

THE LIST

World-leading executive advisor David Carter offers his top ten tips on how to find the right mentor



#01

DO YOU NEED A MENTOR, CONSULTANT, COUNSELLOR, COACH OR CONFIDANT/E?

A mentor can cover all these roles, but the others can't. Counsellors work on emotional and psychological issues, coaches on behavioural and skills issues, confidant/es on politics and culture issues, and consultants on operational or strategic issues. An experienced mentor will be able to straddle all areas – but also know when to bring in an expert.

#02

DECIDE ON THE ISSUES

Identify clearly the issue that you want to be mentored on. Very often it's not what people know, or even what they know they don't know that trips them up, it's what they don't know they didn't know. So very often a client has turned up thinking, "This is what I want some help with," but – after proper enquiry – we discover that the real issue lies elsewhere. A mentor's objectivity is critical.

#03

HOW TO FIND A MENTOR

Do you already know someone? Ask your network if they can refer or recommend someone (for whom they can give a testimonial). Google 'mentoring'. Do you need a 1:1 mentor? Or

peer mentoring? Find the right offering that meets your needs.

#04

CHECK THEM OUT

Read their testimonials. Talk to their past clients. Ask them which mentee relationships were most and least successful and why. Ask them why they are a mentor. In my old firm, I hired one in every 22 people who applied to be a mentor. A great CV does not a great mentor make.

#05

GET SOME BACKGROUND

Ask them about what they are *not* good at and what they have failed at – and the lessons that they learned. Anyone who hasn't ever failed won't make a great mentor. It's often the war stories and surviving adversity that great

leaders love talking about most in their autobiographies. The mistakes they make and the lessons learnt give mentors their insight. Besides, it shows they have taken some risks – not all of which worked out.

#06

ENSURE AVAILABILITY

Is your mentoring need urgent? Mission critical? Ongoing and developmental? Can the mentor meet you when you are available? It just won't work if you call for a meeting and the next slot they have in their diary is weeks away. A decent mentor will only take on ten clients at any one time. As the client, you also need to set aside time, after the mentoring sessions, to think about and integrate and implement what you have worked on.

#07

BE TRUTHFUL

Be prepared for 100 per cent honesty and vulnerability. Great leaders are self-aware, honest and authentic. How can someone really help you if you are not open? If someone is closed, unwilling to change, to look inside, there is probably no chance of a successful mentoring relationship – or outcome. I have had to fire a few clients over the years because they just weren't

Eminence grise

David Carter mentors everyone from CEOs and entrepreneurs to celebrities and philanthropists

willing to do the work or be honest with themselves.

#08

GAIN MUTUAL TRUST

Without you trusting your mentor and your mentor trusting you, no progress will be made. Do they have any conflicts of interest, hidden agendas, axes to grind, vested interests in the mentoring topic? If they do, don't proceed. For example, you wouldn't ask your spouse to mentor you on your infidelity!

#09

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN TEACH YOUR MENTOR

Mentoring is a two-way relationship. If a mentor isn't passionate about learning, they won't be any good for you. A mentor brings their experience and wisdom and asks better and more informed questions based on these. A fresh pair of eyes asks great questions – without preconceived or opinionated ideas. Good mentors deliberately choose eclectic and diverse clients who they can learn from and then pass on that learning to other clients.

#10

ENJOY YOURSELF

After credibility, the only other critical ingredient is chemistry. Does the mentor like you? Do you like them? Is there mutual respect? True friendships can emerge from a great mentoring relationship. It should be an enjoyable and fun relationship – as well as a serious and growth-based one. ●

Expect to be honest. Great leaders are self-aware and authentic

details

David Carter founded Merryck & Co, the world's leading CEO mentoring company, which he sold in 2010. He now runs his own company as The Mentor. Visit davidcmcarter.com For information on BA's Great Britons mentoring programme, visit ba.com/greatbritons

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What I've learnt
Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones