you to learn from his/her failures.
- **Discernment** – Look for specific characteristics when choosing a mentor. In *Multipliers* (thewisemangroup.com/books/multipliers), Liz Wiseman offers several insights on the makings of a discerning leader: “The right counselor is considered to possess wisdom and be of good judgement; especially so with regard to subject matter often overlooked by others. The right coach will extend a clear and concrete challenge. He will ask the hard questions that need to be answered to achieve the challenge and require the pupil to give the answers.”
- **Trust** – People don’t share with someone they can’t trust. A good advisor understands that confidentiality is paramount in his role as a teacher and coach. You will want to share both your ups and downs with your mentor. You should fully expect that information to stay between the two of you. Make sure this is clear.

- **Mutual benefit** – Seeing someone prosper from my life’s experiences has been incredibly rewarding. Helping others brings unexpected mutual benefits like joy and motivation. The late Zig Ziglar (ziglar.com) said it well, “You can get anything out of life if you just help enough others get what they want out of life.” Mentoring requires putting someone else’s well-being, growth, and happiness on par with your own. Both the mentor and mentee should grow from their relationship.

- **Availability** – Be flexible with your time. Work within your mentor’s schedule, not yours. Be clear on what you would like to see as the final outcome from the mentor experience. Know the direction you hope to be taking, including your goals for the next twelve months. When you meet, be prepared with your questions.

A respected expert -The most successful people are always looking for someone who can make them even better. When considering a mentor look for someone who is enthusiastic, a good personality fit, considerate of others, and a respected expert in their field.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. When choosing a mentor, look for someone that suits your needs.
2. Make sure your mentor fits your personality.
3. The right mentor allows you to learn from his/her failures.
4. A good advisor understands that confidentiality is paramount.
5. Choose the most qualified and respected person you can find.