

Mentorship

Mentorship is a vital component of professional development. The best mentor relationships are collaborative. While the mentor can provide knowledge, help with challenges, broaden a mentee's network and provide encouragement; it is on the mentees part to come prepared to each meeting with open eyes and ready to learn. This document will walk you through best practices as well as do's and don'ts of a successful mentor relationship.

Set Expectations

Reviewing this document with your mentee/mentor could be a great agenda item for your first meeting. It will be important to identify a meeting cadence as well as understand what you are each looking to get out of this relationship. Below is a short list of ideas to kick start the first meeting:

- > How often should we meet?
- > Where should we meet? (if virtual be sure to be in a location where you can concentrate & have your camera on)
- > How should we stay in touch between meetings?
- > Confidentiality is respected.

It is also recommended that both parties come to each meeting with a planned agenda. This will help keep the process and commitment on track. Below is a simple sample agenda template:

1. Development Goals
 - a. Specific, desired outcomes, objectives, etc.
2. Learning Activities
 - a. Actions, meetings, etc.
3. Resources
 - a. Books, trainings, contacts, etc.
4. Success Indicators
 - a. Steps, milestones, signs, etc.
5. Meeting Schedule
 - a. Targets, dates, time, frequency

Best Practices as a Mentor

The best mentors are good listeners who are knowledgeable and nonjudgmental. They are able to give supportive or constructive feedback in a honest and candid way. They usually have an extensive network and are open to sharing their connections with their mentees.

As a mentor, you play several roles, including:

Advisor: Sharing your story with your mentee and reflecting on what you could have done differently or what advice you wish you would have been given are important parts of the mentorship process. Sharing your knowledge or tips and tricks of the trade you have learned along the way will be extremely helpful to your mentee.

Guide: Listen to your mentee. Ask a lot of questions. Let them share with you their strengths, ambitions, goals, and dreams. Help guide them to set realistic expectations or encourage them to dream bigger! The best mentors do not necessarily tell their mentees what to do or give them explicit advice on how to handle an issue; they listen carefully and help guide their mentees to find the answer on their own.

Motivator: It is important to provide encouragement to your mentee. Inspire your mentee to try new things, encourage your mentee to have open and honest dialogue with you, and express your belief and confidence in your mentee's abilities.

Resource: Sharing resources like articles, websites, and podcasts can be really useful to your mentee. Ultimately the best resource you can give your mentee is human capital. Help your mentee to develop their personal brand; then introduce him or her to your professional contacts and teach them how to properly build and nurture their network.

Do's and Don'ts for Mentors

What a Mentor DOES

Respect your mentees time as much as your own
Always ask if you can provide suggestions or feedback
Tell your mentee that you don't expect them to follow all of your suggestions
Expect your mentee to move towards their goals
Keep the relationship on a professional basis
Recognize and work through conflicts in a respectful way; invite discussions of differences
Provide networking experience; share knowledge of the company; offer assistance when needed
Point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on the mentee's behavior

What a Mentor DOES NOT do

Assume that your schedule always has priority
Automatically give advice or criticism
Assume your advice will be followed and expect your mentee to do exactly what you recommend
Expect a clone of yourself
Move too quickly into a personal friendship, if at all
Avoid discussion of inappropriate subjects and forcing your solutions in conflicts
Assume the role of problem solver or complete items that the mentee should be doing themselves
Provide criticism of the mentee's character

Best Practices as a Mentee

As a mentee, it is your responsibility to make this mentoring relationship productive. Mentoring relationships work best if you clearly discuss with your mentor what you want to work on and discuss during the year. Generally, you want to know what you are looking to gain out of the relationship. Some suggestions may include:

- > Expand my network and meet people outside of my daily interactions
- > Networking with peers to gain different perspectives or generate ideas
- > Listening to my mentor's point of view
- > Having courage to start tough conversations

Additionally, you will want to have a clear understanding of topics that you want to learn more about or discuss and prioritize them. Examples of these could include:

- > Help me reflect on how my attitude, skills and patterns of behavior can help or deter me
- > Ask questions that challenge me to think, analyze, and prove for meaning
- > Provide a risk-free, confidential environment in which I can share challenges within my department or organization
- > Provide specific feedback, both favorable and not, to address and support my development
- > Encourage me to discuss ideas, visions and creative concepts
- > Help me to develop and keep my personal brand
- > Provide ideas for stretch opportunities (tasks or projects slightly beyond my current skill set)
- > Ideas to balance work and life

Do's and Don'ts for Mentee

What a Mentee DOES

Set specific goals & expectations for the relationship
Maintain distinct boundaries
Be proactive, be prepared and always give your best
Listen to come up with your own ideas and solutions

What a Mentee DOES NOT do

Commit yourself to obligations that you cannot keep
Use friendship with your mentor to escape consequences
Take advantage of the mentors time and help
Expect the mentor to make decisions for you