

Developing an Effective Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring is a Two-Way Street

Mentorships are about listening and learning. Mentees should be able to find their own voice and outlet while mentors glean fresh perspective for their own endeavours.

It's important that you foster an environment where mentees can speak freely while addressing any of their concerns or questions. Mentors that simply talk at individuals will offer little value. As a mentee, your obligation is to ask questions and learn from others' experiences.

Mentoring is Sharing

It's vital that mentors feel comfortable sharing their career experiences and mentees feel that the advice is valuable. If this is not the case, then it might be advisable to part ways and search for another mentor or mentee.

Mentoring is about Clarity

Before approaching or establishing a mentorship, it is the responsibility of the mentee to outline:

- 1) what they want out of the relationship;
- 2) a general structure for meetings, conversations and take-away tasks. It is the responsibility of the mentee to lead the course and ensure the relationship stays on track.

The following are our recommended steps for developing an effective mentoring program:

1. *Assessment* - This should include the mentor getting a measure of the mentee, his/her level of motivation for change, and a sense of whether the mentor and mentee will be compatible.
2. *Initial Phase*:
 - a. Mentee does a self-assessment (where do they think your skill levels currently are in regards to the areas that they need mentoring in, where do they hope to be after 3 months of mentoring?)
 - b. Mentor and mentee review the mentee's self-assessment as well as other appropriate assessments (common interests, abilities for mentor to assist in the mentees needs)
 - c. Mentor and mentee agree to a Personal Development Plan defined by the mentee
 - d. This plan includes:
 - i. Duration of plan
 - ii. Level of structure (is it highly structured and formal or a casual mentoring relationship?)
 - iii. Communication methods
 - iv. How accountability for hitting targets will be worked out between mentee and mentor
 - v. How assignments will be given, agreed to and followed up on
 - vi. How adjustments to plan will be made
 - vii. Consequences of noncompliance (including termination of relationship)

3. Adjust the plan
 - a. As the program progresses forward with the relationship, both parties must make sure that they are flexible enough to adjust to the program's changing needs and the needs of each other
 - b. Agree to new expectations; this may include new outcomes
4. Conclusion of mentoring program
 - a. Will the program conclude after an allotted period of time e.g. 6 months?
 - b. Will the program continue on indefinitely in a casual unstructured format?

Review what has been learned and stay in touch. The best mentor-mentee relationships last forever.