

powerplay

[THE EXECUTIVE SUITE]

HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

A mentor learns the true meaning of leadership

Name: Keith R. Wyche

Title: President, U.S. operations
Pitney Bowes Management Services

Location: Stamford, Connecticut

Age: 47

Power Play: With a budget of \$586 million, Wyche directs operations at more than 1,000 of the company's corporate mail and copy centers nationally. He mentors 15 professionals.

BE: What's the difference between a mentor and a sponsor?

KW: A mentor will typically function as a sounding board—offering advice and counsel on issues from how to prepare for an interview to how to deal with difficult bosses. A mentor provides insight on potential career moves, retirement planning, and everything in between. Typically a sponsor is someone within your own organization who will help you gain visibility to the right people; make you aware of key career opportunities; and, at their best, campaign on your behalf when key assignments become available.

BE: What is the value of the mentor/mentee relationship to the mentor?

KW: It really enhances the leadership capacity of the mentor. The first law of leadership is a true leader helps create future leaders. It also helps the mentor move from being just successful to being significant. Individual success is admirable, but taking time to help others achieve success is much more satisfying and significant. Truth be told, individual success dies when you die, but significance leaves a legacy.

Secondly, mentoring and sponsoring keep a senior executive in touch with the realities, concerns, and challenges within his or her organization and it better equips them to address areas that may be having a negative impact on business productivity, profitability, or the overall health of the company.

BE: How does a person interest you in mentoring them?

KW: Having both the assertiveness and the preparedness to seek me out, with a clear understanding of what it is they're trying to achieve and being aware of their own strengths, as well as lesser

strengths. But above all, those who are willing to put in the work to grow and develop.

As far as sponsoring, you don't choose me, I choose you, primarily because as a sponsor I'm putting my name, my credibility on the line. So when I look for folks that I may sponsor, I look for individuals who have demonstrated consistent high performance throughout their career and who are excelling in their current role.

BE: Is there a stage in a person's career when having a mentor is most valuable?

KW: It's imperative at the initial stage because it's how you build that foundation and tone for your career. Mentoring increases again in importance as you begin to make transitions through various levels of management. From first-line management to middle management is a transition period where a mentor would definitely be someone you'd like to have in your corner, and then again from middle management to senior management.

BE: Who was your best mentor?

KW: By far, my father. He invested in my development both as an executive and as a man. Unfortunately, he passed away very early in my corporate career.

—Laura Egodigwe