

The Importance of Mentorship

Mentoring is a partnership where the mentor supports and guides a mentee towards managing his/her learning, growth and development.

A mentor can be:

- A fellow cohort
- Co-worker
- Faculty/Staff
- Alumnus/Alumna



A Mentor will serve as a **guide** or role model. Consider the **relationship** to have **mutual trust** and willingness to learn and share. It is strongly encouraged that you find a mentor who has more professional experience and who can offer insight, guidance and advice from a **real world perspective**.

What's in it for you?

The relationship you build with your mentor has benefits. Your mentor should be **savvy** and open to sharing their knowledge and experiences to help you succeed. He/she can assist you with career goals, workplace challenges and help you make business decisions that will positively impact you.

Why should you have a mentor?

It is said that having a mentor is one of the keys to success.

Here are five reasons you should consider a mentor:

1. The saying "Been there, done that" applies strongly. Think about what you can learn from your mentor's experience, mishaps, and great successes. Advice will be truthful. They may identify hidden strengths that you may not have identified.
2. Increase your network. Your mentor will have their own network, he/she may connect you with.
3. Open your mind to other sectors you may have never thought of before or knew they existed.
4. Two heads are better than one, plus it's FREE. They will add value to your network and may become a very close ally.
5. Working with a mentor should be enjoyable. Consider someone with similar goals and career. Be considerate of their time. Do not make excuses. You are benefitting from this professional relationship, and you must strive to find time for this to be successful.

When should you obtain a mentor? You should consider having a mentor throughout your professional career. This trusted ally should be sought out when you first begin your career, when you change career paths and/or when you are close to retirement. In return when you are a seasoned professional, you should consider becoming a mentor.

Where could you find a mentor? People like helping others, and by asking a prospective mentor you show admiration and respect towards their experiences and insight will help you grow. Research the industry/company you want to enter. Create a list of possible mentors who may be a good fit. Open the conversation after you have established a relationship. Get to know their personalities and work ethic. Start with family and friends. Then move to your professional network (LinkedIn). Reach out to professionals outside your network (but first build a rapport).

Four Tiers of Mentoring

1. Inquire to begin. To be successful, both the mentor and mentee need to listen to each other. The mentor's role is to support and guide the mentee, and allocate time and honor mentee's confidentiality. The mentees should have an open mind and ask questions.
2. Challenging, testing and sharing the experiences, resources, values, network and feelings will require a high level of trust.
3. Encourage and share mistakes. Mentors will persuade you to move forward. Mentees need to take risks. People tend to learn and grow by making mistakes.
4. With every good thing comes the transition of closure. As your time closes, end on a positive note.

What is a mentee? A mentee is a self-motivated individual seeking to continuously promote personal development. A mentee recognizes personal strengths and weaknesses and actively seeks methods for personal growth.

The roles and responsibilities of mentees are to:

1. Take initiative and be proactive in his/her own career development.
2. Develop a mentoring contract/agreement that clarifies the expectations of the mentoring partnership.
3. Keep the supervisor informed of mentoring progress and schedule to ensure that it does not conflict with assignments and priorities.
4. Attend formal mentoring training, progress reviews, and forums.
5. Participate in open and honest discussions with the mentor.
6. Develop an Individual Development Plan with feedback from mentors and supervisors.
7. Meet with the mentor approximately four hours a month, at least touching base weekly.

Suggested Guidelines for Mentor/Mentee Meetings

Phone Contact

- Mentor calls mentee to arrange initial meeting and discuss scheduling.
- Mentee calls mentor to arrange monthly meetings.

First Meeting

Mentee

- Explain why you are interested in a specific position.
- Discuss your perceptions and expectations of the relationship.
- Ask questions.
- Plan future meetings and contacts.

Mentor

- Discuss your current job responsibilities.
- Explain how you started in your profession.
- Discuss the necessary academic and personal preparation needed for your career.
- Share your feelings on the importance of networking and continued professional development.

Second Meeting

Mentee spends a day "shadowing" the mentor during a typical work day.

Third Meeting

Discussion of the shadowing experience. Completion of suggested mentor/mentee activity (See list).

Fourth Meeting

- Discussion of the mentor experience.
- Discussion of the value of additional meetings or contact.
- Completion of a suggested mentor/mentee activity.

Suggested Activities

- Lunch with mentor, mentee and several other professionals and contacts to discuss everyday challenges encountered in their work.
- Mentee attends a company training program with mentor.
- Mentor and mentee discuss proper business and telephone etiquette and corporate protocol.
- Mentee attends a key business and professional meetings with mentor. Mentor discusses common employee issues and explains how they are handled.
- Mentee attends a company staff meeting.
- Mentor and mentee attend a professional meeting together. Mentor introduces mentee to other contacts and professionals.
- Mentee observes the development of a special project; attends meetings and observes how it is communicated.
- Mentor reviews mentee's résumé and offers suggestions for improvement.