

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-school-way-to-find-mentor-when-doing-remote-work-11643290156>

AT WORK

Yes, You Can Find a Mentor While Working Remotely

Young professionals slide into the DMs of their professional idols in the hopes of becoming their mentees

By [Ray A. Smith](#) [Follow](#)

Jan. 27, 2022 9:14 am ET

Note to young professionals looking for a mentor as the pandemic drags on: Shoot your shot online.

Remote and hybrid work has upended many traditional mentorship arrangements, leaving up-and-comers in search of more seasoned professionals to learn from and help their career climb.

In the absence of in-person mentoring opportunities, people in their 20s and 30s are going online to pitch themselves as remote mentees, sometimes engaging in behavior once considered gauche, such as sending cold-call emails and sliding into the social-media direct messages, known as DMs, of stars in their field.

They risk not hearing back. Some prominent professionals might be wary of online messages from people they have neither met nor heard of. A number of mentees who have sought mentorship this way say they have caught the attention of people they admire because, well, everyone is online now.

Priya Jaisinghani said she spent months trying to connect with colleagues and potential mentors when she moved to Manhattan for an endocrinology fellowship in the summer of 2020. The fellowship would be her last big step before going into independent practice and she wanted mentors through this stage of her career, so she said she turned to Twitter, Instagram and Clubhouse, joining group accounts, some of which focused on women in medicine or her specialty.

Last year the 30-year-old came across the Twitter account of Vineet Arora, dean for medical education at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Have you had a particularly productive relationship with a mentor or mentee? How did it begin? Join the conversation below.

“I have a strong liking for quality improvement and patient safety and Dr. Arora is, like, legendary in that field,” Dr. Jaisinghani said.

She decided to reach out on Twitter with a direct message and hoped Dr. Arora, whose account has more than 43,000 followers, would reply.

“I’m just like ‘Hi, I’m a first-year fellow. I really want to look at this public health crisis that we’re seeing about the dissemination of the Covid-19 vaccine through a quality improvement lens,’” she said. She cited Dr. Arora’s expertise in her note and, to her surprise, she quickly responded.

“She seemed so open and warm,” Dr. Arora said. “I usually don’t agree to mentor anyone from a distance.”

Dr. Arora said she was wary of entering a virtual mentoring relationship because less time with a person—and more distance—meant there were more ways it could go wrong. The two ended up working on a monthslong research project together.

“She was so enthusiastic about it, it was a breath of fresh air,” said Dr. Arora.

They said they have stayed in touch by phone, video calls and social media. They still haven’t met in person, yet Dr. Jaisinghani calls the experience invaluable at a crucial career moment.

Adam Galinsky, a professor of leadership and ethics at Columbia Business School, advises his students and young professionals to mimic the in-person experience as best they can by asking to help a would-be mentor on a project that can be collaborated on online, like a prototype rendering.

Early and midcareer professionals can check whether their employer’s mentorship programs have remote options, as some companies have taken them virtual. Mentor, a

nonprofit that provides resources for corporations and community organizations, connects mentors and mentees through a new app and moved its workplace mentoring initiative completely online during the pandemic, said Charline Alexandre-Joseph, Mentor's director of workforce development.

Virtual mentoring existed before Covid-19 with e-mentoring platforms, but "they became more relevant for folks because of the crisis we all found ourselves in," she said.

Large numbers of people are using LinkedIn to find potential mentors during the Covid-19 era, said Meg Garlinghouse, LinkedIn's vice president of social impact.

LinkedIn tends to see an upswing in activity in January as people think about their career goals in the new year. The wider reshuffling in the labor market and the long stretch of remote work have people looking for career advisers. Searches for mentees and mentors on LinkedIn doubled during the first half of January 2022 compared with the same period a year ago, the company said. In the fall, more than half of 2,000 working adults in the U.S. surveyed said they have never had a mentor, while 18% said they currently had one, according to research done on behalf of LinkedIn.

Marissa King, a professor of organizational behavior at the Yale School of Management, advises against cold emails asking someone to be a mentor. Instead, start by demonstrating interest in their work, by citing in correspondence to them their accomplishments, talks, or research. Such actions prove you have done your homework, she said.

Dunte Hector, a 32-year-old engineer who lives near Denver, found a mentor on LinkedIn after starting a new associate product manager job last January. He had been googling for help to improve some of his skills and found a series of articles published several years ago. He decided to track down the author online. Mr. Hector didn't identify his mentor.

"I sent him an email that basically says, 'Hey, I found your article from 2017,' and I put a link to it. I said 'This is the part that I loved. Do you have any recommendations for more information on this topic?'" Mr. Hector said.

Turns out, he did. Four days later Mr. Hector got a note recommending a whole book on the subject.

From there, the two began corresponding through LinkedIn, email and phone calls, Mr. Hector said. As the mentor-mentee relationship progressed, Mr. Hector said he sought

career advice, including over the summer when he was weighing a job change. His mentor talked him through how to conduct his search since his current title isn't a common one in his field, he said.

Before Covid-19, Mr. Hector said he would have gone fishing for mentors at networking events or in professional groups, where people showed up to in-person gatherings with the hope of finding someone wise to connect with.

“When I reached out to this guy, it was very targeted,” Mr. Hector said. “It was a very different game.”

Write to Ray A. Smith at ray.smith@wsj.com

Copyright © 2022 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.