

Tips for Selecting a Mentor

By Richard J. Hernández, CPCM and Joyce B. Tabak
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Picking a mentor is an important decision. M/WBEs should consider the following when deciding on whom they want as a mentor:

- Is the mentor experienced, preferably with mentoring other M/WBEs?
- Does the mentor have written policies and procedures for supplier development?
- Are your management and communications styles compatible?
- Is the mentor organization financial and organizationally stable? Are they growing or declining in their industry?
- What style does the mentor use – analytical, creative, etc.?
- Can you ask for a trial (test) program to see if the relationship works?
- Does the mentor have the authority and resources required to make the relationship work?
- Can the mentor provide follow-on contract opportunities and/or referrals?

Asking to become a protégé also shows initiative on the part of the M/WBE. This clearly communicates the M/WBE's desire to become a strategic supplier.

Remember patience is required. Results do not automatically occur. It usually takes at least months before changes occur. Most mentoring relationships last at least one year.

It can also take time to find the right mentor for your company. Some buying organizations may be hesitant to set up a mentoring program due to lack of resources, potential legal liability, etc. Potential mentors can be found by networking and asking for referrals. Having a self-assessment and clearly defined growth goals makes it easier for potential mentors to decide if they want to start a relationship with your company.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. Please contact the authors at:

Richard J. Hernández, CPCM
E-MBE.net
P.O. Box 617995
Chicago, IL 60661
312-404-2224
rhernandez@e-mbe.net
www.e-mbe.net

Joyce B. Tabak
Tabak & Associates
1534 N. Moorpark Road
Suite 311
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
joycetabak@hotmail.com
805-573-7665

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