

“5 Reasons why every young HR professional should have a mentor”

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My name is Alex Miller and I am currently finishing my second year in Villanova University's M.S. Human Resource Development Program. I was fortunate enough to participate in an annual mentoring program designed by the faculty of the Human Resource Development program. Each year, the program faculty selects current students and matches them up with seasoned HR professionals depending on experience and interests. The mentoring program provides graduate students with the opportunity to work with successful HR professionals and to continue to develop a range of skill sets. Mentors benefit by accessing fresh talent, improving their leadership skills and building a rapport with Villanova's reputable HRD Graduate Program. I was lucky enough to be paired with an HR professional who shared similar interests within HR including employee relations, compensation, recruiting, and strategic HR. Listed below are 5 reasons why every young HR professional should seek a mentor.

1. Receive Unbiased Opinions

Whether in school, working at an internship, or fresh into the start of your career, you may find yourself in a situation in which you have no one to confer with. Maybe you are tasked with an overwhelming project and you do not know where to begin, or you are finding yourself struggling with balancing work and school. Perhaps you would like someone with an outside perspective to talk to. A mentor can provide help in all of these areas. A mentor can offer un-biased opinions with a different perspective that you would have otherwise maybe not have considered.

2. Career Planning

Although everyone is ultimately responsible for their own careers, it may be daunting to try and understand how to navigate the very broad field of HR. Whether you would like to pursue a generalist-to-manager track, or would like to specialize in a certain area of HR, discussing the pros and cons with someone can be very beneficial. Seeking a mentor who has similar career aspirations will allow you to understand the steps needed to get to where they are now. You may also discuss your goals together and receive recommendations for how to achieve your goals and direct you to where you want to be.

3. Opportunities and Networking

“Instead of better glasses, your network gives you better eyes” Ronald Burt, an American Sociologist and Professor of Sociology and Strategy at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, once said. Developing a relationship with a mentor will not only strengthen your personal relationship with that person, but it will strengthen your professional network as well. Whether you are looking for a new job, have questions about specific industries, or wish you knew someone who had an expertise in a specific area, your

mentor could know and help you connect with a specific person who might be better able to assist you. With the advancement of social media, the world has become a lot smaller. One person cannot do everything, so the stronger your network is, the easier it becomes for you to reach your professional goals.

4. Learning Outside of the Classroom

I believe you should always strive to develop yourself personally and professionally. Having a mentor will allow you to learn from someone who has real-world experience and who can personalize his or her experiences to help you learn. Whether it is advice on how to prepare for an exam, how to tweak your resume, or how to answer specific questions during an interview, a mentor can give you one-on-one coaching suited to your personal goals.

5. Inspiration and Motivation

The road to success is not always going to be sunshine and rainbows. More often than not, you will most likely encounter hardships and roadblocks that can derail your focus from your goals. A mentor can provide guidance and reassurance that the tough times will not last forever. They can provide personal stories about how they overcame certain obstacles to get to where they are now. They can put everything in perspective from an outsider's point of view.