

JT: I recently had a chance to speak with the magazine industry's 2008 Mentor of the Year, Kevin Martinez, Associate Publisher of *Harper's Bazaar*, on the subject of finding and using a mentor. As a mentor to many individuals, Kevin believes that it is every executive's job to mentor as many people as they can. You can tell he enjoys mentoring others, but that he also expects them to do their part in the mentoring relationship – here are his valuable insights in to building an effective mentoring relationship:

What was the best way you've been approached to be someone's mentor?

I get approached by all sorts of people for advice: the children of friends, staff members and even complete strangers. I think the ones that impress me most are the people who get my name off the masthead of the magazine. In essence, they are cold-calling me. I think they choose me because I am an Associate Publisher and therefore, in their mind, I am more accessible. Even still, I find that courage to reach out to me impressive. . Ironically, I get a lot more requests for career guidance now that I am working at a fashion publication. Yet, I would encourage people to seek out some of the wonderful mentors who don't work for fashion mags, but do have a lot of insight into the publishing industry.

What have the individuals you currently mentor said and done right to convince you to take them on?

I am always interested in helping someone who has done their homework on me and my industry. The time we spend together can be highly productive if they've come prepared with smart questions that will allow me to fill in the gaps where their research came up short. I am not impressed when a person who has asked to speak to me comes to the meeting, leans back in their chair, and with a casual attitude says, "Tell me about the publishing business."

I also like to see that they recognize that I have a full-time job, and therefore are flexible with the times they can meet. A cup of coffee before or after work is going to fit into my schedule a lot better than in the middle of a jam-packed, meeting-filled day at the office. Lastly, I expect them to understand that meeting with me doesn't guarantee them a job. While I might be able to make an occasional professional introduction on their behalf, the work still needs to be done on their end to land a job.

In your opinion, what makes a great person to mentor? What traits do you look for before taking someone on?

One of the greatest mentoring relationships I have is with a current employee, Christina Krollopp. I met her years ago when I was in magazine ad sales. She owned her own retail store and advertised with us. She told me flat out that she wanted to get into magazine ad sales, but had no experience. Her energy and passion for it was clear, but at the time, I had no openings for her. We stayed in touch and when the day finally came, I offered her the opportunity to work for me. She closed up her business and joined my staff as a complete novice. I mentored her extensively for six months, giving her feedback and pushing her to succeed. Soon she was up and running. To this day, she is still one of my top producers. I knew she would be a success because of her attitude and enthusiasm to learn what it takes to succeed in this business. She was also very clear in what she wanted to accomplish, which made it easier to work with her and give her feedback she could leverage to her advantage.

How can a recent college grad seek a mentor when they A) don't have a job, B) don't have a clear idea of what they want to do for work, and C) don't know what industry they want to be in?

First, I'd say you have more contacts than you realize. Reach out to your family and your friends' parents. Ask what they do for work and if it sounds interesting, see if you can set up an informational interview.

Also, be sure to follow up on any introductions that are made on your behalf. Many executives are too busy to reach out to you, so get their e-mail addresses and introduce yourself. Don't be shy, but do be polite and respectful. If you want to meet with them then you need to do all the coordinating to make it happen.

Finally, if you are lucky enough to get an informational interview, make sure you are prepared. Be engaging in the meeting by asking questions that show you've done your homework. Make sure your body language shows you are interested and respectful. While you don't have to be over-the-top with excitement, you should lean in and show your enthusiasm for the opportunity you are being given. And, if the person you are meeting with offers to make some introductions on your behalf be sure you follow through and keep them posted on your progress.