

Mentor Guide

Mentoring is based on respect and mutual appreciation of both participants' time and energy. The collaborative efforts and joint accountability in terms of goal setting, the transfer of knowledge, and how growth will be evaluated, are the driving forces behind a successful relationship. The ability to communicate freely and honestly about strengths, weaknesses, goals, and concerns will only enhance the relationship between you and your mentee.

Mentor Role

Whether you act as a resource, advisor, or teacher in your mentor role, you are responsible to provide guidance to your mentee based on their needs for development.

Expectations:

- Commit to at least 1-2 hours of communication per month
- Provide feedback in a timely fashion
- Allocate appropriate amounts of time and energy
- Follow through on commitments
- Have reasonable expectations of the mentee

Mentors are NOT expected to:

- Drive the relationship
- Manage the mentee as a supervisor would
- Be an expert in all areas

Getting to Know Your Mentee

After you are matched to a student, you will be expected to make first contact. The initial dialogue is a great time to learn about your mentee and get a better idea of what they are hoping to gain from the relationship.

The following questions can facilitate conversation to get to know your mentee better:

1. What will make this a successful mentoring experience for you?
2. What ideas do you have for acquiring skills, knowledge, etc.?
3. How do you envision the relationship working? How do you envision managing the relationship?
4. What characteristics or skills you possess that will be an asset in making the relationship work?
5. What are some of your professional goals? Life goals? Achieved goals?
6. What are you looking for in a mentor?
7. How do you envision each of us fulfilling our unique roles?
8. What are some of your stronger skills?
9. What areas or skills would you like to develop?
10. What is your preferred learning style?

Establishing a Mentor Agreement

It is helpful to create a Mentor Agreement with your student that can serve as a roadmap ensuring clarity of expectations for both of you, and help you to stay focused you as move forward.

Ask the following questions before you speak with your student to establish your own expectations:

1. How can you help your mentee meet their goals?
2. How will you help your mentee remain accountable for their development?

Answer the following questions with your mentee to establish structure in your relationship:

1. What is the best schedule for our meetings (day, time, frequency, etc.)?
2. What is the best mode of communication?
3. How will we measure progress?

Relationship Development

You can help your relationship get off to a good start by sharing your goals and expectations, as well as by listening to your mentee's comments. Remember, a successful mentoring relationship offers value to both participants.

Consider discussing the following questions with your mentee:

1. What are your concerns as we move forward?
2. How do you foresee this relationship working?
3. How will we address any challenges that arise?
4. What do you value in a working relationship?

Goal Setting

Establishing goals is a valuable step in any professional scenario. Try to set specific goals for development and ways of measuring progress, being sure to identify obstacles, knowledge and experience gaps, as well as the steps to success.

The following questions will help your mentee clarify needs and identify possible goals:

1. What do you hope to achieve within the next 3-5 years?
2. What are your current skill and experience bases?
3. What have you done previously to develop yourself?
4. How does this development tie into your strategic professional initiative or personal growth?
5. What are some potential benefits of developing yourself in this area?
6. What other areas of your learning would be impacted if you were to improve your skills in this area?
7. What resources do you have access to that could help you in this development area?
8. What do you want skills and knowledge in the most?
9. To what degree are your goals and progress quantifiable?

Giving Feedback

Feedback is the most important and difficult task in being an effective mentor. When delivered well, feedback will enable the mentee to reflect on their current personal learning efficiency, discover their strengths, and recognize weaknesses. Providing effective feedback on your mentee's performance is vital to the quality of your relationship and drive its success. In return, your mentee can give you feedback as well. The shift in perspective can help both of you reaffirm your commitment to creating a professional partnership and show your continued respect for your mentee.

Characteristics of Effective Feedback

Before approaching your mentee with feedback, make sure you consider the following five questions:

1. Does your feedback have a clear purpose?
2. Define why you are giving this feedback and what you think the mentee should change.
3. Is your feedback specific and descriptive?
4. Give descriptions of an incident or behavior that led you to conclude the mentee's performance, ideas or development are acceptable or unacceptable.
5. Is your feedback relevant?

Provide only the feedback that is relevant or applies directly to this mentorship situation. Likewise, their feedback should help you identify means to achieve your goals.

Feedback should also be delivered in a timely manner. Listen to your mentee as they give you their advice and opinions, and give them the opportunity to respond to your feedback. Be sure to recognize the positive as you are given your critique.