



Shawn Mintz

**HOW A FEW MINUTES
WITH THE RIGHT PERSON
CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

Dedication

To my wife Ilmee and daughters Kimmy and Serena — for being my inspiration.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Uncle Barry Siskind and Auntie Barbara Siskind. They have worked with me during every stage of this development process and lead me through the process of bringing this book to readers. I appreciate their support, encouragement, advice and for taking the time to share their knowledge and expertise with me. I would also like to thank my Aunty Beverley Kassirer Shniffer for her amazing eye for detail and proofreading ability.



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Introduction

Congratulations! By reading this book, you have taken the first step in a journey to create a new and more powerful you. But you can't just sit back waiting for the right mentor to come knocking at your door. To be truly successful, you need to proactively engage in a process that will ensure you find the right people to give you the help and guidance you need. If you ask successful people how they accomplished what they did, many will credit having a mentor guiding them as the single most important relationship that they had. By reaching out, you will find countless people who are willing and able to help you take the steps that will lead you to success. These people are your mentors.

This book is the first in a series of guides that will help you navigate your road to success. It provides simple techniques to help you maneuver your way through your first encounter with a potential mentor. Whether you are looking to have new career opportunities, advance in your current role, develop new skills, build your network or work through a difficult life transition, mentors are effective in helping you reach your goals.

You've taken the first step and now your amazing journey is about to begin.

Setting Mentoring Objectives

All good plans have a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning gives you a chance to gaze into the future, determine the direction you wish to take and the result you hope to achieve. The middle includes the steps you need to take, and the end gives you a chance to assess your success. Whether you are advancing your career or your life, setting objectives is the first step.

Well-articulated objectives are important for a number of reasons. They set out reasonable and measurable goals, provide important clues as to the types of mentors you need and provide a means for periodically checking your progress.

Take some time to think about what you would like to achieve by having a mentor. The following are a few examples of mentoring objectives:

- Choosing the right university or college
- Building leadership skills
- Asking for a promotion or raise at work
- Developing a business plan
- Starting a small business
- Balancing work and life responsibilities
- Becoming more productive at work
- Networking in my industry
- Choosing my next career
- Handling a conflict in the workplace

Now think of the ideal mentor who can help you achieve your goal. Write down the characteristics you are looking for and the skill set or expertise a mentor will need to help you. Some examples of questions you could ask yourself about a potential mentor are:

- What is their area of expertise?
- Do they run a successful business?
- Is there a specific company you would prefer they work for?
- What industry are they in and what is their job function?
- How many years of experience would you prefer they have?
- In which city are they working?
- Are you looking for male or female mentors or does it matter?
- Are they connected to a cause that you are passionate about?
- Have they experienced a similar life event as you?

Use the following worksheet and/or the worksheet at the back of this book to begin the process of developing your mentoring objectives:

Mentoring Objective	Criteria of My Ideal Mentor	Name of Your Ideal Mentors

Types of Mentors

Mentors are more than people who are willing to take time to help you. In fact, there are several different kinds of mentors. Knowing the type of mentor that will work best in your current situation requires an understanding of what each can bring to the table. There are four broad categories of mentors: networking mentors, career mentors, project mentors and personal mentors. By having an understanding of the various types of mentors, you will be able to reach out to the right mentor at the right time.

The Networking Mentor

The networking mentor is someone that you may meet by chance. You will know if the person is a networking mentor if the conversation inspires you and gives you ideas. You may be at an event and meet someone who speaks with passion and shares insights. By the end of the conversation, you may have a few tips that you can integrate into your life, motivating you to try new things. The conversation may have increased your strength and confidence.

The Career Mentor

A career mentor is someone who understands the nuances of the career you are exploring. This mentor provides you with insights into the profession; helps you develop your résumé; reveals the best places to network; and talks about books, conferences, and other professional sources to contact as well as tips and strategies on how to handle yourself during an interview. The career mentor can help you develop your leadership and communication skills, show you how to build your personal brand, explain the various roles in that industry and provide you with contacts.

The Project Mentor

The project mentor can answer your specific questions about a project that you are working on or a topic that you are interested in learning more about. If, for example, you are creating a new business or developing a life or career plan and you are not sure where to start, a project mentor will be able to answer some of your key questions. The project mentor can help you in learning a new technology, harnessing social media, managing your finances, learning more about investments and any other topic that you would like to gain knowledge in.

The Personal Mentor

The personal mentor can help you deal with life changes. The ideal personal mentor is someone who has experienced what you are currently going through and who would be able to provide you with sound advice and reassurance. For example, if you have recently been diagnosed with cancer and are currently going through treatment, you may want to speak to a cancer survivor who will be able to speak about their own experiences and answer your questions. You could also reach out to a personal mentor for advice on relationships, addictions, mental health, pregnancy, sexual orientation and disabilities.

Can one mentor be all four types? You bet they can! But the best way to get going is to focus on your immediate need. Once you have built a relationship with your mentor, they can transition into a networking mentor, career mentor, project mentor or personal mentor depending on the advice you require at that time.

Finding Mentors

You are now ready to begin your search for mentors through MentorCity.com, social media sites, search engines and people in your existing network.

MentorCity.com

The amazing thing about MentorCity is its focus. Everyone who has registered has expressed an interest in creating a mentoring relationship. All you need to do is register and start searching for a mentor who can help you achieve even greater success. The following are a few tips on how to use MentorCity effectively:

Your Profile

- When you are creating your profile, include as much information as possible. Potential mentors will be evaluating your profile to see if there is a good fit. The more information you include, the better the recommended matches will be.
- Be honest with yourself about your soft skills. Soft skills are your personal attributes that describe how you interact with others (e.g., how effective you are at giving and receiving feedback, your teamwork skills and networking skills). This information will not be displayed on your profile but will help the system match you with someone who has strengths in those areas you would like to improve.
- In the professional profile section, your summary should include a list of your specialized skills, such as product marketing and business-to-business sales.

- If you import your profile from LinkedIn, check your profile to ensure that all of the details are correct. For example, check your employment section to ensure that each of your jobs has the correct industry listed.

Mentoring Requests

- Take the time to think about what you would like to achieve from a mentor by developing a mentoring objective. Your mentoring objective could be to develop your leadership capabilities, develop a business plan, choose the right college or university, ask for a promotion at work, or learn strategies to have a good work/life balance. Once you have formulated your mentoring objective, the type of mentor and your goals should align with your objective.

MentorCity Home Profile Find a Mentor Your Relationships Invite Friends [Shawn Metz](#)

Basic Information **Mentor Criteria**

*** Mentoring Objective**

Leadership Capabilities

A few words that describe your mentoring request

[\(Show examples\)](#)

Summary

I am looking for an experienced leader who successfully guides teams to achieve remarkable results.

Describe the type of mentor that you are seeking

[\(Show examples\)](#)

*** Goals**

To develop my self-confidence

To become a stronger public speaker

List a few goals that you would like to achieve

[\(Show examples\)](#) [+ Add another goal](#)

*** Preferred Meeting Formats (multiple)**

In-person Live text chat Over the telephone Video conferencing

How do you prefer to meet with your mentor?

Additional information

I have a few years experience leading small teams. We achieve our goals, but I feel as though I am always delegating tasks to them. I want to inspire my team to be more self-directed and to have a deeper level of commitment to the organization.

Provide additional information that you would like potential mentors to know about you

[\(Show examples\)](#)

* = Mandatory fields

Searching for Mentors

- The symbol at the top right corner of each profile indicates how compatible you are with the potential mentor. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 (1 being not very compatible and 5 being very compatible).
- If your search doesn't display any mentors, refine your search until you have a few potential mentors to choose from. If you can't find the right mentor right away, visit the site weekly to check for new registrants.
- Read each mentor's profile in detail to determine if they have the skills and personality you are looking for in a mentor.
- The mentor will be evaluating your message, request and profile to see if they would be a good mentor for you. In your message, write down why you are inviting this person to be your mentor; how you think they will be able to help you; and what you like about their skills, background and expertise. It is an honour to be asked to be someone's mentor. Let them know that you are excited about the possibility of having a conversation with them. If the mentor declines your invitation, don't take it personally. It may be that they don't think they would be the right mentor for you at this time. If an invitation is declined, keep searching. Here is an example of a message to the mentor:

I was reading through your profile and was really impressed by all of your (insert industry) experience. I'm currently exploring a career in the (insert industry) and would love the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of working in this industry with you. Thank you for your consideration.

- If you haven't received a response within a few days of sending the invitation, you may want to send a friendly follow-up message. Use the Send Message section reiterating your interest in having an initial conversation with them. Here is an example of a follow-up message:

I hope that you are well. I just wanted to follow-up and let you know that I'm excited about the possibility of having a short conversation with you. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

The Initial 15-Minute Meeting

- Use the Send Message section on MentorCity to set up your initial meeting
- Review the mentee tips that are provided on your relationship page and/or the chapter titled The Mentoring Conversation. This will help you prepare for the conversation.

Your Initial Evaluation

- After the 15-minute conversation, complete the initial evaluation so you can decide on the type of relationship that you would like to establish with the mentor. Your next steps fall into one of three categories:

If you feel that you can gain more from the mentor and would like to establish a structured relationship, you may want to select a formal relationship.

If you would like to reach out to the mentor on an as-needed basis, you may want to select informal relationship.

If you feel that you have gained all that you need to from this mentor, you can say no to both a formal and informal relationship and the relationship will come to an end.

- The mentor will also be indicating a preference as to the type of relationship. Let's say that you want a formal relationship and the mentor prefers an informal relationship. In that case, the relationship automatically becomes informal.

The screenshot shows the MentorCity website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the MentorCity logo and links for Home, Profile, Find a Mentor, Your Relationships, and Invite Friends. A user profile 'Shawn Mintz' is visible in the top right. Below the navigation bar, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Your Relationships / To Learn, Study On, Balls / Initial evaluation'. The main heading is 'Your Initial Evaluation'. A note states: 'Please be honest about your experiences, your evaluation will not be shared with your mentoring partner.' The first question is 'Would you like to set up a formal mentoring relationship with this mentor? In a formal relationship, the mentor and mentee will create a mentoring agreement and meet on an ongoing basis.' There are two radio button options: 'Yes' and 'No'. The second question is 'What did you gain from this interaction?' followed by a text input field. The third question is 'Overall, how would you rate this interaction?' with five radio button options: '1 - Not valuable', '2 - Somewhat valuable', '3 - Valuable', '4 - Truly valuable', and '5 - Extremely valuable'. At the bottom of the form, there are 'Save Changes' and 'Cancel' buttons. The footer contains a navigation menu with links: 'How it Works', 'About Mentoring', 'For Companies', 'Blog', 'About Us', 'User Agreement', 'Privacy Statement', 'Feedback', and 'Contact Us'. It also includes social media icons for 'Follow' and 'Like', contact information 'Contact Us: 647.963.6670 | info@mentorcity.com', and a copyright notice 'Copyright ©2012 MentorCity Inc.'

Your Mentoring Relationship

- On your MentorCity relationship page, review the information provided about formal relationships or informal relationships, depending on the relationship that you have established.
- Review the next steps, as they will guide you and the mentor through the mentoring process.
- Use the Send Message section for agendas, questions and rescheduling meetings. This section acts as a diary for the entire mentoring relationship.
- During your first formal relationship meeting, go through the mentoring agreement to determine the expectations of the relationship. Once you save the agreement, a copy will be sent to the mentor's Documents section.
- It is your responsibility to keep the relationship on track. If a meeting is cancelled, it is your responsibility as a mentee to reschedule.

[Your Relationships](#) / Would Like To Establish A Training Institute

Mentoring Objective: Would Like To Establish A Training Institute

1 Invitation Sent 2 Initial Interaction 3 Relationship Established

You are currently at stage 3 - Relationship Established

Next steps:

1. Congratulations, you have established a formal relationship.
2. To prepare for your next meeting, read [Formal Relationships](#)
3. Set up your meeting using the Send Message feature below
4. To complete your formal relationship, fill out the [Final Evaluation](#)

Goals:

Check off the goals that have been achieved

- To develop business with revenues of \$ 2 million in 3 years time
- To become a strong public speaker

Send Message

Messages can be seen by both parties below and will be sent to the recipient in an email

[Send](#)

Messages

Friday Feb 10 2012 05:03 AM by Shawn Mintz

Hi Duong, This is great news! I look forward to hearing more about your conversation with Sang and the direction that his advice is leading you in. Also, if you would like, we should work on our mentoring agreement, to determine the length of our mentoring relationship, etc. Talk to you soon, Shawn

Tuesday Feb 07 2012 03:30 PM by Janet Lee

Hi Shawn, I had a meeting with Mr. Duong and it was a nice meeting in which I came away with a couple of ideas. Duong was generous in sharing his ideas. Thanks to you once again for his reference.

People



Shawn Mintz (mentor)
President at MentorCity
Active since November 2011

[View your profile](#)



Janet Lee (mentee)
Sales Associate
Group
Active since January 2012

[View Janet profile](#)

Documents

[Mentee's Request](#)
[Mentor Tips](#)
[Formal Relationships](#)
[Initial Evaluation](#)
[Final Evaluation](#)

Your Final Evaluation

- If you would like to terminate a relationship before it officially ends, contact the mentor, let them know the reason and thank them for their time. You can then complete the final evaluation. Once both parties have completed the final evaluation, the relationship is over.

The screenshot shows the MentorCity website interface for a final evaluation. The navigation bar at the top includes 'MentorCity', 'Home', 'Profile', 'Find a Mentor', 'Your Relationships', 'Invite Friends', and a user profile 'Shawn Metz'. The breadcrumb trail reads 'Your Relationships > Would Like To Establish A Training Institute > Final evaluation'. The main heading is 'Your Final Evaluation'. Below it, a note states: 'Please be honest about your experiences, your evaluation will not be shared with your mentoring partner.' The form contains three text input fields with the following questions: 'How has this mentoring relationship helped you grow professionally?', 'What was the most valuable aspect of this relationship?', and 'If there was one thing that you could change, what would it be?'. Below these is a rating section titled 'Overall, how would you rate this mentoring relationship?' with five radio button options: '1 - Not valuable', '2 - Somewhat valuable', '3 - Valuable', '4 - Truly valuable', and '5 - Extremely valuable'. At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'Save Changes' and 'Cancel'. The footer contains a navigation menu with links for 'How It Works', 'About Mentoring', 'For Companies', 'Blog', 'About Us', 'User Agreement', 'Privacy Statement', 'Feedback', and 'Contact Us'. It also includes social media icons for 'Follow' and 'Like', contact information 'Contact Us: 847.863.6670 / info@mentorty.com', and a copyright notice 'Copyright ©2013 MentorCity Inc.'

Social Media Sites

Searching for a mentor on social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, can be helpful. You can use key words, hash tags, company names, job titles and locations as your search terms. You can also join discussion groups and reach out to someone who is providing valuable advice. I was speaking with a human resources professional who has been a mentor to someone who reached out to him through a social media site. The mentee reached out to him for some support on her job search and the mentor was eager to help someone in his industry because he had mentors who helped him throughout his career. They have been having an outstanding mentoring relationship for over a year. He has guided her on several topics and connected her to his contacts in the human resources industry.

Search Engines

An added benefit of using search engines, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo, is that you may find websites, blogs and articles about the topic you are interested in. You can reach out to the author, as a potential mentor or as a referral to someone who could be your mentor. As an example, I was looking for a mentor who could help me with my pricing strategy. I did a Google search and came across a webinar on YouTube. The webinar was helpful so I decided to reach out to the speaker who is an expert in software pricing. He agreed to a call and provided me with the insights that I required at that time. He is now a part of my network, he recently sent me his eBook, and he invites me to attend his webinars.

Your Network

Everyone has a network. It could include your family, friends, colleagues and teachers. An interesting first step is to make a list of everyone you know. You will quickly realize that your personal network can include hundreds of people. The value of this list is not simply whether an individual can help you directly or not, it is in the contacts that each member of your personal network has access to. For example, if you have 200 people in your network and each person has 200 people in their individual networks, the web you can potentially cast is enormous.

Use the following worksheet and/or the worksheet at the back of this book to begin listing the people in your network:

Family Members	Friends	Business Contacts	Others

Reaching Out to Potential Mentors

Now that you have identified names of potential mentors, you need a strategy for reaching them. This may be combination of phone calls, voicemail messages and email.

Phone Calls

The advantage of the telephone is that you can speak directly to your potential mentors. You can let them know that you would love to have a 15-minute conversation with them and that their expertise would help you achieve your specific objective (let them know what that is). At this point, you can ask the potential mentors if they have 15 minutes available, either at that time, or if there is a better time to call them back. As long as the potential mentor is not rushing off to a meeting or working to a tight deadline, the mentor may be able to spend a few minutes with you immediately. It is very rewarding for the mentor to be able to give back in such a short period of time to someone who has taken the time to seek them out, based on their expertise.

Voicemail Messages

If you reach the potential mentor's voicemail, leave a short message. Introduce yourself and explain how you found them. Mention that it would be an honour to have a short 15-minute conversation with them, and leave your phone number. If you do not hear back from them in a couple of days, send them an email or make another phone call. Refer to your voicemail message and reiterate why you would like to set up a short conversation with them. Don't be offended if you do not hear back from someone; that doesn't mean they don't want to help you out. You may want to follow up the following week, but think strategically in your follow up and do not call or write too many times. If you have tried reaching them three times and haven't heard back, focus your energy on connecting with other potential mentors. Recently, I heard back from a mentor a few months after leaving voicemail messages and sending an email. She responded when I invited her to join me on LinkedIn.

Email

Craft an email message, and let them know what impresses you about them. It may be that they are well respected in the industry, won an award, were quoted in an article or may have been on TV recently. Then explain that you would love the opportunity to have a 15-minute conversation to discuss your specific goals. Recommend a few dates and times, and thank them for their consideration.

The Mentoring Conversation

Congratulations, you have booked the initial 15-minute conversation with a potential mentor and now it's time to have the meeting. To make a successful call, you need to be prepared. Ensure your voice is friendly and that you remain positive throughout the entire conversation. Being prepared, upbeat and focused will help ensure the initial conversation is successful.

It's normal to feel a bit nervous. Trying to rid yourself of anxiety may not be realistic, but here are a few simple tips used by mentees and mentors that have helped reduce their anxiety:

- Practise your conversation beforehand in front of the mirror or with a friend or colleague.
- Practise breathing deeply.
- Eating healthy food and getting lots of exercise helps you develop positive coping mechanisms.
- Put the call in perspective. You are not asking for a job, you are just having a 15-minute conversation.

Before Each Call

Here are a few things that you should do to get ready for the call:

1. Set a goal for the conversation. At the end of the 15 minutes, do you want more information about how to brand a product, get a referral to someone within that person's network, set up a face-to-face meeting with that individual, establish a good working relationship with that person, or get some advice on your résumé?

2. Do some quick research about the company and the person you will be talking to by visiting the company's website, doing a Google search, reviewing their LinkedIn profile and talking to people in your personal network who may know this individual.
3. Practise prior to your call. Record yourself and when you play it back, listen for a clear, upbeat, positive and professional voice. The first call is always the hardest and will likely take the most time to prepare for.
4. Set a timer to keep track of your 15-minute conversation. You can use a web-based timer or your smart phone. If the call is going beyond the allotted time, acknowledge this with the person and ask whether they want to reschedule or if they have the time now.

Use the following worksheet and/or the worksheet at the back of this book to prepare for the 15-minute call. The remainder of this chapter will provide you with examples of how to structure your call, build rapport, ask questions and wrap up the conversation.

Do some quick research on your mentor. Visit the company website, view their LinkedIn profile, conduct a Google search, etc.

Set a goal for the conversation (e.g., to gain tips on how to brand a product)

Plan your icebreaker with topics on the weather, weekend, vacation, holiday, etc.

Create a list of questions (e.g., what are some of the keywords that I should include on my résumé?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How will you close the conversation (e.g., summarize conversation, discuss action items, determine if you will be staying in touch)?

Staying Focused

One of the best bits of advice I learned early in my career was the power of focus. You have taken the first step with the development of your objectives and your search for the type of mentors who can help you best. But focus also means being able to keep your attention in the present. There are so many distractions, such as texts, phone calls, colleagues in the office, and so on. During your 15-minute

conversation, it's crucial to avoid the tendency to be distracted. Find a quiet place out of the sight and sounds of others while you are making that all important first contact with a potential mentor. If another call comes in during your conversation, do not pick it up. Avoid checking your email or surfing the web during your mentoring meeting.

I remember the advice given to me by one of my professors. On the day of his first class, I had just lost a major contract and I couldn't get it off my mind. During the class he obviously noticed that I was not fully engaged. After the class, he asked me to stay behind. He told me that in order to succeed, I would have to learn how to compartmentalize my life. When I was in class, it was important to put other parts of my life on hold. He told me that learning how to compartmentalize was one of the most difficult things he had ever had to learn. One of the tips he gave me was to make a list before class of things I needed to do after the class ended. The list eased my mind and allowed me to give his class my full attention. That simple bit of advice changed my life. I am now a consummate list maker, which allows me to be fully engaged when I am having dinner with my family or spending my time promoting MentorCity.

During every interaction, whether in-person or on the telephone, you want the other person to feel as if they matter and are important. Take a few minutes to stay engaged and focused on the conversation. By doing this, you will truly benefit from what they say. I listened intently to an individual as he told me about an accident that he and his family were involved in that changed their lives. I believe that by listening, he felt that someone understood what he was going through. For me, I remembered every detail of his story. He inspired me and I became more aware of our capabilities as humans, how we adapt to various circumstances and the inner strength that we all have that is waiting to be unleashed.

Developing this level of focus is a skill that requires ongoing practise and patience. Think of each conversation as a way to learn and to really connect with others. Practise the following skills during every opportunity that you have—at work, during a phone call, or at a networking event—and you will see that you are building stronger and more enriching relationships. Staying focused should be your number one rule in life.

Now that you have practised, and are focused and prepared, it's time to master your interpersonal skills. These are the skills that will help you implement all that you have planned to date. The trick to a solid set of interpersonal skills is to understand the principles in the next section of the book, practise each skill whenever possible and integrate what you have learned into your personality. What works for one person doesn't necessarily work for another, so take the time and make sure these new skills are those you feel comfortable with.

Step 1: Building Rapport

The people you have the best conversations with are those you feel most comfortable with. Sometimes this level of comfort comes easily while other times it takes a great amount of work. In either case, developing the skills to build rapport will serve you well throughout your life.

A 15-minute conversation is short and you have a lot to achieve within that time frame, but taking the first minute or so to break the ice sets a positive tone for the rest of the meeting. Building rapport helps you get to know the person a little better and gives you important clues into the person's interests and perspectives.

While engaging your mentor, listen to their voice carefully for clues as to whether they would like to continue speaking casually or if they would like to get down to business. In one interaction, I started a

conversation by asking a mentor how her Friday was. She answered by saying that it was crazy. Her voice was rushed and this suggested to me that she wasn't interested in small talk, so I quickly moved on in our conversation. At the end of the call, I summarized my action items and let her know that I would be sending her something within the hour. I also wished her a wonderful holiday weekend. It seemed as though she appreciated this approach and that this new mentoring relationship was off to a terrific start.

The way we communicate plays a big role in the rapport that we are able to build and the relationship that we establish. In 1968, Albert Mehrabian wrote a thesis titled "Communication without Words," in which he found that verbal communication (what we say) accounts for 7 percent of the impression that we make; paraverbal (how our voice sounds, our tone and our intonation) accounts for 38 percent; and non-verbal (our facial expressions, eye contact, space between us, hand gestures, etc.) accounts for 55 percent. Whether you are meeting someone in person or having a phone conversation, be aware of your verbal, paraverbal and non-verbal communication. You may think that the non-verbal isn't important during a phone conversation, but some of it does come across. When you get excited about something, your smile and how you are animated is conveyed over the phone.

Approach each and every interaction with a positive attitude, energy and passion. Let people witness what makes you special and remarkable. As a good example of Albert Mehrabian's thesis, I remember having the opportunity to observe a major newspaper's editorial meeting. The editors and writers all sat around a table and in a monotone voice, spoke about what they felt should be in the paper and the angle for every story. It seemed as though they weren't excited about their jobs or the stories. In the afternoon, I went to another meeting about the features that went into the paper. This

was attended by some of the same people as the first meeting. The atmosphere was completely different because they were engaged and excited about the stories. As they spoke about the features that should go into the paper and brainstormed new ideas, they were full of life and exuded energy and excitement. They spoke with their hands, smiled and were animated. It was remarkable to witness how the same people could be so different during the same day at two different meetings.

Here is an example of a conversation I had with someone who was referred to me from the human resources department of a major retailer. My goal was to talk to him about using MentorCity as one of his employee initiatives:

Shawn: Hi, my name is Shawn Mintz. Thank you for taking the time to speak to me today. How was your weekend?

Bill: It was fantastic! I spent some time up north.

Shawn: That sounds nice. Where did you go?

Bill: I have a cottage up north. It was great to relax with family and friends. How about you, how was your weekend?

Shawn: I stayed in the city, but I head to a cottage every summer. It is a great escape from city life. Bill, I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me. As you know I have been talking to your colleague about MentorCity and she indicated that you were looking for a similar initiative for your employees. I would be interested in getting your feedback on the direction I am taking with MentorCity and suggestions you have for the site's improvement.

What I did with Bill was to establish a personal connection by asking him about his leisure time and then moved quickly on to the purpose of the phone call.

Step 2: Asking Questions

You have taken a couple of minutes to build rapport. Now it is time to ask a few questions. Remember that there are four types of mentors and the questions you ask each type may be different. For each conversation, write down at least four questions. Only ask the questions that you think are important in helping you to achieve your mentoring objective. Let's say that you only are able to ask two questions during the 15 minutes. That's okay. If at the end of the 15 minutes, you still have questions that you would like to ask, you can try scheduling another call with the person. Writing down a list of questions helps you structure the conversation and feel prepared. Sometimes the conversation will go in a totally different direction, so be open and flexible, while still focusing on your goal. The following are examples you can draw on when creating questions for each mentor type.

Networking Mentor Questions

Examples of questions that you can ask a networking mentor:

- To what do you attribute your success?
- What was the turning point in your life?
- Who was your mentor or role model? What did you gain from this mentor?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Who has been an inspiration in your life?
- What strategies do you use to stay focused on your goals?
- Do you have any advice for me?

Career Mentor Questions

Examples of questions that you can ask a career mentor:

- How has your career progressed within this industry and/or company?
- What attributes do you feel it takes to succeed in this industry and/or this company?
- What is the best way to bring an idea forward at this company?
- What are some of the personality traits that you think a good (insert job function) needs?
- How did you decide to get into the industry?
- What courses did you take?
- What do you like and dislike about this field?

Project Mentor Questions

Examples of questions that you can ask a project mentor:

- What are some of the (insert project name) magazines, books or websites that you recommend?
- How did you use (insert project name) to build your business?
- How much time did you dedicate to (insert project name) in order to see results?
- What are some of the key ingredients of (insert project name)?
- Do you recommend hiring a company to help me with (insert project name)?

Personal Mentor Questions

Examples of questions that you can ask a personal mentor:

- How did you stay positive throughout your ordeal?

- How did you talk to your friends and family about what you were going through?
- What were some of the side effects that you had?
- How did you talk to your kids about (insert personal issue)?
- Did you have any difficulties with (insert personal issue)?

The following dialogue provides an example of a conversation I had with a very busy vice president of a large insurance company. At that time, I was exploring the possibilities of having a career as an insurance agent.

Shawn: I really appreciate you spending 15 minutes with me today. If it is okay with you, I would like to ask you some questions about the insurance industry as I am currently exploring a career within the industry.

Beth: Sounds good.

Shawn: Thanks again. My first question is, What are some of the personality traits that a good insurance agent has?

Beth: An insurance agent needs to be passionate about people. They have to understand the importance of people having the right insurance so that they are protected, along with their family. It is also good to be organized and detail-oriented as there is a lot of paperwork that requires accuracy. Good networking skills and the ability to effectively communicate with your clients is also important.

Shawn: How did you decide to get into the insurance industry?

Beth: I was looking for a career that makes a difference in people's lives. As I progressed through life, unexpected illnesses or accidents happened to my friends and family.

They weren't prepared for these life challenges and this made their situation even worse. By selling insurance, I feel that I am able to help people be prepared for the worst and that is very rewarding to me. Do you have any other questions for me?

Shawn: Yes, just one more. What do you like and dislike about this field?

Beth: I like it when I sell insurance to someone and they never need to use the coverage, but that they feel peace of mind because they have it. I dislike the fact that it is difficult to provide insurance to some people because of their current health conditions.

Step 3: Wrapping Up the Conversation

You have been allocated 15 minutes and you don't want to abuse the time. All conversations must come to an end at some point, so make sure you've planned a strong conclusion. A strong conclusion leaves your mentor with a good feeling about the time spent with you and gives you a chance, if appropriate, to set up any next steps.

During the final two minutes, thank the mentor for taking the time to speak to you, provide a short summary of the discussion and what you have learned from it. It is also a good opportunity to discuss any action items that you and the mentor agreed to during the conversation. Action items may include sending them your résumé, the mentor sending you contact information for someone in their network or sending you a useful article about the industry. Use this opportunity to ask if they are okay with you staying in touch with them. It is easy to lose track, but it is important to respect each other's time. If the conversation keeps going, politely notify the mentor that the 15 minutes are up. You may want to ask the mentor if they have a few minutes to continue the conversation or ask if you can book another meeting with them.

The following is an example of a conversation I had with a sales manager of a medical supplies distributor.

Shawn: It looks like our 15 minutes are almost up. I wanted to thank you for your time. I really appreciate your insights about the industry and the impact your products have on health care.

Geoff: It was nice talking to you today.

Shawn: If possible, it would be great to reconnect with you down the road. I may have a couple more questions for you and I would also like to update you on how I am progressing. Are you okay with me staying in touch?

Geoff: Sure, I would like to know how you are doing.

Shawn: That's great! Do you prefer me sending you an email or giving you a call?

Geoff: I'm pretty busy so an email works best for me.

Shawn: Sounds good. Thanks again and have a great day.

Geoff: You too. Bye for now.

Shawn: Bye.

Staying in Touch

Once the call is complete, it's time for you to take stock of what transpired, what your next steps will be and to evaluate your outcome. You will have some conversations that are terrific. The conversation flowed, you said all the right things, you were confident and prepared and you feel really excited about this new contact. However, some conversations may not go well. It may have been difficult to build rapport with the person and you may have felt as though you said the wrong things, or there were a lot of awkward moments during the conversation. That's okay, some conversations are amazing and some aren't. The good news is that, regardless of the outcome, you have had one more lesson. If evaluated well, it will help you develop great interpersonal skills, which ultimately makes for better and more productive calls in the future.

After Each Call

Here are a few things that you should do after each call:

- Take some time to think about the call. Use the following worksheet and/or the worksheet at the back of this book to write down what you did well, where you feel that you could improve and what you would have liked to communicate differently. By writing this down, it will help you to be even more effective during your next call.

Things I Did Well	Things I Can Improve	Things I Will Do Differently Next Time

- Create a contact card for the mentor in whatever contact management system you use (e.g., Microsoft Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo, etc.).



Jo Patel

Vice President - ABC Bank

My Contacts

Connected profiles

jo.patel@abcbank.com

Add and invite

Work jo.patel@abcbank.com

Add email

Work 416.222.0162

Mobile Phone

Address

Add

December 3, 2012: Spoke to Jo. She provided me with great insights about how to get my foot in the door at a bank. She has worked in the banking sector for over 25 years. She has twins, they are both girls and just started University in September.

- Document advice, referrals and lessons you learned from the call.
- Document personal details, such as their children's names, ages and sexes.
- Document action items and any follow up that's required.
- Craft a very positive and upbeat thank you note to that person. Send a thank you note or an email for both the great calls and not-so-great calls.
- Invite this person to join your social media network. This is a great way for them to remember you through your status updates, and when you accept new contacts/friends, they will see your name and think about you.
- If you would like to reach out to this mentor again, before your next conversation, review their contact card so that you remember what was discussed and their personal information. For example, if your mentor shared that their children are involved in a special competition, during your next conversation ask them how the competition went. Or if they were not feeling well, you can ask if they are feeling better. They will appreciate that you have remembered these details about their life and it will help you build an even stronger relationship.

Keeping Your Promises

You are as good as your reputation. Your reputation is built on your ability to keep the promises you make. For example, you have committed to sending a contact name on a specific topic. In your calendar, jot this action item down with the promised date. If for some reason you are unable to provide the contact, send the person a quick email letting them know that you are still working on this. Then move this item to another date on your calendar so that it doesn't slip your mind.

Following Up

Be strategic in your follow-up strategies and connect when you have a specific purpose. For example, if you just read an interesting article on a subject that you spoke about, send the article with a nice note saying that you thought they may find this interesting. Sending holiday cards is also very important, as that is a good time to acknowledge that person. There are many creative ways to follow up with specific contacts throughout the year, such as leaving them a voicemail wishing them a happy birthday. Keep your eyes open for ideas. If you want this relationship to grow, you will want to give this person priority when it comes to following up with them. It's these little things that differentiate you from everyone else.

Integrating Lessons Learned into Your Life

During your mentoring meetings, you received some advice and ideas and heard a lot of stories. How do you determine what advice you can use? Not all advice is good advice. To determine which is which, use the following worksheet and/or the worksheet at the back of this book to write down a list of all the advice you received and the lessons that you learned:

Advice Received	Rating (1 poor, 5 outstanding)	Integration Plan

Now, consider the list. Ask yourself how you feel about each item (what is your intuition telling you?). You may want to rate each piece of advice on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being outstanding). Now, cross off all the advice that you do not feel good about implementing and that received a low rating. If you are not sure about something, ask someone you trust for their feedback. Long ago, there was one piece of advice I received that I got really excited about implementing. I told my Mom about it and her initial reaction was that I shouldn't move forward with this advice as she felt it wouldn't benefit my career. I let the excitement take hold and I moved forward anyway. Eventually, it became one of the biggest mistakes I made in my career. If only I had listened to my Mom! But we can also learn from our mistakes and become stronger as a result.

After you have vetted the advice and you have one or two things that you can implement into your life, it is time to think about how you can do this. Some things may be easier, such as checking out a website or calling a person who was referred to you by your mentor. Still it is important to note due dates for these items in your calendar. Other advice that requires you to change or adapt may be a little more challenging to plan for. For example, let's say one of the lessons from your mentor is to maintain a positive attitude every day. What do you need to do to achieve this? Do you need to read an inspirational quote every morning, say a few things that you are grateful for, work out, smile and wish people a good morning or engage in positive self-talk? Whatever strategy you choose, add it to your calendar for the next month. It usually takes this amount of time for something to become a habit.

Track your progress and reward yourself for successfully integrating new ideas into your life. But do not stop there. Continue to integrate more advice into your life on an ongoing basis. At the end of every day write down what you learned and if there is something worthwhile then start to integrate it into your life as well. Every time you integrate something new, you will feel amazing, it will re-energize you and give you a feeling of moving forward in your quest to greater success.

Conclusion

I get really excited when I see people engaged in meaningful mentoring conversations. I see this happening all the time and I believe that it is a very natural thing. I think that we need to do more of this to create a true MentorCity—a place that encourages all people living in our communities to reach their potential. Everyone has something valuable to share and by sharing your experiences, you are providing one of the greatest gifts of insight and knowledge. It starts with a few minutes of your time and can turn into one of the most enriching experiences in your life.

I hope that you enjoyed this book. My next book will be all about how to have formal and informal mentoring relationships and it will include mentoring conversation ideas that you can use with your mentors. Get updates by visiting www.mentorcity.com and following my blog. I will be posting book updates to help you make the most out of mentoring.

Let me know about your mentoring journey at shawn.mintz@mentorcity.com.

Worksheets

Setting Mentoring Objectives

Mentoring Objective	Criteria of My Ideal Mentor	Name of Your Ideal Mentors

Finding Mentors — Your Network

Family Members	Friends	Business Contacts	Others

The Mentoring Conversation — Before Each Call

Do some quick research on your mentor. Visit the company website, view their LinkedIn profile, conduct a Google search, etc.

Set a goal for the conversation (e.g., to gain tips on how to brand a product)

Plan your icebreaker with topics on the weather, weekend, vacation, holiday, etc.

Create a list of questions (e.g., what are some of the keywords that I should include on my résumé?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How will you close the conversation (e.g., summarize conversation, discuss action items, determine if you will be staying in touch)?

The Mentoring Conversation — After Each Call

Things I Did Well	Things I Can Improve	Things I Will Do Differently Next Time

Integrating Lessons Learned into Your Life

Advice Received	Rating (1 poor, 5 outstanding)	Integration Plan

About the Author



MentorCity

Shawn Mintz has over 10 years' experience in the career and employment services sector. He has developed innovative mentoring solutions that have helped thousands of people achieve greater success. His latest innovation is MentorCity, which is based on several mentoring best practices. The website effectively matches mentees to mentors and then guides them through the mentoring process. There are no costs involved. MentorCity.com can be accessed by everyone. There are also options to customize MentorCity to reflect your organization's brand and to establish a mentoring community for your employees, alumni, members and/or customers. Shawn can be reached at shawn.mintz@mentorcity.com.

Visit www.mentorcity.com to engage in a series of give-and-take mentoring relationships.

MentorCity

www.mentorcity.com