

Sponsor Help Wanted Ad

Define your ideal sponsor relationship

Printable worksheet · 8 parts

Name _____ Date _____

Help Wanted: Sponsor

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Welcome

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Help Wanted:

Sponsor Needed

"Now hiring for the most important position in my recovery."

Finding a sponsor can feel intimidating. Who do you ask? What do you look for? What if they say no? What if they're the wrong fit? What if you actually thought about it the way you'd approach hiring someone for the most important job opening of your life?

In this exercise, you're the employer. You're writing a Help Wanted Ad for a sponsor. You'll describe who you are, what you need, what qualifications matter, what questions you'd ask in an interview, and what you're offering in return. By the end, you'll have a crystal-clear picture of the person you're looking for—and the sponsee you're committing to become.

Because here's the thing most people don't realize: you're not just finding a sponsor. You're building a recovery relationship. And the more intentional you are about what you need, the better that relationship will be.

Your Help Wanted Ad Will Include:

1. About the Company (You) — An honest introduction of yourself as a sponsee
2. Position Description — What does this sponsor role actually involve?
3. Qualifications Wanted — What you're looking for in a candidate
4. What I Need — Your specific recovery needs right now
5. Green Flags & Red Flags — What to look for and what to avoid
6. Interview Questions — Questions to ask a potential sponsor
7. Compensation & Commitments — What you offer and what you pledge
8. The Complete Help Wanted Ad — Your finished posting

Therapeutic Note: Many people avoid getting a sponsor because the process feels vague and vulnerable. This exercise reduces that anxiety by making it structured and empowering. You're not begging someone for help—you're thoughtfully recruiting the right person for an important role. It also helps you practice radical honesty by describing yourself truthfully as a sponsee before the relationship even begins.

Let's Write This Ad

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Position Description

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Position Description

Before you can hire the right person, you need to define the role. What does a sponsor actually DO? Let's build the job description and give it a title.

Position Title

Give this role a title...

Title suggestions (click to use):

☐ Recovery Guide & Life Advisor ☐ Personal Sobriety Coach & Truth-Teller ☐ Chief Accountability Officer ☐ Senior Director of Keeping It Real ☐ Head of "I've Been Where You Are" Department ☐ Lead Consultant, Getting Through Today ☐ VP of Hard Truths & Unconditional Support ☐ Principal Navigator, Uncharted Sobriety ☐ Executive Mentor of Second Chances ☐ Director of "Call Me Before You Do Something Stupid"

What Does a Sponsor Actually Do?

A sponsor isn't a therapist, a babysitter, a bank, or a best friend (though they might become one). Understanding the role helps you find the right person and set realistic expectations. A sponsor:

Guides you through the 12 Steps based on their own experience

Does NOT do your step work for you or tell you what to write

Shares their experience, strength, and hope

Does NOT give professional medical, legal, or financial advice

Holds you accountable to your commitments

Does NOT keep you sober—that's your job

Challenges your thinking and calls out your patterns

Does NOT shame, belittle, or control you

Models healthy recovery by working their own program

Does NOT have a perfect life or all the answers

Is available in crisis—within reasonable boundaries

Is NOT a 24/7 on-call therapist or emotional support hotline

Encourages you to develop your OWN relationship with recovery

Does NOT demand you do it exactly their way or else

In Your Own Words: What Do You Want This Role to Be?

Beyond the standard definition, what does this role look like for YOU?

e.g., I need someone who walks beside me, not in front of me. Someone who makes me feel safe enough to be honest and uncomfortable enough to change...

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Qualifications Wanted

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Qualifications Wanted

What are you looking for in a candidate? Browse the categories and select the qualifications that matter most. Mark which ones are non-negotiable "must-haves" vs. "nice-to-haves."

☐ Recovery Experience ☐ Character & Qualities ☐ Communication & Style ☐ Practical & Logistical

Recovery Experience

☐ Has meaningful, continuous sobriety (typically 1+ years minimum) recommended ☐ Has worked ALL 12 Steps themselves (not just talked about them) recommended ☐ Currently has their own sponsor (sponsors need sponsors too) ☐ Has experience sponsoring others before ☐ Has relapsed and come back (understands the struggle firsthand) ☐ Active in their own recovery program—not just coasting on time recommended ☐ Has experienced the specific consequences I'm facing (legal, family, career) ☐ Understands my specific substance/behavior of choice

Add Your Own

What else matters to you in this category?

Qualifications selected: 0 (0 must-haves)

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What I Need

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What I Need From a Sponsor

Qualifications are about WHO they are. This section is about WHAT YOU NEED. Be specific—the clearer you are about your needs, the more effective the relationship will be.

☐ Accountability ☐ Guidance & Direction ☐ Emotional Support ☐ Challenge & Growth

Accountability

What kind of accountability do you need? Daily check-ins? Weekly calls? Someone who'll notice if you disappear?

☐ Daily check-in calls or texts (especially in the first 90 days) ☐ Someone who will follow up if I don't call—not just wait for me to reach out ☐ Weekly face-to-face step work sessions ☐ Someone who notices behavioral changes before I do ☐ Honest feedback when I'm rationalizing or minimizing ☐ A person I can't easily lie to (because they've heard all the lies before)

Add Your Own Needs

What else do you need in the area of accountability?

Your #1 Priority Need Right Now

If your sponsor could only do ONE thing for you right now, what would it be?

What is the single most important thing you need from a sponsor today?

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Green Flags & Red Flags

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Green Flags & Red Flags

Not every person with sobriety time makes a good sponsor. Knowing what to look for—and what to run from—protects your recovery. Select the flags that matter most to you.

Green Flags — Signs of a Good Sponsor

- ☐ They have what you want—peace, stability, genuine recovery ☐ They actively work their own program and have their own sponsor ☐ They share openly about their own struggles—not just their wins ☐ They ask you questions rather than just telling you what to do ☐ Other people in the program respect them (not just like them) ☐ They set clear expectations and boundaries from the start ☐ They've been through hard things in recovery and stayed sober ☐ They make time for you—but don't let you become codependent ☐ They practice what they preach—their life reflects their words ☐ They celebrate your progress without inflating your ego ☐ They're comfortable saying "I don't know" or "Let me ask my sponsor" ☐ They hold you accountable with love, not shame

Any other green flags from your own experience?

Red Flags — Warning Signs to Avoid

- ☐ They have an answer for everything and never admit uncertainty ☐ They try to control your decisions rather than guide your thinking ☐ They talk about their own recovery more than they listen to yours ☐ They gossip about other sponsees or break confidentiality ☐ They don't have a sponsor themselves ("I don't need one anymore") ☐ They pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with you ☐ They shame you or use your vulnerability against you ☐ They're never available when you actually need them ☐ They want you to do recovery THEIR way—no flexibility or individuality ☐ They enable your behavior instead of challenging it ☐ Their own life is chaotic, unstable, or full of unaddressed issues ☐ They use the sponsor role to feel powerful or important

Any other red flags you want to remember?

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Interview Questions

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Interview Questions

You wouldn't hire someone without an interview. Select the questions you'd want to ask a potential sponsor—and understand WHY each question matters.

Select Your Interview Questions

- ☐ "How long have you been in recovery?" Why this matters: You want someone with enough experience to guide you, but time alone doesn't equal quality
- ☐ "Do you currently have a sponsor? Are you actively working with them?" Why this matters: A sponsor without a sponsor is like a doctor who doesn't believe in medicine
- ☐ "How did you work the steps, and how do you approach step work with sponsees?" Why this matters: You need to know if their approach fits your learning style and needs
- ☐ "What does your typical availability look like?" Why this matters: Mismatched availability is the #1 reason sponsor relationships fail
- ☐ "What are your expectations of a sponsee?" Why this matters: Clear expectations prevent resentment. You need to know the "job requirements" upfront
- ☐ "Have you ever fired a sponsee? What happened?" Why this matters: Their answer reveals their boundaries and what they consider deal-breakers
- ☐ "How do you handle it when a sponsee relapses?" Why this matters: This answer tells you everything about whether they lead with shame or compassion
- ☐ "What does your own recovery look like today?" Why this matters: Are they still growing, or did they park at year 5 and stop working?
- ☐ "What's the hardest part of your recovery that you're willing to share?" Why this matters: Vulnerability from a sponsor builds trust. Perfection builds walls.
- ☐ "How do you know when it's time to push someone versus give them space?" Why this matters: You need someone who reads the room, not someone with only one gear
- ☐ "What's something you wish your first sponsee had told you?" Why this matters: This reveals self-awareness and how they've grown in the role
- ☐ "What do you get out of sponsoring?" Why this matters: The best answer: "It keeps ME sober." Red flag: "I love helping people" (ego alert)

Your Own Questions

What else would YOU want to ask? What matters specifically to your situation?

e.g., How do you feel about sponsors and sponsees texting vs. calling? or What's your take on medication-assisted treatment?

Real Talk: You don't literally sit someone down for a formal interview. But you CAN have a conversation. Ask to grab coffee. Ask them about their experience. Ask them what they expect. Most people in recovery are happy to talk about this—it's what we do. The "interview" is really just an honest conversation with intention.

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Compensation & Commitments

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Compensation & Your Commitments

A sponsor works for free—but they DO get compensated. Understanding what they get out of it helps you appreciate the relationship. And your commitments? Those are the real "salary" you're offering.

What the Sponsor Receives (Select What Resonates)

- ☐ The Gift of Keeping Them Sober Sponsoring IS recovery work—your growth helps them stay accountable to their own
- ☐ A Front-Row Seat to a Miracle Watching someone rebuild their life from the wreckage is one of recovery's greatest rewards
- ☐ Remembering Where They Came From Working with you reminds them why their own recovery matters
- ☐ The Chance to Give Back What Was Given to Them Someone sponsored them when they were where you are now. This completes the circle.
- ☐ Honest, Growth-Oriented Relationship In a world of surface-level connections, the sponsor-sponsee relationship is rare and real
- ☐ Purpose and Meaning Being needed in someone's recovery gives life profound purpose

What else can you offer a sponsor? What makes sponsoring YOU worthwhile?

My Commitments as a Sponsee

These are your promises—the "terms of employment" from YOUR side. Select the commitments you're willing to make.

- ☐ I will be honest—even when it's terrifying and every instinct tells me to lie critical
- ☐ I will call before I use, not after critical
- ☐ I will show up—to meetings, to step work, to our scheduled calls critical
- ☐ I will be willing to be uncomfortable in the service of growth critical
- ☐ I will follow directions even when I don't understand them yet
- ☐ I will respect your time and boundaries
- ☐ I will do the assignments and homework you give me
- ☐ I will be open to hearing things I don't want to hear critical
- ☐ I will tell you when I'm struggling instead of disappearing critical
- ☐ I will not blame you for my choices or expect you to keep me sober
- ☐ I will be patient with the process even when I want instant results
- ☐ I will eventually carry this forward and sponsor someone else

Any other commitments you want to make?

Your Closing Statement

If you could put a personal note at the bottom of your Help Wanted ad—something real, from the heart—what would it say?

e.g., I'm not the easiest person to work with. I'm stubborn, scared, and still learning how to ask for help. But I'm showing up, and I'm willing. If you've been where I am and found your way out, I'd like to learn how you did it.

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The Help Wanted Ad

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Your Complete Help Wanted Ad

Ready to post. Ready to find the right person.

HELP WANTED

Sponsor Needed

Position Type: Ongoing • Compensation: Priceless • Start Date: ASAP

TO APPLY: Show up. Share your story. Be real.

Position Open Until Filled • Equal Opportunity Recovery

Post-Exercise Reflection

Now that you know exactly what you're looking for, does anyone in your current recovery community come to mind?

What surprised you about what you wrote in the "About You" section? Was it hard to be that honest?

Look at your commitments list. Which one will be the hardest to keep? Which one matters most?

How did your fears about getting a sponsor change (if at all) after completing this exercise?

What's the difference between the sponsor you WANT and the sponsor you might NEED?

If someone handed YOU this Help Wanted ad 10 years from now, would you be qualified to fill the position?

What's stopping you from having that first conversation with a potential sponsor this week?

Suggested Uses: Share this ad in group to practice vulnerability. Discuss your "qualifications wanted" list with your counselor. Use the interview questions when talking with potential sponsors. Review your commitments list monthly as a self-check. Most importantly: actually go talk to someone this week.

Next Step: The ad is written. The position is open. Now the only thing left is to post it—which means walking up to someone in recovery and having a conversation. That conversation is the bravest thing you'll do this week. And it might save your life.

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