

listening to advice and acting on new ideas.

2. Develop a presentation that demonstrates your personal pride.

Walk straight, keep your head up, shake hands firmly and establish eye contact whenever you are in a conversation. Speak quietly yet with conviction and don't be afraid to say what you believe. Mentors like to connect with future leaders. Show that you're worthy of consideration.

3. Be willing to accept failure as easily as you accept success.

Learn from your mistakes. Build the strength needed to try again by carefully examining what went wrong and what you could have done differently to have guaranteed a more successful outcome.

If possible, seek help from your mentors. Their perspective can help you identify errors caused by your inexperience, anxiety or naivete.

4. If someone says the race is five miles, be ready to run 10.

In most instances, you can never be too prepared. Recognize that people who have control over the preparation process have significant influence over the results of their efforts. Take time to understand as many alternatives to a problem or assignment as possible. Prepare for whatever questions you might receive from your mentor, your boss, an audience or your peers.

5. Recognize that many of your friends and relatives, as well as your mentor, may not understand your need to excel.

Look to establish relationships with people who understand your drive and determination. The process of building new relationships works hand-in-hand with identifying new mentors. While some of the friends you make will be colleagues (likely your same age), many will be older, more experienced and in a position to take you under their wings. Avoid potential mentors who patronize you and your career plans.

6. Travel as much as possible.

You may have already identified travel as critical to your development by attending a college away from home. Experiencing other lifestyles and cultures broadens your perspective and exposes you to exciting new possibilities, both in your career and in your personal life. It also can attract the attention of fellow travelers within the company. Many mentor relationships began when junior

employees were seated next to their more senior colleagues on long flights.

On a practical note, managing the scheduling and logistics of travel will improve your business savvy and help you gain maturity faster than other recent graduates.

7. Be persistent and flexible.

People who persist develop excellence in their fields faster than those who settle for second best. Time is on your side, so use it to keep plugging away at your goals. Also, demonstrate your flexibility when appropriate. If a potential mentor simply is too busy to help, don't give up. Locate another, perhaps more suitable mentor and start again.

Showing flexibility also is important when receiving a mentor's advice, says Bob Higginbotham, a human resources executive at National Semiconductor Corp. in Santa Clara, Calif. "New hires out of college tend to be flexible, making them much easier to train and cultivate," he says. Don't be the hard-headed exception.

8. Work to develop a sincere, honest and trustworthy reputation.

Whether a member of a student organization or a new employee, stand by your word and avoid playing political games. Making a promise to one mentor, for example, then contradicting it to another can bring disaster and the loss of two trusted friends. Learn to personify sincerity and honesty in your relationships with others. Concentrate on doing your job efficiently and thoroughly, and leave petty politics to others.

9. Monitor your health carefully.

The quality of your health often dictates your ability to implement the other nine critical skills. Pay attention to your diet and exercise regularly (at least twice a week). It will improve the quality of your personal presentation in terms of both physical appearance and mental sharpness.

10. Set realistic career goals.

This is a crucial skill to develop. Without a career map, new graduates can drift aimlessly from one job to another, often pulled by little more than an impressive title or a bigger paycheck. Mentors are of little help when they don't know how you want them to help. Your first goal might be to complete a brief self-assessment of the previous nine skills to see how you measure up.

Once you master these 10 skill areas, your network of mentors will develop naturally. Keeping the connection alive through the years then becomes as important as establishing mentor relationships, says Martha Leape, director of the career services office at Harvard University.

"Students are well advised to keep in touch with those who have taken the time to give them good advice," she says. "Those mentors are interested in your progress," and will likely be willing to help again and again through your career. "Recognize," she adds, "that only a brief meeting or conversation with a mentor could change the course of your personal or professional development."

Developing critical personal skills will help you garner the respect and admiration of people both in and out of the business world. Opportunities for personal and financial growth beyond what you believed possible also will emerge. Everyone wants to be associated with a winner. That's how you will be perceived when you master these 10 important skills.

Mr. Brewster is president of Boston-based L.S. Brewster & Co., a management consulting firm specializing in marketing and sales.

