

# Role Models

Deborah Hutton explains the importance of having a good mentor.

**A**merican author William Arthur Ward once wrote, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."

When I was a teenager, desperate to get into the modelling business, there was one woman in the industry I looked up to more than any other. Maggie Tabberer was Australia's first supermodel. She was everything I admired and respected — and years later when she booked me for photoshoots, I used the opportunity to learn and absorb all that I could from her. Maggie took me under her wing. She wasn't afraid to offer tough love.

Back in the day, as models we all smoked. I still remember the day she said, "Deborah, what on earth are you doing with that cigarette? You need to take care of your skin. Smoking won't do you any favours."

But she didn't just tell me what to do — she led by example. The way she conducted herself — on the runway, in business dealings — was always with a tremendous amount of professionalism and grace. She dressed immaculately, spoke with confidence and when she realised her modelling days were done, she completely reinvented herself by launching her own fashion-based public relations company which was very successful. In the 1980s she took her career to new heights by becoming fashion editor for *Australian Women's Weekly*, a role which, following in Maggie's footsteps, I later took on myself. It would be fair to say that as a young model, I couldn't have chosen a more appropriate mentor.

I once heard someone say that the difference between a promising businessperson and a successful one is a good mentor. I would definitely agree. There are a million books out there on how to 'make it' and there are loads of professionals who can give you advice, but if you want to aim for the stars, you need someone in your life who will truly inspire you to reach great heights.

Whether you're trying to set up a business, or move up the corporate ladder, it makes sense to tap into the wisdom of those who've already walked down that road.

Check out *Balance on Virgin Australia IFE* and at [www.balancebydeborahhutton.com.au](http://www.balancebydeborahhutton.com.au) 



## Career Guide

*How to choose the right mentor to help navigate the workplace.*

### 1 Find someone who has already achieved what you're aiming for.

The key is knowing your goal. There's no point approaching someone to be your mentor unless you have an idea of the direction in which you want to take your career. Then look for someone who is already successful in that field.

### 2 Remember that it's a two-way street.

You need to think about what you can offer a mentor. Are you willing to take their advice? Are you willing to work hard? You are entering a partnership, so be prepared to keep your end of the deal by not wasting their time unless you are committed to success.

### 3 Choose someone who will challenge you.

A great mentor should be someone who is capable of pushing you beyond your comfort zone. Don't be afraid to choose a role model who can offer you the kind of tough love that your friends cannot.

### 4 Do you like your mentor as a person?

For me, this is the most important factor when choosing someone to look up to. It's not just about how successful they are in their career, but how successful they are as a human being. Is there integrity around what they do? Are they kind? Do they connect well with their community?