



## 10 Career Builders That Mentors Help Develop

By Ann Rolfe

*“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself any direction you choose”*

Dr Seuss

Are there areas you should focus on to build your career? Are there key attributes that serve you throughout your career? Can you develop career resilience for the tough times?

Yes, yes and Yes! Throughout your career you will benefit from ongoing:

- Professional development
- Personal development
- Career development and
- Leadership development

10 career builders are foundational attributes in these areas of development and contribute to lasting career success. Use the description of each attribute below as a checklist for self-appraisal and as mentoring conversation starters.

### Professional Development

**1. Technical Competence** – knowledge skills and ability in a particular discipline or field that allow you to demonstrate the required standard of performance.

Mentoring is not a master-apprentice relationship – they are not there to teach you your job but your mentor can help you decide which competencies to target for development and how you can build the skills and knowledge for your next career step.

**2. Experience** – practical application of ability, on-the-job learning, demonstration of knowledge and skills, projects, challenges, tasks that add to development.

Talking with a mentor can help you learn from your on-the-job experience. The supportive input of your mentor will help you recognise your accomplishments.

**3. Learning agility** – willingness to learn from experience, ability to reflect, review and gain insight from the past as well as prepare for the future through development, flexibility, adaptability and dedication to ongoing growth.

Nothing develops this ability more than working with an effective mentor. Conversations committed to your development boost your potential.

**4. Performance and Feedback** – the way tasks and duties are executed, concern for quality and safety, seeking feedback and acting to improve or enhance performance, pursuing excellence.

Mentoring conversations help you observe your work from a more objective perspective. You learn how to gain value from feedback to build even better performance.

### **Personal Development**

**5. Self-awareness** – knowledge and discovery of strengths and weaknesses, values, beliefs, opinions, personality, motivation and preferences. Using this information to enhance quality of life, work and relationships. Looking for opportunities to develop personal potential

There are lots of assessment instruments that reveal personality. The real value of these comes when you find ways to build on the strengths and manage weaknesses they identify. Discussing this with a mentor translates awareness into action.

**6. Interpersonal skills** – using listening skills and appropriate self-expression to communicate and involve others. Recognising and responding to non-verbal clues. Giving positive and corrective feedback. Including others, valuing diversity and accepting other points of view.

Mentoring is a unique relationship. It is professional and personal. It creates a safe space where you can speak and be heard, listen and understand at a deep level. In this way you enhance interpersonal skills that can be used in all your relationships.

**7. Professional Relationships** – respecting and learning from managers, peers and subordinates. Acting in ways that reduce defensiveness and increase collaboration and cooperation. Behaving ethically and in a business-like manner. Networking within and outside of the organisation.

A mentor can be a role model. Drawing on their experience, you will develop knowledge and skills that help you manage situations in the most constructive way.

### **Career Development**

**8. Self-direction** – using self-assessment and exploration of options and opportunities to set goals, make choices and plan. Taking responsibility for your own development and moving toward personal goals.

A mentor is a sounding board for your ideas. They will help you set goals that are important to you and plan how to achieve them.

**9. Self-management and resilience** – emotional self-control, personal discipline, priority setting and time management, work-life balance. Having personal interests, looking after your health and wellbeing and managing stress in constructive ways.

A mentor's perspective can help you choose and maintain priorities and manage challenges. They can point you towards resources and techniques that will sustain your career progress.

### **Leadership Development**

*10. Ability to deal with complex information, decisions and problems and bring out the best in a team.*

Mentors do not make decisions or solve problems for you. What they do is lead you through the process of making decisions or solving problems for yourself. They model a process that you can apply in many different ways.

A successful career is one where contributing your strengths to achieve worthwhile outcomes is rewarding and enjoyable. Make this the aim of your development plan. Choose and use mentors who can help you put together this plan, stay focused on your goals and keep developing. That's how mentoring works.

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