



Make the most of being mentored!



MENTEE GUIDEBOOK



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There is no such thing as a "self-made" man. We are made up of thousands of others. Everyone who has ever done a kind deed for us, or spoken one word of encouragement to us, has entered into the make-up of our character and of our thoughts, as well as our success.

George Burton Adams

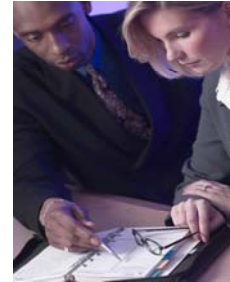
Most leaders mention that there were individuals who had a great impact on both their personal and professional lives.

We hope you will have a similar story to tell!

INTRODUCTION

What is Mentoring?

Take a minute to recall the people in your life who helped you learn something, what did they have in common? If you said they guided/ advised you, coached or supported you, or taught you something essential to your life or career progress, then you are describing the qualities associated with a mentor.



According to the Harvard Business Review, *it has been difficult to define mentoring because it is as informal as pairing, as variable as the organizations in which the mentors and protégés find themselves, and as idiosyncratic as the people involved.*

There are no set rules for how to mentor, or be mentored, because different individuals have different needs. That said, there are some practical recommendations that can increase the likelihood that your mentoring partnership will prove effective – and that is the purpose of this Guidebook.

The History of Mentoring

It is a tradition that has withstood the test of time, and is today making a comeback. In the adventure tale, *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, left home for the siege of Troy, he asked his friend Mentor, an older, wiser man, to act as a guardian and teacher of his young son, Telemachus. In time, the mentor came to mean trusted advisor, friend.

How to Use This Guidebook

This Guidebook is designed for mentees who are looking for practical advice and insights to increase the value you derive from being part of a mentoring partnership. The Guidebook offers tools, tips, and resources to prepare for, structure and benefit from a mentoring relationship.

The material in this Guidebook is intended to increase your understanding, effectiveness and enjoyment of that role. It has been designed and developed by Radhika Warriar. If you have any suggestions/ comments, feel free to get in touch with her at 513.784.2588.

If I have been able to see further than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants
Sir Isaac Newton

“Everyone Who Makes It Has a Mentor” proclaimed Harvard Business Review over two decades ago. One survey of senior executives reported that mentors were second in only to education as a key driver of career success.

WHAT TO EXPECT OF A MENTOR

In a professional sense, having a mentor can make an important difference in your career. The quality of your work life will increase in direct proportion to the types of relationships you choose to build.

Mentoring works because experience *is* often the best teacher. Additionally, benefiting from the wisdom of a mentor oftentimes allows you to accomplish more than you would by yourself.

By working with a mentor you can:

See yourself as others see you: A mentor can provide insight into how others, especially at more senior levels of the organization might view your performance.

Provide Feedback: A mentor may provide you with objective feedback about key performance issues – including blindspots.

Open Doors: Your mentor is an important new connection in his/her own right - and can also help you connect to other people in his/her network, as well, heightening your visibility within the organization.

Add perspective and depth to your decision making: A mentor's wisdom and experience can add value to your thinking and decisions as you encounter typical career challenges.

Increase your clarity about your career goals and choices: As an objective ally, your mentor can alert you to opportunities of interest, help you discover and leverage your strengths, and assist you in setting long-range development goals.

Gain insight: By virtue of what your mentor has accomplished, he or she can help you gain useful insights about the organization, its people, processes, norms and culture – all of which play a role in your own career success.



Behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth: Somewhere, some way, someone cared about their growth and development.
- Linkage Inc.

Imagine yourself at the helm of a boat-

You are the captain, and your mentor is holding the rudder, steering the ship in the direction you want it to go.

You are responsible for your career development.

A mentor can provide valuable advice and help you learn from experience, but it is up to you to take the initiative, demonstrate your capabilities, and seize opportunities.

FINDING THE RIGHT MENTOR FOR YOU

Step One: Know What You Want to Achieve

Your new mentoring partnership will require a substantial investment of time, thought, and energy to be effective. Before you can embark on your mentoring journey, you will need to identify your needs.

Identifying Your Goals

Military strategists know most battles are won before the first shot is fired - by the side that determines its approach in advance. We all have our own passions, strengths, weaknesses, and unique capabilities; a mentor can help you in many ways, but *it's up to you* to determine what purpose the relationship will serve.



Before identifying the qualities you seek in a mentor, first reflect on your needs:

How did you get where you are today?

What do you ultimately want to accomplish in your life? In your career?

What is getting in your way?

a) Look within yourself

There are many ways to conduct an honest self-assessment of your goals and dreams. Set aside obstacles like time, money, and expectations of what you *should* be doing – focus on what you really want and feel you are capable of achieving.

The time invested in this reflection can help you establish the focus and direction of your mentoring experience:

Why might I want a mentor? What do I hope to achieve from the relationship? What opportunities can a mentoring experience afford me?

When I envision myself at the height of my career success, what do I see? In what ways would I be different than I am now?

What would be the most beneficial advantage I could truly hope to gain from a successful mentoring experience?

b) Look outside yourself

Next, ask people who know you well what they see as your greatest strengths and weaknesses. Ask them what they respect or admire most about you, and what areas you could benefit from addressing.

Having identified what you want to learn, distinguish between what you can accomplish by yourself, and what you need your mentor's help to achieve.

*When the student is ready,
the Master appears.*
Buddhist Proverb

As you begin to think about the ideal mentoring partnership, ask yourself:

What am I prepared to put into the relationship?

Are you prepared to trade off some of the comfort of familiarity for the greater potential of learning?

People to consider as potential mentors include those who:

Currently hold or have held a position you'd like to have one day.

Are strong in the qualities you lack, or possess a level of expertise you want to achieve.

Have earned your admiration and respect.

Step Two: Make Yourself Mentor-Ready

Most mentors would not want to invest valuable time in mentees who are not serious about learning. *Sometimes mentee status needs to be earned* – dedicated mentors are typically attracted to mentees who are genuinely committed to growing and learning, and are driven and ambitious.

Step Three: Identify What Kind Of A Mentor Would You Learn Best From?

Mentees who derive the most value from their mentoring relationship invest time upfront in finding the right people to help them grow. People have different learning styles, which influence how well or quickly they learn. Once you have determined what you would like to gain from a mentoring relationship, *consider the qualities in a mentor that are best-suited to those needs.*

Identify a learning relationship that had a great impact on your professional life. What about that person facilitated your learning? What about the relationship enabled you to learn?

Conversely, identify a situation when your learning seemed to be stifled. What about that situation inhibited your ability to learn?



What If One Mentor Can't Address All My Needs?

Very few people get all that they want from a *single* mentor; you may need to temper what you can expect to learn from any one person.

Alternatively, you might find it beneficial to take on different mentors at various stages in your career – or to augment what you gain from you mentor by developing a broad network of talented people who can assist you with secondary learning needs.

In addition to pursuing a formal mentoring partnership, you may be well-served to forge casual relationships with people who have varying levels of experience across a broad range of functions, both inside and outside the organization. The diversity of perspectives could prove to be a great asset – *and* keep you from exhausting your mentor in the process as well.

Spectacular achievement is always preceded by spectacular genius.
– Robert H. Schuller

Approach your potential mentors with a well-developed plan of what you hope to achieve so that each prospective mentor can accurately assess how beneficial he or she can be to you in your journey.

Don't over-rate chemistry... but if you happen to take an instant liking to someone, you will probably find it easier to talk with and confide in him or her than if you take an instant disliking.

Step Four: Finding Your Mentor Match

Choosing from available mentors

Many successful people genuinely enjoy being able to help others learn and grow. The key is to find someone whose strengths match your learning needs:



Not so close to home - Your mentor need not work in your field; some of the best pairs often arise when the partners work in different functional areas, thus expanding the mentee's network and opportunity for exposure.

Also, choosing a mentor whose work isn't closely tied to your own may give you the opportunity to communicate openly about sensitive issues, like challenges that you might have with your manager.

A different point of view - While most people tend to play safe and partner with someone they like or is similar to them, differences can help you develop a broader, more comprehensive understanding of issues. If you are seeking mainly a sympathetic ear from your mentoring relationship, finding someone like you is as good a strategy as any.

If you want to maximize learning, however, you would be better served to look for somebody very different; the greatest opportunities for learning come with people least like us. In practice, most people find a mentor some where between the two extremes.

Initiate Contact – Don't Be Afraid To Ask!

Asking for help can be difficult. The first major obstacle for a mentee is to contact a prospective mentor to ask for help – however, the payoff will be *huge!*

Don't delay - Your future is waiting! If you have identified a prospective mentor who looks like a good fit, you are well on your way... just pick up the phone... your prospective mentor will most probably be flattered – and excited – by your call.

Is it possible that the prospective mentor will decline? Absolutely. If a prospective mentor does not feel that he or she has the time or talent to fulfill your needs, it is in your best interests if he or she declines – rather than investing months of time, only to fall short of your goals.

You have the option of establishing a relationship for six, nine, or twelve months in the formal relationship.

Why define a fixed time period for the mentoring relationship?

Establishing a fixed time period has clear benefits:

Goals with defined due dates are the most likely to be achieved.

Partnerships of defined length are understood to be temporary - reducing the likelihood of overdependence.

Defined terms encourage frequent progress reviews and opportunities to make course corrections.

People's needs and commitments change with time. Partnerships with pre-determined end dates allow for graceful transitions into new partnerships if desired.

Should both partners agree that more time is needed to achieve the original goals, you have the option of extending the relationship for another six, nine, or twelve months.

Step Five: Preliminary Conversation to Determine Fit

You become as your teacher, therefore, select with care.
- Mary Rudisill

Successful mentoring relationships typically occur when both the mentee and mentor have a choice in agreeing to the relationship. Determining the “fit” between you and the prospective mentor is more than a matter of chemistry and requires advance preparation and consideration.

Use your initial conversation with a prospective mentor to:

Get acquainted before agreeing to a mentoring relationship; discussing interests allows a better determination of fit –and increased chances for success.

Help you assess the compatibility of your development needs and the mentor's expertise.

Clarify expectations for the relationship.

Recommended Conversation Flow

Be honest in communicating with your prospective mentor what led you to choose him/her from the list of available mentors. Clearly outline your developmental goals, how you arrived at them, and the steps you are currently taking to address them yourself.

Use questions to check your assessment of the value he/she could bring as your mentor:

- ✎ What experiences do you bring that might be strengthen my development, relative to my goals?
- ✎ What are you looking for in a mentee? What expectations do you hold for mentees?
- ✎ How do you foresee each of us fulfilling our unique roles?
- ✎ Are you willing and able to commit the time needed to help me reach my goals?
- ✎ What are you looking to gain from a mentoring partnership?

If the decision on whether to commit to or decline a potential partnership isn't immediately obvious, encourage your prospective mentor to take a few days to think about the potential “fit” while you do the same.

Identify a date that you contact him/her again to reach a final decision. Be persistent if you don't connect as scheduled – sometimes, despite good intentions, people are busy!

Thank Your Prospective Mentor and Follow Up

Regardless of whether you decide to move ahead, remember to thank this person after your conversation for his/her willingness to spend time exploring the possibility of a partnership.

Much of the value you realize from your mentoring experience depends on your willingness to learn, to be open and honest, and to ask for what you need.

Good mentees tend to be oriented toward achievement, willing to take accountability for their own development, and show high initiative to make the most of available opportunities.

In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.
- Eric Hoffer

YOUR ROLE IN MAKING THE MOST OF A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Seize this very minute; what you can do, or dream you can, begin it; boldness has genius, power and magic in it.
- Van Goethe

You and your new mentor will both assume a number of roles in ensuring a successful partnership. Your roles as mentee include:



Learner The most successful mentees look for opportunities to grow and develop. This could involve asking for feedback, reflecting on experiences (both successes and setbacks) and developing new skills and abilities. Mentors who considered their mentees to be effective learners described them with comments like:

Continually strived for improvement.

Used my feedback to improve personal effectiveness.

Planner The mentee maintains a clear sense of where he or she is going, and tracks and evaluates progress along the way. The mentee comes to mentoring meetings prepared, with a concise outline of issues to be discussed with the mentor. Mentors provided the following comments to describe their mentees in a planner role:

Explored how she wanted her career to progress.

Took responsibility to schedule meetings and was fully engaged.

Communicator The mentee openly discusses goals, challenges and concerns with his or her mentor – the hallmark of a strong, trusting relationship. Mentors describe effectiveness in the communicator role as:

He really opened up to me- and was willing to share information and ideas. He also solicited feedback from me on what I was observing in him..

She gave me good feedback on what did and didn't work

Communication was great. Even if we couldn't meet, we checked in with one another.

Driver The mentee sustains momentum in the learning process by initiating and following through on commitments (including meetings). Playing this role requires the mentee to spend time and be committed to the relationship:

She took ownership of the process. I helped her, but she didn't use me as a crutch, she took the initiative to make things happen.

He always assessed his progress, identified setbacks, and determined the next steps.

*Teachers open the door,
but you must enter by
yourself.*
- Chinese Proverb

Part of your job is to convince your mentor to invest one of his/her most valuable resources- time in your future. You do that by honoring their investment in you.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MENTEES



How do you become a mentee your mentor is happy to work with? Mentors appreciate the following in their mentees:

Respect your mentor's time.

Good mentees recognize and respect the fact that your mentor usually makes a bigger investment in the relationship initially than you do.

Respect your mentor's investment of time in *your* development - by returning calls, working around your mentor's schedule, arriving promptly for meetings, doing your homework, and coming to meetings prepared to make the best use of the time your mentor is investing in you.

Follow through on your mentor's guidance.

Few mentors are willing to spend time on advice that the mentee doesn't at least try to heed or apply. Unless you are willing to at least try to implement the guidance and recommendations your mentor offers, don't expect to merit his/her time.

Also, discuss with your mentor your efforts to apply what you're learning from him/her.

Be flexible.

Be willing to look at issues from different points of view, and open to the feedback that you receive from your mentor. Also, proactively seek your mentor's feedback, and use it to explore what changes you might be able to make. Feedback is, after all, one of the biggest reasons why a mentor can be so helpful.

Show respect for your mentor's efforts.

By following through with the people your mentor introduces you to, you demonstrate respect for your mentor's efforts and the opportunities he or she has provided for you. Also, keep your mentor updated with the steps you take, and results you achieve.

Pass it on!

Good mentees usually pass on the gift of mentoring by mentoring someone else in turn – and making an investment in another mentee, who is seeking help and guidance.

Remember- mentoring is not only for those in senior positions; you don't have to know everything in your given area of expertise to become a mentor! Often, the most enthusiastic mentors are people who earned their stripes some time earlier.

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't care where" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go,.." said the Cat.

- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

The importance of goals

In a study, researchers asked Yale's class of 1953 the following questions:

- ✗ Have you set goals?
- ✗ Have you written them down?
- ✗ Do you have a plan to accomplish them?

Only 3 percent had written down their goals, with an action plan to achieve them.

In 1973, when the same class was re-surveyed, the 3 percent who had written their goals were earning, on average, *ten times* as much as the other 97 percent combined.

Setting Goals

Goal setting is a dynamic process that evolves over time. If the goals are too ambiguous or broad in scope, it is likely that neither you nor your mentor will be satisfied with the learning process or outcome.

YOUR FIRST MEETING: CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

Your first meeting represents a great opportunity to get to know your mentor at a deeper level, as well as exploring expectations, goals and boundaries for your relationship.

Initial discomfort or heavy scheduling demands may tempt you to hurry though the initial meeting - doing so not only cheats you out of truly getting to know your mentor, but also endangers the success of your budding relationship.

Your Development Plan

Your development plan is your blueprint for development – which itself is the reason for your mentoring partnership. Your Development Plan details the specific steps you will take to address your objectives, time frames, milestones, resources, potential obstacles.

Discussing and Documenting Goals and Expectations

Unrealistic or unclear expectations of the mentoring process on the part of either partner can cause the relationship to become uncomfortable and even fail.

- *Kenneth Kerr, Donald Schulze & Lyle Woodward, Mentoring: New Strategies and Challenges*



Like any relationship, this one will take time and commitment from both parties to evolve successfully. The value of discussing and then documenting expectations and goals from the relationship is many fold. It builds trust, and can potentially reduce disappointment of unmet expectations later.

As a result of your initial meeting, you and your mentee should have compiled a written agreement documenting:

- ✗ The expected period of the relationship (six, nine, or twelve months)
- ✗ Ground rules for the relationship
- ✗ Expectations of the mentor and mentee
- ✗ Learning goals and development needs of the mentee
- ✗ A detailed Action Plan for making progress toward goals, including individual accountabilities
- ✗ Confidentiality

Delineating your goals in writing at this point promotes clarity and specificity – and increases the likelihood of attaining your goal. Although you largely drive and establish what you want to learn, your mentor must review and agree to the plan *before* it is *finalized*. By jointly creating and documenting the mentoring agreement and using it as a foundation for your relationship, both you and your mentor can better stay focused on accountabilities and objectives as the partnership progresses.

A sample mentoring contract and a checklist for assumption testing about confidentiality is available on MentorNet.

When we see that to learn, we must be willing to look foolish, to let another teach us, learning doesn't always look so good anymore. Only with the support and fellowship of another can we face the dangers of learning meaningful things.
- Peter Senge

Use the tool provided on the next page to assess how receptive you are to learning.

BE A RECEPTIVE LEARNER!



A single conversation with a wise man is worth ten years of study.

- Chinese Proverb

Mentees who have been found to make the most of their mentoring experiences captured and then internalized what their mentors shared with them. Ways to do this effectively include:

Ask yourself what you have learned.

After every meeting with your mentor, ask yourself what you have learned. Reflect on and review the key insights you gained; capture your learning in a journal so that you don't lose those insights.

When you internalize and apply your learning, you gain more from your mentoring experience. You might also strengthen the relationship with your mentor, who will see your efforts as evidence of your commitment to learning – and as worthy of continued investment.

Apply what you have learned.

What you don't use, you lose! Learning occurs when you apply new ideas or information soon after gaining it. For instance, if your mentor suggests a new coaching strategy, find opportunities to apply that approach on your job as soon as possible.

The sooner you have the chance to apply new information or insights, the more you will learn – and retain what you learned. Another reinforcement strategy is to teach someone else what you have learned. Finally, write in your journal how you plan to apply what you have learned.

Report back to your mentor on your efforts to apply what you have learned

Keep your mentor informed of what you have learned and how you are trying to apply it. This gives your mentor the opportunity to add new insights to your own as you gain experience and a new level of understanding.

Knowing that you are working to apply what you have learned can be gratifying for your mentor, validating the time and effort that he/she is investing in you.

This process of reflection, recording and sharing can help you learn, internalize, and apply what you learn even more effectively.

LEARNING SELF ASSESSMENT

Use the questions and statements below to develop deeper insight into how receptive you are to learning – and how you can become more receptive to gain the most benefit from your mentoring partnership. Mark the comments that you believe are true of you:

How receptive am I to new learning?

Receptive learners risk being vulnerable in order to reach their full potential, including the willingness to ask for feedback and support.

- I value and seek feedback from my mentor, my supervisor, my peers, and others with whom I work - even when their feedback is difficult to hear.
- I candidly share information with my mentor about my struggles and difficulties.

Do I manage my own learning?

Self-managed learners take the actions and steps necessary to reach the next level of performance, rather than expecting their mentors to do it for them.

- I know what I want from my career, and I have a clear, detailed development plan to achieve that level of success.
- I take full responsibility for learning all that I can from my mentor and using this partnership to strengthen my performance.

How self-aware am I?

Learners high in self-awareness reflect on their own development needs. (I don't have any idea what that last part is supposed to mean...)

- At the end of each day, I reflect on my performance relative to the events that took place, in order to learn to be even more effective in the future.
- I pay attention to how events and situations affect me and my behavior.

Am I resilient?

Resilient people learn from disappointments and take risks to sustain continued growth and learning.

- I respond to disappointment or setbacks by learning all I can about what went wrong and how I can approach things differently in the future.
- I push myself to do things I fear or am uncomfortable with so that I can achieve new levels of performance.

Am I growth-oriented?

Growth-oriented people focus on maintaining the ability to contribute at a high level by gathering feedback and taking ownership for improvement.

- When opinions differ or disagreements occur, I try to determine how someone else's view differs from mine; differences allow opportunities for new insights and understandings.
- I look to see how much I can learn instead of how often I can be right.

How well do I learn about myself?

Self-learners are those who, in solving one problem, learn something about how to address similar problems.

- I explore how my way of thinking about a problem may get in the way of solving it.
- I pay attention to my patterns of behavior and how they impact my effectiveness.

You may find that you are stronger in some areas than others. Concentrate on developing those areas that aren't part of your current thinking or behavior.

Recognize that open and honest communication plays a significant role in developing trust – for both you and your mentor.

Work to overcome any misunderstandings that may result from differences in communication style – in doing so, you create a relationship built on trust.

DEVELOPING A RAPPORT WITH YOUR MENTOR: KINDLING KINSHIP



As you may have well experienced, a new relationship can be awkward until both partners find a comfort zone.

The following factors in a conversation can strengthen rapport:

Each person demonstrates respect for the viewpoint of the other, even if different.

Both parties give their undivided attention to the discussion and keep the dialogue focused.

There is a mutual focus on desired outcomes – understanding, learning, and issue resolution.

The challenge to build rapport may be even greater when your mentee is different from you in some significant way (gender, ethnicity, age).

Deborah Flick, an experienced teacher of expert on strengthening dialogue for between diverse people or groups, explains that diversity emphasizes the importance of being able to *listen deeply and to seek to understand: listening to understand requires the listener to identify:*

- ✎ How the other person interprets events, people and their own circumstances
- ✎ What is important and of value to that person - and what is not?
- ✎ What that person assumes to be true or not about a given situation
- ✎ The meaning they the person ascribes to the circumstances

One of the most useful approaches in trying to gain an understanding of someone else's position is the phrase "*Help me understand*". This simple phrase sends some important signals:

- ✎ I suspect there is a difference here, but I cannot fully identify it at the moment.
- ✎ I want to be able to empathize, but first I have to understand how this issue appears to you, how you think about or perceive it.
- ✎ If I can understand the difference between our perspectives, I can be more effective in helping you deal with this issue.
- ✎ I have something to learn here too.

Make sure you have someone in your life from whom you can get reflective feedback.

- Warren Bennis.

What you get out of your mentoring experience depends on your willingness to learn, be open and honest, and ask for what you need.

DRIVE THE RELATIONSHIP

Take Responsibility for Directing the Relationship

Your responsibilities as a mentee don't end with the creation of your development objectives; it is your responsibility to keep the relationship moving forward. *What you get out of your mentoring relationship largely depends on what you put into it.*

Initiate periodic meetings with your mentor.

Prepare an agenda.

Maintain the relationship and rapport by keeping in touch, expressing appreciation for your mentor's efforts, and giving back.

Make an effort to apply what you learn, to help ensure that your mentor maintains a high level of commitment and willingness to investment his/her time and talent to the partnership.

Seek Opportunities for Experience

Ask your mentor to help you build confidence and credibility in the workplace by providing challenging learning opportunities and experiences

Don't settle for a partnership that only provides just discussions and advice; request hands-on developmental assignments.



Challenge Your Mentor to Challenge You

Solicit feedback from your mentor on what he or she observes to be your strengths, areas for improvement, and real opportunities for growth. Act on the feedback and coaching that you receive.

Routinely assess your progress with your mentor. Identify obstacles and shortfalls as well as accomplishments. Set next steps to ensure continued learning.

Finally, mentoring is only one part of your personal development efforts, and does not replace your own, personal efforts and accountabilities. Ideally, working with a mentor should be one part of an overall career plan. You still need to take the initiative to do things like read newspapers, books and magazines; join discussion groups; attend seminars or classes; pursue a degree, etc. to direct your own development.

Honest criticism is hard to take, particularly from a relative, a friend, an acquaintance, or a stranger.
- Franklin P. Jones

Being able to ask for feedback, accept it, and act on it can often spell the difference between success and failure in a mentoring relationship.

By accepting feedback and suggestions without getting defensive, you facilitate your learning and growth.

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

*Those who know they know not become wise;
Those who presume they know much stay ignorant.*
- In Mentoring: The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom

Receiving Feedback

Feedback can keep your development on track by providing you with valuable external perspectives. It allows you to see yourself as others see you. Mentees intent on learning invite and accept candor in the feedback from their mentors.



One of the most valuable gifts a mentor can give you is honest, constructive, meaningful feedback. But in order to learn, you must be able to admit you need help and be open to the feedback that you receive.

Encourage your mentor to give you periodic feedback, and ask for suggestions for improvement. Accept feedback with an open mind – remembering that only an *ally* would give you feedback to help you strengthen your performance. Be willing to try new things as a result of the feedback you receive

Giving Feedback



Like many mentees, you may find it difficult to give your mentor feedback - especially if it is motivated by some dissatisfaction with the partnership. Nevertheless, keeping the relationship moving forward is your responsibility, and giving feedback is part of that. When feedback is given and received in the right way, it can build trust, and nurture and strengthen your mentoring relationship. Quick tips for giving feedback to your mentor in a respectful manner include:

Clearly and concisely describe the specific issues needing feedback. Be able to articulate the issue in a way that focuses on resolution and progress, rather than blame.

Ask your mentor's permission before you give feedback, to increase his/her openness to your input. You can broach the subject simply by saying, "I have some feedback I'd like to offer. Would you like to hear it?"

Don't over generalize. Keep your comments specific, and define what you do and don't mean by citing examples of behavior or situations that have occurred. You might add a suggestion for more productive behavior, such as: *"It would be more helpful for me if you didn't provide the answers, and instead asked me what I might do in a situation."*

Finally, thank your mentor for being open to the feedback, and together decide how you can flag such issues as they arise in the future.

HELPING YOUR MENTOR RECEIVE FEEDBACK



If you truly accept accountability for providing feedback effectively, you will want and need to know what will allow your mentor to be most receptive. Start by reflecting on the conditions and approaches under which *you* are most receptive to feedback... Once you have done that and had time to think about it, ask your mentor to do the same.

Directions: Read the worksheet below and select up to five statements that best describe how you prefer to *receive* feedback, or that are most important to you when receiving feedback. There are no one right or wrong answers – only answers that will allow us to be more effective.

IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO ME THAT FEEDBACK BE...

Given with Care	I value feedback more when it is clear that the person providing it truly cares about me, and is motivated by a desired to help me, not hurt me.
Invited by the Recipient	I value feedback most when I have asked for or invited it. Then I am better prepared for it, more open to accepting it, and better able to ask for clarification and details. I struggle a bit more when I am caught off-guard.
Freedom of choice to change	I value feedback most when it represents opportunities to grow or improve that I can choose to pursue, rather than mandating ways that I <i>must</i> change.
Directly expressed	I most value feedback that is clear, specific, and direct – preferably citing a particular incident as an example of what is meant.
Fully expressed	I value feedback most when it acknowledges the feelings involved (mine and others), not just facts. I need to understand the feelings involved to formulate next steps most effectively.
Non-Evaluative	I most value feedback that is presented as objective observations, rather than being biased by others' opinions, inferences, assumptions, or personal value judgments.
Well-timed	I value feedback most when it closely follows the behavior or event, so that the details are still fresh in my mind.
Readily actionable	I most value feedback that I can act on, about behaviors or actions that I can influence, control, or change.
Checked and clarified	I value feedback most when I have an opportunity to clarify what is meant and to explore possible differences in perception.

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.
- Khalil Gibran

Suggestions for reaching closure:

Celebrate your accomplishments in a way that you would both enjoy!

Share how you have benefited from the relationship.

Evaluate the extent to which learning outcomes were achieved.

Discuss how the learning can be applied and integrated.

Acknowledge that there may be some dissatisfaction on both your parts, if applicable.

Identify for yourself what you would do differently in future mentoring relationships.

BRINGING CLOSURE TO THE RELATIONSHIP: REAPING THE HARVEST

Mentoring relationships can be rich and engaging, but will need to draw to an end as the objectives for the partnership are met. Bringing a relationship to closure can be challenging- and full of emotion, including anxiety, gratitude, fear, relief, joy, excitement, or disappointment.

Prepare for the End

As you begin the mentoring relationship, think about the ending, and what you hope you will have achieved by that point. Address your ultimate objectives periodically in discussions your mentor. Some examples: *‘Since we have only a few months left to work together, this is what I am going to work on in the future. How does that sound?’* or *‘What suggestions do you have for me as I start to take off on my own?’*

Reflection

Before closing the chapter on your mentoring relationship, reflect on what you have learned and how you can apply that to any future mentoring relationships. Note what went well for you, what did not, and why.

Life after Mentoring

Jointly discuss and determine what, if any, connection you will maintain in the future so both of you know what to expect.

If you have enjoyed a warm, fruitful relationship with your mentor, be sure to do get in touch periodically to update him/her on the progress you are making in your life, and toward the achievement of your goals. Remember, your mentor has invested a lot of his/her time and effort in your success, and will appreciate updates on how you are doing.

A Formal Ending?

Letting go is rarely comfortable or easy, but it is necessary. It may be tempting to avoid the discomfort of closure, simply saying “thanks” and moving on, but a formal ending affords you the opportunity to evaluate your work together and acknowledge all that has been accomplished.

The end of your mentoring relationship need not necessarily represent a final or permanent goodbye; it may simply mark the transition into a less formal, less structured relationship. Your mentor can still hold an important place in your life.

Celebration

Terrence Deal and M. M. Key in [Corporate Celebration: Play, Purpose and Profit at Work](#), speak to the value of celebration:

“Celebration infuses life with passion and purpose. They attach us to our human roots and help us soar toward new visions. They touch our hearts and fire our imaginations.”

Celebration should be rich in laughter, compliments and stories.

“During the final month of our mentoring partnership, my mentor and I evaluated the accomplishment of my goals and had a little party to celebrate,” says one mentee. *“We ended our formal relationship, but we still like to keep in touch to share interesting experiences, concerns, and successes.”*

Thank Your Mentor

Offer your sincere gratitude in return for your mentor’s guidance, advice, time, and faith in you:

✎ Find words to express how valuable your mentor has been to you. Your mentor might need to know that their contributions are appreciated and heartfelt recognition can be a memorable parting gift.

✎ Note how you have used or benefited from the insights shared by your mentor, as well as specific aspects and qualities of the relationship that have been meaningful to you. This can also help your mentor recognize the role he or she has played in your development, as well as providing him or her with useful feedback for subsequent mentoring relationships.

✎ Even if your mentoring experience was disappointing, it is appropriate to express appreciation for your mentor’s time and effort. Your mentor may be a better fit for the next mentee; your appreciation may encourage him/her to continue mentoring despite personal feelings of disappointment or responsibility that he/she may also be feeling.

Give back!

The best tribute you can pay to your mentor is to *give back* what you have gained, in full measure.

✎ You can play a significant role in enhancing the reputation of your mentor. Publicly acknowledge the value your mentor brought to the partnership. Share the benefits you received from your mentor with others – and make it known that your actions are motivated by the great impact your mentor had on your own growth and development.

✎ Offer information or feedback, or share your views or experiences to help your mentor broaden his/her perspective in areas where you have greater expertise. Continue to forward articles and information that might be of interest to your mentor.

✎ Finally, honor your mentor’s impact by becoming a mentor yourself. As you attain higher levels of success, be willing to make the life-changing investment in someone else that your mentor made in you.



Entertain hardships while
they are still easy
Address great issues when
they are small
The wise take precaution,
and anticipate difficulties
with ease and preparation
And manage great things.
- In *Mentoring: The Tao of
Giving and Receiving Wisdom*

SPECIAL SITUATIONS: TROUBLE SHOOTING TIPS

Like all relationships, mentoring can come with its share of unanticipated obstacles and challenges that test the skills of the mentor and try the patience of the mentee.

The key to overcoming obstacles is to anticipate and be prepared for them – and then to address them promptly when they occur. Following are additional tips and insights for special situations that you may encounter in the course of your mentoring relationship:

What if a prospective mentor says ‘no’?

There are many reasons why prospective mentors might not be willing or able to mentor you. Legitimate possible reasons include poor fit, lack of sufficient time to invest in the relationship, or a pre-existing partnership with another mentee.

The key is not to take rejection personally – the key issue is finding a mentor with the expertise to help you in the areas you want to develop, and sufficient time to dedicate to your relationship.

What if I can’t find a mentor?

Ask colleagues for recommendations of potential mentors who can help you address your specific development goals.

Look for people who are at or beyond the midpoint of their careers; they are more likely to devote time to being a mentor.

In the meanwhile, capitalize on other helpful relationships – supportive bosses, loyal peers, networking forums and encouraging friends. Peers can be a powerful source of accurate developmental feedback; turn to those who will be objective in their feedback to help you identify areas for your development.



I don’t seem to have much ‘chemistry’ with my mentor

Some of the best mentoring relationships are those where there are significant differences between partners. Although the lack of “chemistry” may make your partnership a bit more challenging, your relationship can still be rewarding as long as there is mutual trust and respect between you.

Even if you are paired with a mentor who is not your first choice, recognize that he or she can still offer great value for your development journey. Focus on what you *can* learn from the mentor you have.

If for some reason, you are absolutely convinced that your mentor is not the right person to help you with your goals, gracefully end the relationship (even if your defined time period has not yet expired).

I don’t know if I can trust my mentor

Mutual trust is at the heart of the relationship and crucial for success.

Trust and confidentiality are part of your agreement and should be discussed openly at the outset, and revisited if either partner has concerns in this area.

Most mentoring relationships will go through different phases of development.

Being a mentor and being mentored are both valuable experiences; we hope that, together, you have learned, grown and shared insights - and enjoyed the journey!

We don't seem to have anything to talk about/ We have run out of steam

Relationships may flounder when the focus is on problems rather than opportunities; the greatest value and meaning may stem from an exploration of opportunities.

It is possible that the relationship has run its normal course and it's time to move on. Be prepared to find another mentor, if appropriate.

My mentor doesn't have the time for me

Initiate a candid discussion with your mentor. Review and share with your mentor the expectations that you have of his/her time and see what your mentor has to say.

Be willing to consider options. If your mentor travels a lot, can you schedule virtual meetings instead of in-person meetings?

Consider whether you have unrealistic expectations regarding your mentor's availability, or time commitments.

I don't drive the relationship

Don't hesitate to speak up or ask questions – what you get from the relationship is largely dependent on your efforts to ensure that it's moving in the right direction for your needs.

Your mentor wants to help you; the more questions you ask, the more he or she can do for you! Feel comfortable to ask for your mentor's time.

My mentor is very critical

It isn't always easy to accept feedback when it doesn't come in the form of praise or reinforcement of what you're doing. Recall the earlier information on communication styles; recognize when your mentor's style may differ from your own, and work to actively resolve misunderstandings or miscommunications that may stem from having different styles.

One of the primary responsibilities of your mentor is to give you feedback so that you can develop; since *developing* is your responsibility, help your mentor understand how to give you feedback in a useful way.

Pursue an honest conversation about how you need to receive feedback.

I don't understand my mentor sometimes. He/she is from a different culture.

If you don't understand your mentor's culture, there is a greater likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstanding, due to different traditions and practices, and widely held (but possibly inaccurate) stereotypes associated with the culture.

One solution is to research your mentor's culture and develop some familiarity with it. Open your mind and be willing to learn and appreciate cultural differences.

For additional thoughts on mentoring across cultures, refer to the "*Cross Cultural Mentoring*" in MentorNet.

Many of these issues, when identified early, can be successfully addressed and the relationship steered back on track.

My mentor is unreceptive/doesn't follow through

Most mentoring relationships are cyclical, but it might be best to address this problem directly by immediately expressing your concern. Show your mentor that you value his/her expertise and experience by being prompt for appointments, sending thank-you notes, and giving timely feedback about how you used and benefited from the advice.

Understand your mentor's motivations for wanting to become a mentor – and do what you can to ensure that his/her needs are also being met through your partnership.

If your mentor is still unreceptive, tell him/her what you have observed and how that is affecting you. You may have to redefine your roles and expectations but often, just expressing your concern and establishing better communication can resolve the issue.

Finally, not everyone will be the most amazing mentor, but he or she will have value to offer if you maintain a positive outlook for the relationship and look for the benefits to be realized.

My boss feels threatened by my relationship with my mentor

Occasionally a boss may feel threatened or intimidated by a mentor. Your boss may simply be uncomfortable not knowing what you and your mentor are working on. Your boss may resent the time and attention your mentor is able to give you. Or, your boss may feel intimidated if your mentor outranks him/her. Alternatively, your boss may be concerned that your mentor will 'steal' you away from the department.



Share with your boss what you are working on with your mentor, and what your mentor's role is. Highlight the benefits that you and the organization are receiving from this relationship (for example: if you learn something new, you might be able to contribute more to the department).

Consider appropriate ways to involve your boss in your development journey. For example, you can solicit his/her input on your potential areas for development, and update him/her on your progress.

Because mentoring is an age-old phenomenon, there are many myths surrounding it.

It is important to remember that not all of the assumptions you hold about mentoring are true or completely accurate.

Knowing about and understanding these mentoring myths will help you begin to appreciate mentoring and what it has to offer!

MENTORING MYTHS

Many people – especially those who are new to mentoring – hold popular misconceptions. Common misperceptions – and more accurate information – are listed below:

Myth #1: You only need one mentor.

Reality: The truth is that a person can and ideally should have multiple mentors over the course of his or her career. Adopting new mentors as your career progresses allows you to benefit from new expertise and wisdom that is most relevant at the particular career stage you are in.

Myth #2: Mentoring is a one-way street.

Reality: Again, not true. Learning flows from the mentor to the mentee and from the mentee to the mentor. It is a reciprocal process.



Myth #3: A mentor must be older than the mentee.

Reality: Age is not synonymous with wisdom. Mentors can be younger than mentees. The relevant criteria for an effective mentor is not age, but experience and expertise – and the willingness to share it for someone else's benefit.

Myth #4: Once a mentor, always a mentor.

Reality: The real goal of mentoring is not to encourage a mentee's dependency on his or her mentor, but to achieve the higher state of interdependency. You do not need to have the same mentor for the rest of your career- nor does a continuing relationship with your one-time mentor need to be maintained as a mentoring relationship

Myth #5: I can only be a mentee to someone with whom I enjoy a strong friendship.

Reality: The mentoring relationship may eventually evolve into a friendship, but a close friendship is not necessary at the outset for a mentoring relationship to work. What is required at the outset: mutual respect, admiration and trust.

Myth #6: I must stay with the same mentor for a lengthy period of time.

Reality: Not really. A mentee's development needs will evolve over time – requiring new mentors with relevant expertise to suit those needs. The Convergys Mentoring Program forges a mentoring partnership agreement for a *fixed* period of six, nine, or twelve months – as mutually agreed upon by mentor and mentee. Once the agreed upon time period concludes, you have the option to continue on with your mentor if you would like (and he or she agrees to) an extension in your agreement.