

The
CRAFT of
MENTORING
with **Anastassia Lauterbach**



Before You Jump to Another Company, Consider All the Risks

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Anastassia Lauterbach, former EVP at Deutsche Telekom, and a mentor and coach at The ExCo Group, shared sharp insights with Adam Bryant. Key themes include building a foundation of trust and clarity, the hidden risks of impatience and job-hopping for ambitious leaders, and the critical importance of intentional network-building from the earliest stages of a career.

Bryant: What do you consider to be the keys to effective mentoring?

Lauterbach: It's about building a trusted relationship. And part of the mentor's role is to be very candid and clear about the client's situation. What is the baseline in terms of where they and their company are right now? What is happening in the industry? And what do they want to achieve? This provides the frame for our conversations.

Once we establish that baseline and clarify the targets, then we start looking carefully at how they spend their time. This usually leads to a powerful reality check because I've never once worked with someone whose goals were fully aligned with how they spend their time.

Very often, I find that they are still doing much of the job they had before they were promoted. That exercise creates aha moments that bring clarity and enable focus. And you can only be a great leader if you have clarity and focus.

Another part of our role as mentors is to be generous about sharing people in our networks. There are times when I might recommend that they talk to a peer or colleague of mine who has a lot of expertise and experience that might be transferable to my client's context.

Bryant: Is there a theme that comes up often in your mentoring?

Lauterbach: When the leader is tremendously ambitious, they can become impatient at their company about moving up quickly and getting the title they want, without that title, they won't consider their career a success. So they may start thinking that they need to move to another company to get what they want.

In those cases, I will explain to them something that I learned very late in my career, which is that all companies are the same and all people are the same, but they just have different names. And sometimes the best thing you can do is to be patient and wait.

Because there is a risk of moving to another company, it's a familiar pattern that when people come in at senior levels from the outside, they can be attacked by the antibodies of the existing culture. These are the kinds of things that you learn only through experience.

Bryant: What is the wisest thing that you've ever read, heard, or said about leadership?

Lauterbach: I often repeat what John F. Kennedy said in 1962 about the ambition of the Apollo space missions: "We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

This, for me, is the quintessence of leadership. You need to love to solve problems, and you need to have faith that you can solve problems together with others. You are not alone on these journeys. You need to be convinced that you can build partnerships and form alliances.

Bryant: What is another theme that has come up over your years of mentoring executives, even those who are in earlier stages of their careers?

Lauterbach: You have to be very intentional about building your network, and you have to start early in your career. For the first two-thirds of your career, you have to reach out every week to people outside of your company and build relationships with them.

You have to build time for that into your calendar, if you don't, then it won't happen. If you do that, then your network will carry you in the last third of your career. This can sound very theoretical to, say, a first-time vice president. But your network ultimately becomes part of your personal brand.