

# PUBLICATION

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## What Makes for a Successful Mentor/Mentee Relationship?

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**October 19, 2021**

**Mentorship has been an important topic around conversations of success for many years now. When addressing how anyone has reached success professionally, most credit the contributions of their mentors and praise the vital sound advice their mentors gave to help them advance in their career.**

However, mentorship has taken on a new form amid a global pandemic, a national crisis on race, justice, and mental health, and the post-pandemic professional landscape. Mentorship is now shifting from focusing only on the career advancement of the mentee and a traditional promotion pathway, to becoming a more mutually beneficial relationship, encompassing emotional support, friendship, and affirmation.

There are many pieces of information and advice mentors and mentees can share with each other. We sat down with Baker Donelson mentor Jennifer Cooper and her mentee Hannah Jarrells to talk about their mentorship relationship and how it has served them both for the better in their careers.

*How long have you been Hannah's mentor and were you matched, or did it happen organically?*

**Jennifer:** I think we have been together for about three years. Hannah was the one who approached me about mentoring her and I gladly agreed.

*What are some areas where having a mentor has really helped you?*

**Hannah:** Jennifer has helped me in so many ways! First, she has encouraged me to be intentional about how to spend my non-billable time. Second, she encouraged me to start thinking about business development early on in my career and to make sure that my practice is diversified. Third, she is always willing to catch up on life and work over a good glass of wine!

*What have you learned from Hannah by being her mentor?*

**Jennifer:** Hannah gives me a clear understanding of what it is like to be an associate in this day and time and that is a valuable insight that I always keep in mind when I am working with and coaching other associates throughout our Firm.

*What are some career-boosting tips you have learned from Jennifer that have stuck with you?*

**Hannah:** The first tip that I learned from Jennifer is to go where the work is and be open to new career opportunities. If you are too tied to your practice area or niche, you may miss out on career building opportunities. The second tip is that there is no substitute for hard work. We recently had a conversation in which I was complaining that the transition from a mid-level associate to a senior associate is difficult. She agreed, and encouraged me, but also told me that each new career level would bring a new set of challenges that I would have to navigate. The key to success is to get the work done, whatever it entails - there are no shortcuts.

*We are all very busy - any tips you can give to other mentors about why it's so important to make the time?*

**Jennifer:** We are all too busy to take on anything else. However, I have never said no to anyone who asked me to mentor them. I do ask that my mentee take the initiative to schedule meetings and keep the relationship going. You really do end up enjoying the time you spend with a mentee, it gets you out of your rut of hanging out with the same people all the time, and you see the profession and the Firm from a different point of view.

*Could you tell us about how your mentor/mentee relationship has helped you this past year?*

**Hannah:** Jennifer has served as a valuable resource offering advice about career advancement, how to manage competing family commitments, how to effectively utilize our Firm's resources, and how to build and maintain relationships both inside and outside the Firm.

*What are some best practices you've seen in making the most of your time together?*

**Jennifer:** It's important to be open to discussing what matters to the mentee.

**Hannah:** It does help that Jennifer's office is right down the hall from mine. It means that we can connect several times a week even if it's just for a few minutes at a time. For mentors/mentees who do not work in the same office, I would suggest just making time for a 10–15-minute phone call a few times a month. Even short chats can make a big impact!

*What is the key to making the mentor/mentee relationship a success?*

**Jennifer:** Honesty and approaching it as an opportunity to make a new and lasting friend.

**Hannah:** Get to know each other! It is certainly a great way to build a lasting friendship.