

Administrative Assistant's

UPDATE



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CANADA'S OFFICE SUPPORT STAFF

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More workers hypermiling

With gasoline prices soaring, more people are *hypermiling*—driving differently in order to get the best possible gas mileage from their vehicle.

wikiHow (www.wikihow.com/hypermile) says you can increase your car's fuel efficiency by driving as if you don't have brakes, since frequent stopping and starting are big fuel consumers. It also suggests maintaining the correct tire pressure, preventing idling and going easy on the accelerator.

Employees are also changing their driving routes or carpooling to save gas, according to a new survey by Robert Half International. The majority of those polled said they have taken steps to save fuel including doing more telecommuting or getting a job closer to home.

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Finding the right mentor

With fewer great leaders out there, you need a plan

By Linda Allan

Everyone hopes to find a great mentor; smart professionals know that their success could depend on it. Great mentors help you in challenging situations, teaching you the *unwritten rules* that they've spent a lifetime learning. And there's no textbook for that.

These days, many admins are discouraged that they can't find anyone in their workplace who is professional in dress and conduct, as well as being a good business leader.

Over a 25-year career in corporate business, I have had only two great bosses. Considering all the positions I've held throughout Canada and the U.S., this is shocking and sad.

But there *are* outstanding role models out there, and you can take steps to enhance your chances of finding a great mentor.

Know what you want

In addition to wanting a mentor who is successful in business matters, you may want to seek out someone who is great with people—who is good at building excellent teams and moving people passionately to action.

Or, you may want to find



The competition for mentors is fierce. But with a game plan and a few inside tips, you can find a mentor who will help you take your career where you want it to go.

someone who is exceptional with ideas and at putting strategies in place to support those ideas. In that case, look at the person's results. What is her legacy? Is there something she did for the company that she will be remembered for?

Whatever it is you want in a mentor, define it for yourself first, in writing, before you go looking.

Don't wait for her to find you

Professionals often tell me they were given a mentor who turned out to be a poor match for them. This happens a lot in corporate mentoring programs. Just because someone offers you guidance, or

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Top websites for admins

According to Monster.com.

RefDesk

www.refdesk.com—A portal with hundreds of links to reference material (news, weather, international clocks, photos of the day and much more).

Microsoft Office Clip Art

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-ca/clipart/default.aspx>—Free images and videos to download.

Brainy Betty

www.brainybetty.com—Download images, videos, school posters, music for presentations, logos, icons and PowerPoint templates including charts and backgrounds—all free.

XE.com

www.xe.com—Currency calculator.

International Association for Administrative Professionals

www.iaap-hq.org/—Links to events and resources, including its Canadian division.

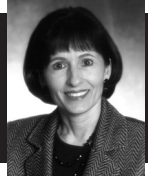
Virtually There

www.virtuallythere.com—Helps you plan your flight and provides real-time flight delays, up-to-date travel advisories and lots of good information for Canadian travellers.

Monster Career Advice (Admins)

<http://career-advice.monster.com/get-the-job/administrative-support/home.aspx>—Industry-specific advice and a job board.

YOUR IMAGE
Linda Allan



Mentor *Continued from page 1*

someone suggests a mentor for you, does not mean that you should blindly accept. When you proactively choose the mentor (even if she wasn't looking to be a mentor), you're in the driver's seat. This also tends to make you more responsible for the success of the relationship which means that you'll probably take the reins a bit more in terms of making it work. All good.

Colour outside the lines

Be innovative. Instead of setting up a regular schedule of meetings with your mentor to talk about business issues, ask to get involved in a specific business issue that's on her plate. Help her as she's helping you—it will give you real-world experience, which is what you're looking for.

Define a role for yourself, however small, that puts you in direct contact with the leader you admire, so you can watch her in action. Observing is also very powerful learning.

More than one mentor

Today, there are so many things to know that one person cannot possibly provide all the guidance you will need. Enlist the help of a number of business professionals, each for a specific purpose. For instance, you may want to find one person who's a wonderful speaker, another who understands the corporate culture at your firm, and another who can help you

understand your boss a bit better. Rather than trying to find one superstar mentor, learn from the expertise of several people.

Silent role models

The customary approach is to work as closely as you can, as often as you can, with your mentors of choice.

Here's an alternative: find a role model you admire—from word-of-mouth or from what you have read about her—and get as close to her as possible, even if you never meet her.

When Jean Monty was at Bell Canada, I read everything I could about him. I listened to what others in the company had to say about him, and I took every opportunity to be there when he spoke in public. I observed the way he handled people and the press; the way he carried himself and conducted meetings. He never knew that he was one of my most significant mentors.

Don't let a lack of great mentors hold you back

Whether you are beginning your career or have many years of business experience, aim to be the best you can. There may not be as many mentors out there as you'd like, but all you need is one good one to get you started. Look for role models who are themselves smart, well groomed and whose conduct, on all levels, is above reproach. Don't settle for mediocrity.

Linda Allan (www.LindaAllan.ca) consults, trains and coaches on behaviours in business etiquette, workplace conduct, travel etiquette, dining, and dress. E-mail her at lallan@linda.allan.ca. If you have a question for her to answer in the pages of AAU, e-mail it to us at joycegrat@sympatico.ca.