

Mentoring Guidelines



“Ecologists tell us that a tree planted in a clearing of an old forest will grow more successfully than one planted in an open field. The reason, it seems, is that the roots of the forest tree are able to follow the intricate pathways created by former trees and thus

embed themselves more deeply. Indeed, over time, the roots of many trees may actually graft themselves to one another, creating an interdependent mat of life hidden beneath the earth. This literally enables the stronger trees to share resources with the weaker so the whole forest becomes healthier.

Similarly, human beings thrive best when we grow in the presence of those who have gone before. Our roots may not follow every available pathway, but we are able to become more fully ourselves because of the presence of others. ‘I am who I am because we are,’ goes the saying, and mentors are a vital part of the often invisible mat of our lives.”

Excerpt from “The Mentor’s Guide” by Lois J. Zachary

Mentor & Mentee Points of Connection: Setting the Climate for Mentoring

What to Do	How to Do it
Invest time and effort in setting the climate for learning	Determine mentee learning style and learning needs.
Be sensitive to the day-to-day needs of one another	Spend time connecting with each other. Ask enough questions to give you sufficient insight into your mentee's work context & mentor's experience.
Identify and use multiple venues for communication	Explore all available options: e-mail, telephone, mail and emerging technology and use more than one. Look for opportunities to connect face-to-face, even if there are location differences.
Set a regular contact schedule, but be flexible	Agree on a mutually convenient contact schedule, and make sure it works for both mentor & mentee. If you need to renegotiate a scheduled appointment, use that situation as an opportunity for connection and interaction.
Check on effectiveness of communication	Ask questions: Are we connecting? Is the means we are using working for us? Is it convenient?
Make sure that connection results in meaningful learning	Is learning going on? Is the mentee making progress?
Share information and resources, but never as a substitute for personal interaction	Set the stage to share information. Then share the information and follow up once the information is shared.

Mentor & Mentee Conversations: Negotiating Questions & Outcomes

Negotiating in the mentoring partnership is a free-flowing focused conversational process that takes place over one or several sessions and results in a shared understanding about the outcome and process of the mentoring partnership. Determine a work plan for yourselves anchored in well-defined goals, measurements for success, delineation of mutual responsibility, accountability mechanisms, and protocols for dealing with stumbling blocks.

Outcomes	Questions Answered
Well-defined Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the specific learning outcomes desired from this relationship?
Success Criteria and Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the criteria for evaluating successful accomplishment of learning outcomes? • What is the process for evaluating success?
Delineation of Mutual Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will be responsible for what?
Accountability Assurances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure we do what we say we are going to do?
Protocols for Addressing Stumbling Blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stumbling blocks might we encounter? • What process should we have in place to deal with them as they occur?
A Work Plan for Achieving Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the process? • What are the steps for achieving the goals?

Mentor & Mentee Guidelines: Developing Partnership Agreements

Placing the shared understanding about the partnership in writing facilitates the learning process. The form the mentoring agreement takes is not as important as the contents. The agreement whether written or verbal should be meaningful to both partners. You may want to use the following as a template, with the answers to the questions serving as your agreement. Constructing it together helps ensure shared understandings. It builds trust and creates shared accountability.

Mentoring Partnership Template

Instructions: Use this template after completing the negotiating questions & outcomes.

We have agreed on the following goals and objectives as the focus of the mentoring relationship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We have discussed the protocols by which we will work together, develop, and in that same spirit of partnership, collaborate on the development of a work plan. In order to ensure that our relationship is a mutually rewarding and satisfying experience for both of us, we agree to:

1. Meet regularly. Our specific schedule of contact & meetings, including additional meetings, is as follows:
2. Look for multiple opportunities & experiences to enhance the mentee's learning. We have identified, and will commit to, the following specific opportunities and venues for learning:
3. Maintain confidentiality of our relationship. Confidentiality for us means...
4. Honor the ground rules we have developed for the relationship. Our ground rules will be...
5. Provide regular feedback to each other and evaluate progress. We will accomplish this by...

We agree to meet regularly until we accomplish our predefined goals or for a period of _____. At the end of this period of time, we will evaluate our progress and reach a learning conclusion. If we choose to continue or mentoring partnership, we may negotiate a basis of continuation. We will use closure as a learning opportunity.

Mentor's Signature & Date

Mentee's Signature & Date