

Wendy McCarthy AO MAICD (Mentor)



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Wendy McCarthy AO MAICD has held executive and non-executive director roles in many private and public national and international institutions. In 2005 she completed a decade as

Chancellor of the University of Canberra and has been nominated by the Sydney Morning Herald as one of Australia's Top 100 Public Intellectuals.

What is the role of a mentor?

The role of the mentor is to assist you to grow and learn with the support of an independent trusted adviser. A mentor provides advice, listens, encourages, inspires, takes an interest, shares time, gives attention, clarifies a direction, questions, provides constructive criticism, opens doors, guides, supports, builds self confidence and can empathise. A mentor creates the learning environment and helps build a relationship of trust. I think of mentors as tribal elders.

What are the qualities of a mentor?

The qualities of a mentor range from great listening skills to technical competence, patience, self awareness and confidence. An interest in learning, effective communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to share credit rate highly as does a network of contacts and influence. The

best mentors are challengers, role models, trusted advisors, approachable counsellors, supporters, nurturers, encouragers, leaders and teachers.

What are the qualities of a mentee?

Mentee qualities include self awareness, a positive attitude, talented, goal oriented, conscientious and well organised. Mentees should be active in seeking challenging assignments and greater responsibility whilst also be able to learn from their mistakes. Mentees need to be willing to assume responsibility for their own growth and development and be receptive to feedback and coaching. It is the mentee who drives the relationship by setting the pace and the goals.

What are the benefits of mentoring?

There are many benefits of mentoring for both the organisation and the mentee. The business case for mentoring is powerful. People feel valued and their confidence grows. This has a positive effect on staff recruitment and retention as it reduces staff turnover and succession planning is easier to manage. For the individual mentee, mentoring results in increased confidence and self esteem so mentees often describe this as being able to hear and trust their own voice. The benefits for mentees include improved knowledge, skills and motivation. Mentees also have better career outcomes as they learn to strategically plan their careers.

When is the right time to find a mentor?

When a person believes it will be of value and she/he is prepared to make the time commitment. Mentoring can assist people in transition and there are particular moments in life we identify such as moving from

technical skills to general management. Maternity leave is another moment as being promoted to the senior management team, joining a board.

How does a mentee find the right mentor?

Mentors can be found within your organisation – ask your boss to create a Mentoring program.

How long should the mentoring relationship continue?

In our formal mentoring programs, we encourage a 12 month agreement.

How has mentoring benefited you personally?

I was well mentored at school, university, as a young teacher and later as young feminist determined to make the world a better place for women to pursue their dreams and aspirations. I learned to value the older women and men in my life who shared their wisdom with me. It gave me the confidence to challenge the status quo, take risks and achieve career opportunities beyond my wildest dreams. In my perfect world, everyone is a mentor and everyone has a mentor.

How did mentoring affect your pathway to directorships?

I don't think I was consciously mentored on to a board but mentors introduce you to new networks and different people and this broadened my thinking and encouraged me to explore new opportunities and take risks.

Finding Board Positions: Wendy McCarthy will be speaking on the panel of this inaugural workshop 24 November 2009 8.30am – 12.30pm.

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