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Why Mentorship Matters—Through Every Phase Of Your Career



Patrick Galleher Forbes Councils Member

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Patrick Galleher is the Managing Partner of [Boxwood Partners](#), an investment bank in Jupiter, Florida, where he leads sell-side transactions.



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As managing partner of a boutique midmarket advisory firm, I've come a long way from where I started in my career. While it took

years of education, hard work and firsthand experience to reach my professional goals, I was also blessed with mentors along the way who generously shared their time and knowledge to help me succeed.

A true professional mentor will always have your best interests at heart. They will voluntarily devote themselves to teaching you the ropes—as long as you are willing to put in the work.

For me, that person was Peter Wakeham, an industry advisor for financial technology and food and beverage brands. I've received guidance and benefited from the wisdom he has shared from his years of experience in the financial world.

Having mentors to cheer you on and reassure you as you face different obstacles is essential. For example, Peter taught me how important it is to define the culture, rather than letting it define you.

Perhaps due to the value I gained from having a mentor, I've made it a top priority to mentor others who are just starting their careers in the finance industry. I believe mentorship sets you up for success, no matter where you are in your career.

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Mentorship And Internships Go Hand In Hand

An academic education provides one kind of value, but nothing prepares you for a career—especially in the financial world—quite like firsthand experience. Internships offer an excellent opportunity for college students and recent graduates to learn the ins and outs of the industry. Many of them even return to the companies they intern for later in their careers.

One of the reasons internships are so beneficial is because interns receive real-world feedback to better understand industry standards and norms and, ultimately, improve their work.

The guidance they receive sticks with them throughout their careers, and by the time their internship is over, they have an in-depth understanding of how they can continue to utilize their knowledge and experience in the next chapters of their career. Internships also encourage collaboration with those at all levels, including other interns, and instill confidence in young professionals.

Mentoring Vs. Managing

Mentorship is not about telling others what to do; it's about inspiring, influencing and, ultimately, supporting.

A great mentor is fair, but disciplined. They are not there to micromanage, but to lead the way.

They are your biggest cheerleader, but they also hold you accountable when needed. They help you to learn from your mistakes and walk you through how you can apply each lesson to your future work.

Your mentor should help you set goals and help you persevere through any roadblocks that come your way. They are there

through the good and the bad, and many mentorships last for years, or even decades.

Helping You Reach Your Full Potential

Mentorship is a balancing act between providing support while also respecting independence. It requires trust and reliability on both ends. Oftentimes, mentors help give a little “nudge”—leading you to some of your biggest career (and personal) breakthroughs.

No matter what stage of your career you’re in, it’s easy to get caught up in day-to-day tasks. Mentors can help remind you when it’s time to take a step back to look at the bigger picture.

One of the most valuable aspects of having a mentor is their ability to help you look at things from another perspective—whether it’s their own or someone else’s. An everyday work task for you could be working toward a major milestone for a client.

Mentoring Is Mutually Beneficial

A mentor often helps themselves as much as their mentees. For example, taking on the responsibility to help someone else often reenergizes you to reach your own objectives. It is rewarding to know you’re helping someone else both create and obtain their professional goals. It’s a classic “giving is receiving” equation.

Behind every successful business owner, entrepreneur or corporate executive is a professional mentor. Seeking a mentor to receive an outside perspective from someone you admire and respect who will listen to you, challenge you, hold you accountable and share guidance to help you grow is among the best professional decision you will ever make.

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