

# Mentors can unlock the genius in you

**GUIDANCE** V Pradeep Kumar highlights the importance of choosing good mentors to achieve academic and professional success

The year was 1975. I had joined a degree course, completely dejected, having failed to get an engineering seat, which was the route to my dream career. With no focus, I was doing badly in the course. Eventually, I caught the attention of my mathematics professor who called me over to his office. He was a great listener and allowed me to pour out my woes. When I had finished, he smiled and said, "Perhaps, it's good you missed engineering". I was surprised and asked him how. He said, "Let's find out."

He headed the counselling department and took me through various tests to check my aptitude, verbal reasoning and numerical ability. A few sessions later, I sat nervously to know the result. He smiled and said, "It's good you missed engineering". He explained that the results recommended that I should be doing a management

course and not engineering. Becoming my mentor, he continued to guide me, until I finished my MBA and got a campus placement. Like a true mentor, he made positive contributions to my life. This can happen in your life too.

The word mentor comes from a Greek myth. Mentor was the name of Odysseus' friend, entrusted with the education of Odysseus' son Telemachus. A mentor is a guide, a counsellor, or a Guru, who has the required expertise as well as the time and inclination to assist you in choosing the right career and the right course.

Further, a mentor can guide you until you join the chosen course or be with you in your professional career as well.

## Role of a mentor

Globalisation has created newer business opportunities and millions of new jobs. Further, the economy has several unconventional and off-beat career options too. However, while career options have multiplied, they are extremely competitive. In a world of new opportunities, the role of a mentor is even more critical in helping you choose the right course.

A mentor makes you realise if your aptitude and skill sets actually support your dream career. They understand your strengths and help you avoid career and course related mistakes. Importantly, if you face obstacles, they stay with you, providing support and

inspiration.

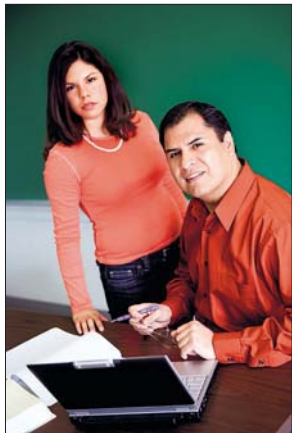
Typically, mentors are great listeners, making you relax and open up.

When disappointments of a degree or an entrance exam

trigger negative emotions, they willingly provide vent to such suppressed emotions. Radiating positive energy, they prepare you to consider new ideas with an open mind.

## Who can be a mentor?

A mentor can be anyone from a professional advisor to a family member. In general, a mentor should have academic, **Continued on page 4**



# Guidance & more

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economic and industry overview from both a short-term and long-term perspective. They easily relate your career preference to the knowledge and skill sets required for achieving excellence in that field. For example, if you want to get into corporate sector, your mentor can be someone senior in the corporate sector. Or, if you wish take up teaching, your mentor can be a director or dean of an institution.

## Pursuing excellence through your mentor

- Understand your interests and strengths, if required, through tests.
- Shortlist your preferred career options.
- Look for a mentor to guide you. The mentor should be knowledgeable and approachable.
- Discuss career prospects with your mentor and decide on the right course and the institute. For example, for a career in marketing, you can choose an MBA course.
- Determine what additional skill sets are

required. For example, a short course in personality development for a marketing career.

- Establish the right relationship with your mentor. Be an active listener, seeking clarifications and guidance.
- Build your contacts using the network of your mentor.
- If your mentor is from the profession of your choice, understand their perspective and insight.
- Importantly, cultivate the right values, ethics and resources that's required for long-term professional success.
- Think of ways to compliment your mentor for the time and energy they invest on you.

A mentor shares knowledge and wisdom and, in the process, kindles your mind to think and choose the right course and the right career. A mentor is someone whose hindsight can become your foresight to realise your highest potential and pursue your dream course.

(The writer is a management and career consultant.)

