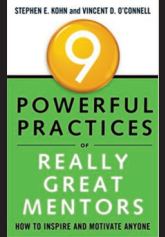


# 9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors

## How to Inspire and Motivate Anyone

Book by Stephen E. Kohn and Vincent D. O'Connell

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## Synopsis

So, you've climbed the corporate ladder and now you want to give back some of your expertise. Mentoring sounds promising, but where do you start? With the nine powerful practices that all really great mentors use, of course!

**9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors** (Career Press, © 2015) explores the nine practices you should follow to become a committed and effective mentor:

- 1 model emotional intelligence
- 2 explore intrinsic and extrinsic motivation early on
- 3 understand different people styles to build rapport
- 4 set and chase stretch goals
- 5 emphasize the value of credibility
- 6 cultivate strategic thinking
- 7 encourage mentees to create their own mentoring plans
- 8 spot and exploit teachable moments
- 9 emphasize the benefits of lifelong learning

The key concepts of **9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors** can be distilled into the following ideas:

### Mentors Accelerate Mentees up the Learning Curve

Mentors do more than show new employees the ropes. They teach and guide mentees to the higher levels of competence in coping with higher levels of responsibility.

### Mentors Need Mentors Too

Mentorship is based on the concept of *continuous* learning and growth, so it's crucial that mentors be trained to fill the mentorship role before they can be committed and effective mentors to others.

### Mentors Are Role Models

Mentees emulate their mentor's behavior because they understand that the mentor's behavior is part of what contributes to their success.

### Mentorship Is Professional and Personal

Mentors give career guidance and coaching, but they are also people the mentee can confide in and socialize with outside of work.



“The powerful mentoring practices we share in this book are the result of contributions from those who have served as mentors, and the lessons they have learned that they have shared with us.”

Based on *9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors: How to Inspire and Motivate Anyone* by Stephen E. Kohn and Vincent D. O'Connell, we discuss the complexities of effective mentorship. We share our interpretations of *9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors* in the following pages.

## Mentoring Defined

Mentoring can be a powerful tool used to bring about meaningful change in your organization. If you want to implement a mentorship program, or become a mentor yourself, it's crucial that you understand the nature of the mentor's role.

### A Case for Mentorship

Companies that neglect their employees' potential could face some serious opportunity costs. For example, it is more expensive to search for and recruit talent from outside the organization than it is to groom talented employees who already work for you. Talented people who are given the right platform can help innovate your organizational processes and generate creative new products or services. But, if you don't help them develop the skills they need or give them the freedom to innovate, you won't benefit from their talent. Mentoring is a great way to develop potential in your organization. Remember, though, that the success of your mentorship program hinges on the ability of your mentors to have a meaningful impact on their mentees, so make sure that mentors have the skills they need to be effective in their role.

### Understand the Complex, Challenging Role of Mentor

A mentor, at its simplest, is a person who wants to pay his or her experience and expertise forward to more junior people—to help guide them on their path to growth and success. But to achieve this goal, a mentor needs to reflect a wide variety of characteristics, which makes the role of mentor both complex and challenging.

There are many facets to the mentoring role: mentors give advice, and sometimes teach the mentees. They are people their mentees can trust. They are available to their mentees outside the limits of the “day job” and its office hours. Mentors help mentees through significant transitions in life, such as taking the next career step, learning a new skill, or making a tough decision. Mentoring relationships are characterized by reciprocated emotional commitment, which often leads to a long-term bond forming between mentor and mentee.

## 3 Principles of Effective Mentoring

Before you can start applying the nine practices of great mentors to your mentoring effort, you need to lay down a strong foundation of basic mentoring competencies. In order for you to effectively help a novice through the learning process, it's important that you understand the principles of self-actualization, self-awareness, and natural empathy.

### Mentoring Toward Self-Actualization

*Self-actualization* is a person's incremental growth toward fulfilling his or her potential. This is a universal need; everyone wants to reach his or her full potential. As a mentor, you'll have to help your mentee grapple with issues like work fulfillment. You should be a sounding board and an advisor when it comes to your mentees' search for fulfillment and meaning in their job—and help them plan their future steps toward such fulfillment.

## Building Self-Awareness

“Knowledge is power” may be a cliché, but it’s one that mentors will do well to remember when thinking about effective mentoring. *Self-awareness* is a powerful tool to have in your toolkit when it comes to the act of mentoring itself, and to making future development plans for your mentee. Part of your job as a mentor is to help your mentees explore and understand their strengths and weaknesses—in other words, to become more self-aware. This enables you to help your mentees play to their strengths and mitigate any risks related to their weaknesses. And nurturing self-awareness in yourself means you’ll have a keener insight into the mentoring relationship and the interactions you have with your mentees. You’ll be better equipped to guide your mentees if you can effectively gauge their emotional reactions too.

## Developing Your Sense of Empathy

Before a mentor can guide or give advice, he or she first needs to understand the mentee as a person. *Empathic behavior* can help you form a deeper understanding of both the person and the particular issue up for discussion. The book outlines tips to become a more empathetic mentor, including:

- **Ask open-ended questions.** This gives you a better understanding of the issue at hand.
- **Don’t rush.** By slowing down, you’re giving your mentee enough time to explore and process the issue.
- **Let the story unfold naturally.** Wait to air your opinion or point out mistakes or problems until after the mentee has given you the entire account. Don’t give your mentees quick fixes; rather, gently nudge them in the right direction and put them on the path to figure it out for themselves.
- **Learn to listen with your full attention.** Don’t spend time thinking about your answer, or latch onto specific statements while ignoring others. Wait until you’ve heard the full story before forming an opinion.

# 9 Powerful Mentoring Practices

Being a mentor is a complex task with a lot of responsibility. In this section, we discuss the nine practices that can help you make a good impact through your mentoring role.

## Model Emotional Intelligence

Your mentee will learn by watching what you do and how you do it, so it’s crucial that you model the right kind of behavior. Demonstrating a mix of key interpersonal skills—known collectively as emotional intelligence—is one of the biggest favors you can do your mentee. Skills such as self-awareness, self-management, and relationship awareness and management aren’t easily learned from books or courses. However, they are skills your mentee can learn by observing your interactions with other people.

## Explore Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Mentees have different motivations for getting a mentor. If they are *intrinsically* motivated, they do it to learn new things, explore what they find interesting, and grow. *Extrinsically* motivated mentees do it to achieve, deliver better results, earn a better salary, or climb the corporate ladder successfully. Your mentoring approach will depend on what type of motivation brought your mentee into the mentoring relationship. It's a good idea to establish the mentee's motivation early on by asking questions such as "Why are we here?" and "What do you hope to gain from this experience?"

## Understand Different People Styles to Build Rapport

Personalities differ, and mentoring relationships between diverse people can often be very productive but, for it to work, mentors need to understand how to build rapport with someone who has a different interaction style than they do. There are four main people styles a mentor should know how to work with:

- **Drivers** are assertive, direct, independent, and driven. Use a fast learning pace, and be willing to stand back and act more as a source of additional information than a hands-on teacher.
- **Expressives** are outgoing, energetic, impulsive, and imaginative, so be prepared to deviate from the formal mentoring plan from time to time. Make the most of their social aptitude, and be sure to give them lots of reinforcement and acknowledgment.
- **Amiables** are team players, easygoing and sensitive to people's feelings. It might fall to you to train an amiable to be more assertive. They are often likeable people, but be careful that this doesn't deter you from pushing them to perform when they aren't advancing as they should.
- **Analyticals** are perfectionists who have a systematic, organized, and task-oriented approach. You'll get good results when you stick to the mentoring plan agreed on initially, but it will also be necessary to push analyticals toward higher goals than those you set out initially. Don't let them get stuck in determining the feasibility of these goals.

Finally, assess your own people style. If it matches your mentee's style, you're well placed to offer support that makes sense to him or her. If it doesn't, tailor your mentoring approach to his or her style.

## Set and Chase Stretch Goals

Stretch goals are aimed at getting the mentee to reach new levels of personal and professional excellence. By nature, these are often lofty ambitions that aren't easy to achieve. They are meant to make the mentees extend themselves in order to grow. But keep in mind that stretch goals are a series of small triumphs, rather than one big win. The mentor's job is to recommend a goal, and then to help the mentee establish a pathway to achieve it.

## Emphasize the Value of Credibility

One of the most important jobs a mentor has is to lead the mentee to greater levels of professional credibility. Point the mentees to sources of information so they can cultivate a credible level of expertise in their field. Help them to apply solid judgment whenever problems arise—for example, equip them with the wisdom to make difficult judgment calls. Another aspect of credibility is to stay abreast of new advances in the field. As a mentor, instill this habit in the mentees and point them toward the right sources of information.

## Cultivate Strategic Thinking

Mentors don't focus solely on behavioral aspects in their teaching. They also teach the mentee how to think. Strategic thinking skills are particularly important for mentees who aspire to leadership roles. There are three thinking behaviors mentors should help their mentees practice. *Strategic attention* enables the mentee to consider future implications of current circumstances, and helps him or her understand the strategic motivation of others. *Integrated reasoning/data interpretation* is the ability to make sense of the data in front of you and engage with it critically before making a decision. This ability is central to leadership roles, but can be useful in any other capacity too. Finally, once the mentee has mastered the first two skills, he or she will be able to generate new insights that can be used to innovate new solutions. Then he or she needs the ability to *advocate for strategic innovation* so his or her insights can be harnessed for positive outcomes.

## Encourage Mentees to Create Their Own Mentoring Plans

It can be a good exercise for mentees to have a hand in creating their own mentoring plans because it helps establish a shared vision of what both parties want to accomplish with the relationship. Mentees should give consideration to areas and skills they want to develop. Once the drafting process is complete, the plan can be represented as a matrix with quadrants for areas for development; activities and methods to develop those areas; specific learning outcomes they want to achieve; and dates for completion. It can also be useful to include a column listing the responsible person. We discuss how to draft a mentoring plan later in the Insights section.

## Spot Teachable Moments and Make the Most of Them

Once a mentoring plan is in place and you know what skills or abilities your mentee needs to work on, you need to keep an eye out for moments that lend themselves to discussing a particular topic. A teachable moment is a point in time when what's happening at that moment offers an opportunity for the mentee to learn something. It takes skill and practice to identify teachable moments and use them to their best effect. Remember that good teachable moments usually include an emotional component to help generate a discussion and open the mentee to insights.

## Emphasize the Benefits of Lifelong Learning

Any mentor worth his or her salt understands that skills are outdated quickly—and this will become even more apparent as we advance further into the age of the knowledge economy. Staying up to date and clued in is a lifelong commitment, so it follows that mentors need to emphasize the importance of lifelong learning to their mentees and equip them with the know-how and mindset to keep their skills relevant.

So, how do you reinforce the value of lifelong learning? Start by making sure your mentees addresses their current knowledge gaps. Once they have the skills they need for the present, you can set your sights on knowledge that will be needed in future. Help your mentees add a lifelong learning section to their mentoring plan that lays down routine continued education through both formal avenues, such as universities and training colleges, and informal avenues, including online learning materials.

## Insights—Guiding Your Mentee up the Learning Curve

### Draft a Mentoring Plan

The authors present a five-step approach you can teach your mentees to develop a draft plan. Start with a self-assessment to identify strengths, current skills, and areas for improvement. Then compare current skills to those that need to be developed. Next, draft a plan that serves as a roadmap to develop the areas required to reach the identified goals. Allow the mentor to review the plan, invest in a discussion, and finally apply any changes the mentor requests.

### Match Mentors with Mentees

Mentor profiles are useful tools for formally matching experienced employees with novices. There are four main mentor profile information categories that can help with the matching process: demographic/background information, the mentor's professional career path, special professional interests, and personal interests.

### Create Customized Challenges for the Mentee

Mentees must be challenged if they're going to grow into excellence. As part of the career coaching aspect of your mentorship role, challenge your mentees' status quo. Set challenges that push them out of their comfort zone.

### Teach Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking is a complex skill that can be broken down into steps. First, focus on analyzing the issue; then apply standards from the industry to understanding it. Teach mentees how to distinguish differences from and similarities to previous issues. Next, look for additional information from the right sources. Finally, set your sights on predicting future behavior and then transforming that into a plan.

### Train Mentors

Mentor training can be broken down into three stages. At the basic training level, mentors learn how to reinforce basic people skills in their mentees. Next, they are trained in the nuances and requirements of the mentoring role. During the final training phase, they acquire the nine powerful practices discussed previously.



## Conclusion

Mentoring is a complex activity with many facets and, while it can be extremely effective and fulfilling if done correctly, the process can also be fraught with pitfalls. This book offers a fully integrated approach to mentoring that can help you chart a course for success—for both yourself and your mentee.

“Mentoring is a highly dynamic role, focused on the learning needs of individual protégés. Our model is intended to enhance the dynamism of the relationship, both as a means to achieve better results and to engender greater satisfaction among mentors in performing this role.”

If you've enjoyed our insights on Stephen Kohn and Vincent O'Connell's *9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors: How to Inspire and Motivate Anyone*, we encourage you to access the other *9 Powerful Practices of Really Great Mentors* assets in the Skillsoft library, or purchase the hardcopy.

## About the Authors



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### Also by the Authors

- 1 *6 Secrets of Highly Effective Teams*, Crimson Publishing, © 2009, ISBN 978-1854584762.
- 2 *6 Habits of Highly Effective Bosses*, Career Press, © 2005, ISBN 978-1564148322.
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- 4 *The People Management Formula: Six Indispensable Human Relations Practices Used by Bosses Everyone Admires Most*, iUniverse, ©2002, ISBN 978-0595244980.