



Mentee Handbook

Introduction

How to use this handbook

Mentorship has been around for a long time, and it's proven to be one of the best ways to achieve personal and professional growth whether you're a mentor or mentee.

We designed this Handbook to break down the different areas of your role as a mentee and the best practices that will help you drive a successful mentoring relationship. It's designed to be easy to skim but also provide depth if you want to learn more about a particular area. In addition, at the end of each section, we've provided a further reading list for you to explore if you want to go even further in your learning.

By using these mentorship Handbooks you'll be well prepared to build a successful mentoring relationship.

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What is the purpose of mentorship?

A mentor is someone who helps a mentee grow, develop, make decisions, and receive guidance for their future. For the mentor, it serves as a way to give back and is an important development and learning experience.

The mentor acts as a role model for the mentee, but they both benefit from the relationship.



Benefits to a Mentee



Learn the workplace culture

Employees who are involved in a mentorship program are more aware of workplace routines, policies, and expectations than those who do not participate. This is an important factor in helping new hires to feel more a part of the organization.



Enhance skill development

Most mentees are looking for someone to help them advance their career prospects. Through advice and guidance, the mentor can help the employee develop their full potential in the workplace.



Networking

A workplace mentoring program is a great way to boost employee networking opportunities. For many new hires, it can take months and sometimes years to get to know key co-workers. Through a mentoring program, a mentee can gain access to important career contacts sooner. This is especially true in remote work environments.



Problem-solving

A mentor can be a sounding board when the employee comes up against a situation or problem that they are not familiar with or can't see a solution to.



Knowledge transfer

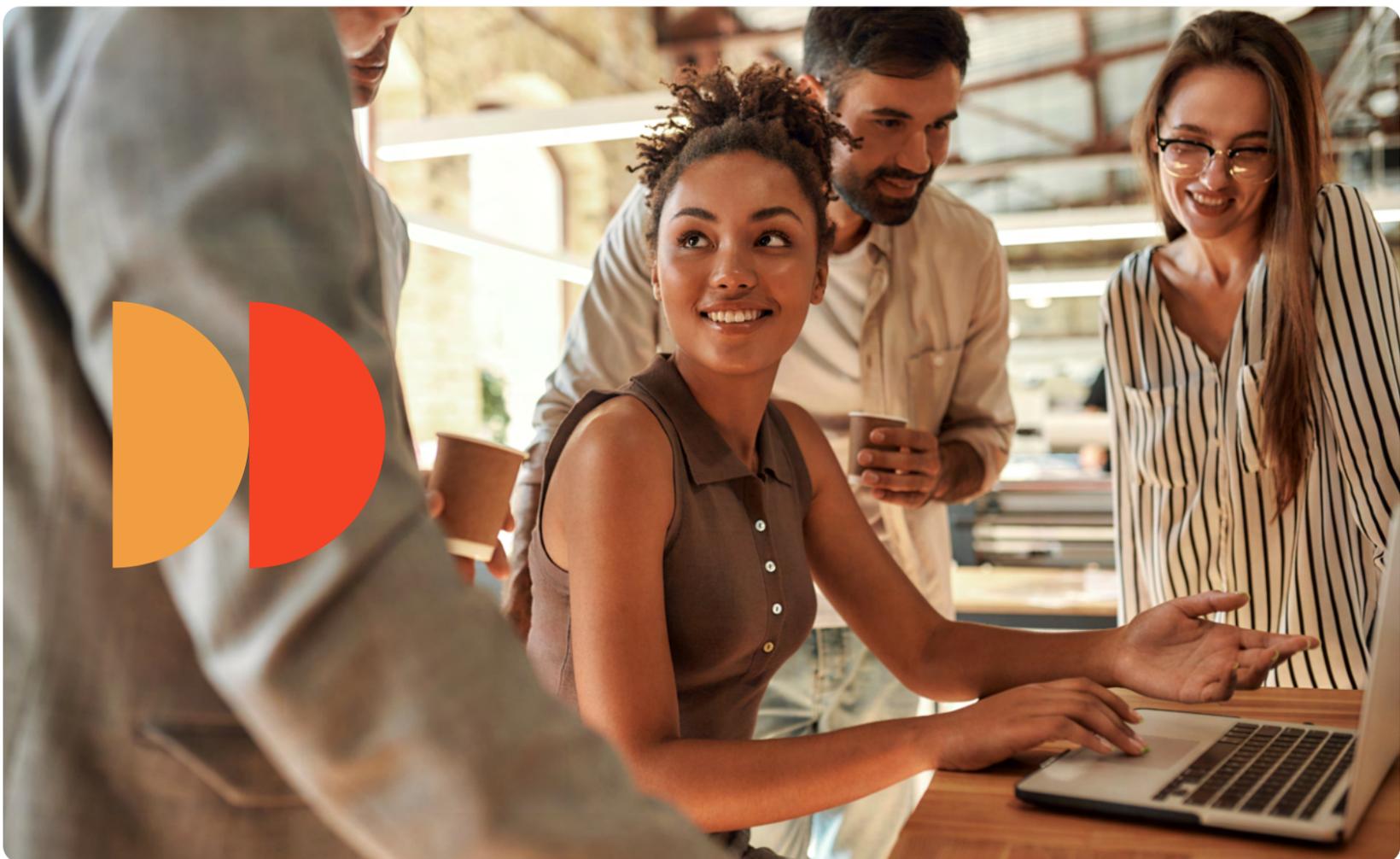
The mentor should have a thorough knowledge of the organization, as well as any programs or training that a mentee can access to help them reach their goals. The mentor can impart wisdom developed on the job over time, information and workplace expectations or policies that will help the mentee succeed in the long run.

What to know before you start your mentoring relationship

Your role as a mentee

Mentorships exist to be a positive experience for both the mentor and mentee. Challenges can become opportunities when you have someone who can reveal a different perspective.

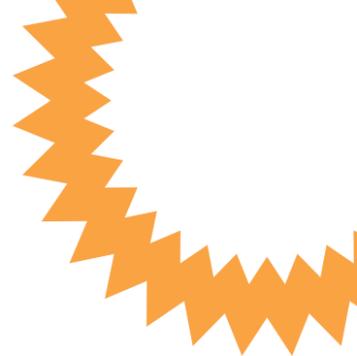
At the beginning of the relationship, spending time clarifying what you can legitimately expect to give and get through mentoring is essential. It is especially beneficial for the individuals involved to discuss, negotiate, and agree upon expectations. We'll go over expectations in its own section later on. Before we go over expectations let's establish what mentorship is and isn't.



What mentorship is and isn't

It is essential that both you and your mentee understand what does and does not constitute a mentoring relationship, as detailed below:

Mentoring is	Mentoring is not
<p>Development tool:</p> <p>It is a development program that grows knowledge, networks, and careers. For example, the process allows more experienced employees to support and develop other HIPO employees.</p> <p>Knowledge sharing opportunity:</p> <p>It is a process that improves cross functional knowledge sharing and facilitates the flow of information and ideas throughout the organization.</p> <p>Organizational culture enhancer:</p> <p>It can help employees better understand the organization's operations, policies, and culture.</p> <p>Candid and specific:</p> <p>A good mentoring relationship provides honest and specific feedback and a route to growth.</p>	<p>Guarantee of promotion:</p> <p>A mentoring relationship does not assure promotion or increase in compensation. However, both parties may develop competencies and skills that improve overall job performance.</p> <p>Replacement for formal development:</p> <p>Mentoring cannot take the place of formal training but rather should augment formal development activities.</p> <p>Management replacement:</p> <p>The mentor should not take on the responsibilities of the mentee's manager.</p> <p>Personal counselling:</p> <p>It is best to seek help on personal issues from a life coach or mental health professional.</p>



Difference between a mentor and a coach

Mentoring and coaching differ in their objectives, impacts, and durations, as detailed below:

Mentoring	Coaching
<p>Helps facilitate a culture of growth and development within the organization</p> <p>For example, a mentor can help mentees see new opportunities within their organization that they could laterally transition to. If this is multiplied across dozens of mentors in an organization, more employees would be experts in more than one organization area.</p> <p>Concentrates on the individual's development needs and goals based on their career aspirations</p> <p>For example, a mentor doesn't have a direct motive to increase the mentee's performance. Instead, the mentor can determine what their mentee's individual goals are for their career and help them work towards those goals without thinking about their current position and KPIs.</p> <p>Mutually benefits both the mentor and mentee</p> <p>The mentor also benefits from their relationship with the mentee. For example, the mentee can provide feedback that helps the mentor listen better before they jump to problem-solving.</p> <p>Builds a long-term relationship</p> <p>Many mentoring programs don't end when the sessions do. Many mentors and mentees continue to check in with one another to support them and keep them accountable to their long-term goals. For example, a mentor could check-in at the end of each quarter with their mentee and check in on their progress toward an ambition they set for themselves.</p>	<p>Assesses and improves an individual's performance in a particular area</p> <p>For example, a coach could focus specifically on speaking skills and how to improve them. They may not question why they want to get better at speaking, but the tactics that lead to stronger presentations.</p> <p>Disproportionately benefits the person being coached</p> <p>For example, the coach isn't there to get feedback on how they can be a better coach. Instead, they are expected to be an expert in their domain and transfer that knowledge.</p> <p>Time-bound relationship</p> <p>The coaching relationship usually has a timeline on what improvement is expected to be seen. For example, a coach may decide that within six weeks, the mentee needs to be meeting specific KPIs or objectives within their role to demonstrate improvement.</p>

Evaluation

A key difference between coaching and mentorship is the place of evaluation. Mentoring is non-evaluative, while coaching is based on measuring performance change. Evaluation can be through company performance reviews or tests. For this reason, mentors shouldn't be direct supervisors or managers of the mentee.

Who drives the relationship?

The mentee drives mentoring; coaching is the opposite. The mentee sets the relationship goals and comes to their mentor with the problems they want to solve. In coaching, the coach or supervisor is driving the agenda for the relationship. The relationship is about performance. The coach is helping the mentee reach a specific goal or develop a particular skill.

Mentoring is highly personalized; coaching is repeatable.

In mentoring, a mentee has specific needs and needs to discuss challenges that are not necessarily tied to company-wide, top-down performance initiatives. Mentoring also carries the benefit of building your network by meeting multiple mentors and making new connections. Mentoring in this way is particularly helpful when onboarding new employees.

In coaching, the organization identified a specific skill gap, and one or more coaches are selected to provide a generalized program to make improvements. Thus, content is reused and generalized, and a coach wouldn't typically be a networking opportunity for a coachee.



Further reading



If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

They include:

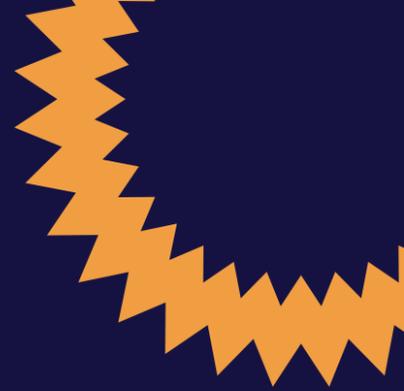


[What is the Difference Between Mentorship and Coaching?](#)



[Modern mentoring](#)



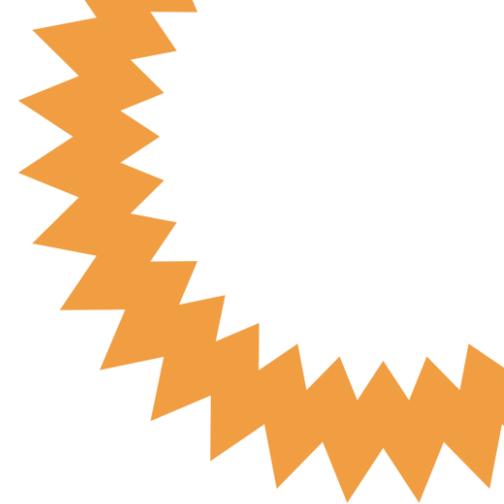


What type of mentor do you want?

Mentorship can take different forms. You may respond better to one form of mentorship over another.

Here are eight different types of mentors. Discuss with your mentor which one they think they are and if you see that as a good thing for you.





1. Advisor

An advisor is someone who makes suggestions and recommendations on what their mentee should do. Advisors also give advice based on their professional expertise and personal experience. Mentee's who want to follow the same path would do well with an advisor.

Here's where advisors are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acts as a sounding board and facilitator• Maintains privacy/confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fixes problems for you• Assumes responsibility for mentee

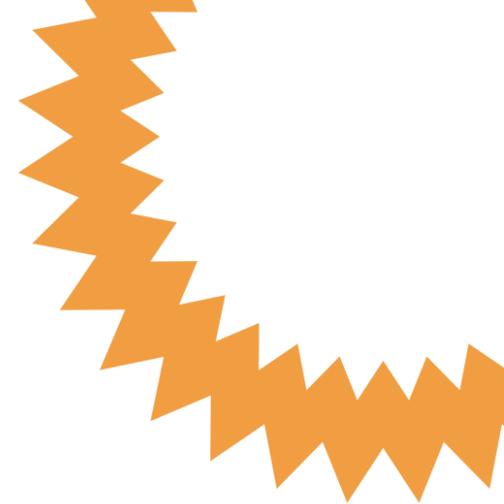
2. Developer

A developer is similar to a coach but is an observer without specific goals for performance improvements. Developers are good listeners and will point out red flags they recognize in their mentees. Likewise, if a mentee displays positive qualities like honesty, humility, or critical thinking a developer will make sure to point them out and commend them.

Here's where developers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives structure and direction• Provides guidance based on observations during interactions with mentee• Empowers mentee to handle his/her problems independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dictates, controls learning• Looks for quick-fixes• Provides general criticism or judgment• Tells mentee what to do





3. Broker

A broker is great at connecting their mentee with opportunities to grow. Rather than discussing possibilities for growth, a broker will determine what their mentee wants to learn and then connect them with whoever is an expert in that area. Brokers are great mentors for mentees who are less inclined to talk a lot but are hungry to pursue learning opportunities.

Here's where brokers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies skill or competency gaps through a “third party” lens• Identifies and facilitates development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows for personal biases• Abdicates, does not follow up

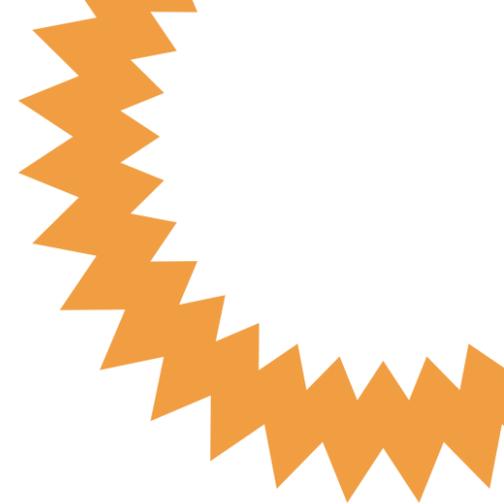
4. Challenger

A challenger thrives on tough love and playing the devil's advocate. They won't stand for poor attitudes or faulty logic. They will push back on their mentees if they begin to complain about their challenges without considering possible solutions. Mentees that want someone to “tell them how it is” will thrive under these mentors. However, they may need thicker skin.

Here's where challengers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positively provokes, pushes toward highest standards• Helps mentee explore potential career opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pushes too far too soon• Discounts mentee's thoughts and opinions





5. Clarifier

A clarifier is a great companion to their mentee. A mentee who is independent and can pursue their growth without much direction would benefit from a clarifier. A clarifier will quickly be able to fill the gaps in the mentee's knowledge based on their own experience within the organization. They can lean on their mentor if the mentee needs to know how to act at an upcoming board meeting.

Here's where clarifiers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaches organizational values and politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removes obstacles so mentee does not have to deal with organizational politics

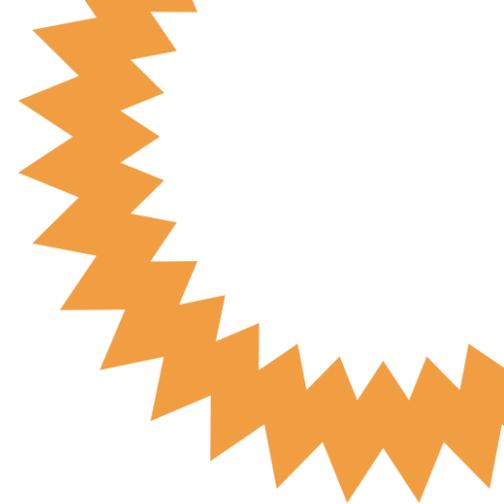
6. Affirmer

An affirmer is great for mentees that respond well to a soft shoulder. Rather than tough love, affirmers are great listeners. If a mentee is going through a stressful situation they can trust that their mentor will be there to talk through it with them.

Here's where affirmers are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives needed support, enhances self-esteem• Exhibits empathy and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gives too much feedback• Discounts mentee's feelings or concerns





7. Sponsor

Sponsors help their mentees meet the people who will make the difference in their careers. They have large networks and credibility. By having their recommendation for promotions or new opportunities, these mentees will gain access to professional growth much faster than if they were on their own.

Here's where sponsors are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides visibility and recognition of mentee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotes mentee at the expense of others

8. Protector

A protector is great for a mentee who is in the midst of a transition which can be stressful and have some risk. Protectors help prepare their mentees for growth by making sure they don't make any mistakes that would be detrimental to their careers.

Here's where protectors are effective and ineffective:

Effective	Ineffective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports, is a safety net• Ensures a safe environment to take risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fights mentee's battles• Overprotects



Further reading



If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

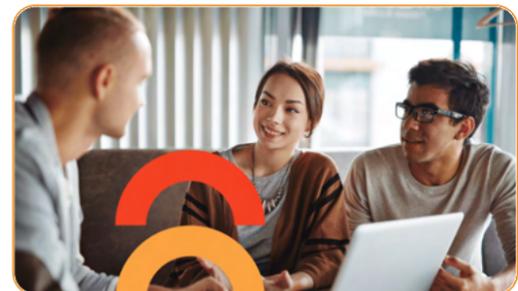
They include:



[What is the Purpose of Mentoring?](#)



[Different types of mentoring and their uses](#)



[How to Mentor Someone At Work](#)



How to be a great mentee

Skills and qualities of great mentees

There are several characteristics that are common in great mentees. These include:

- Motivation
- Communication Skills
- Enjoy Learning
- Team Player
- Committed
- Positive Attitude

These characteristics express themselves differently in professional settings.

If you exhibit these traits you're in a good place!



What to look for in your mentor



Skilled and experienced in the field and industry

Mentors who have worked in their area of expertise for some time and who have gained experience with the company will be a good fit for mentees wanting to follow their same path. A mentor can share what they know about their job, how they fit into the organization and share insights about their industry. In addition, you'll have the unique ability to groom your successor or prepare a new manager in your department.



Desire or motivated to share wisdom

Good mentors are those that not only have gained lots of knowledge and experience but are also motivated to share what they know with others. In particular, they must understand and respect the mentor-mentee relationship and take the workplace mentoring program seriously.



Commitment to extra responsibility

Being a mentor can take time and energy. To be an effective mentor, you'll need to be committed to putting in the extra time and effort. It's your responsibility to demonstrate an understanding of what you are committing to and be willing to do what it takes to help make the relationship, and ultimately, the mentoring program work.



Positivity

Good mentors are positive people. If you accept the responsibility of being a mentor but do so grudgingly, your mentee won't feel comfortable opening up about their goals and challenges. It's beneficial to see the glass as half full and have an optimistic view of what the relationship can provide.

Communicator



One of the most critical factors in a mentoring relationship is good communication. Therefore, someone who has proven they can communicate positively and effectively will be a good mentor. In addition, you will need to provide guidance and give constructive feedback to the mentee. Thus, it is essential to know how to do so in a constructive way.

They find fulfillment in their job



To pass along your knowledge and encourage the mentee to grow in their field and organization, you should enjoy what you do. If you're not interested in your field of expertise, you're not going to develop enthusiasm in the mentee.

Enjoys learning



Mentors that enjoy learning and are well-informed about their field will make the best mentors. These are those individuals who continuously learn about the changes and innovations happening in the industry. They read journals and attend workshops and other training sessions to stay ahead of the game. A person who is up-to-date about the field will pass along that information to the mentee.

Team player



Individuals who can work well independently and contribute to a team effort will also be good choices for mentoring programs. These employees are often skilled at sharing and with and listening to others. They usually value others and understand the importance of being part of a team in the workplace.

Emotionally intelligent



Emotionally intelligent people have a good understanding of their own emotions and know how to be sensitive to others. This skill helps a mentor relate better to the mentee. In addition, they are often empathetic and can see things from another person's perspective.

Further reading



If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

They include:



[Who Can Be a Mentor?](#)



[Different types of mentoring and their uses](#)



[Develop Leadership Skills with a Mentor](#)



[How to Mentor Someone At Work](#)



Your first meeting

How to create the foundation for a trusting relationship

Use the following questions to guide your first mentoring conversation, which will help you get to know one another and establish mutual expectations and goals. Then, note both parties' responses for future reference.

Questions to understand their background:

- What is your educational and professional background (including your current role and how long you have been with the organization)?
- What are your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- What are your short-term career goals? Long-term career goals?
- What are your hobbies/interests outside of work?

Questions to get a sense of what your partner is expecting:

- What do you see as my role as your mentor?
- What ground rules should we set (e.g., confidentiality, openness, honesty)?
- What topics are off-limits (e.g., performance reviews, personal lives)?
- What do you think will be challenging about this relationship?
- Are there any topics of urgent interest?
- What topics do you want to cover in our conversations?
- What do you hope to gain from this relationship?
- How do you prefer to communicate between meetings?
- When is the best time for you to meet?



Decide on expectations

For the relationship to be fruitful, mentors and mentees should define their roles and expectations of one another. What do they expect from one another? Should your sessions be more casual or formal? You should decide beforehand.

Here are some expectations to agree upon:

Core performance expectations

- Be willing to discuss failures and successes
- Demonstrate a genuine interest in being helped by a mentor
- Demonstrate application of learning obtained through the relationship
- Exhibit a desire to improve in a specific area or learn a new skill
- Identify professional development goals, priorities, and career interests
- Listen actively
- Provide honest feedback
- Seek ways to achieve objectives and contribute ideas for solving particular problems

Time commitment obligations

- Be accountable for scheduling meetings with mentor
- Be respectful of mentor's time and schedule
- Commit the requisite time and energy
- Do the necessary pre-work for mentoring conversations
- Follow up on action items identified during development conversations
- Informally communicate regularly with your mentee

Will you be a mentor outside of the sessions as well?

- Attend mentoring-related meetings and events
- Maintain privacy/confidentiality of development conversations
- Provide input to assess and improve the mentoring program
- Take advantage of organizational resources
- Track development and career progress

The do's and don'ts of relationship building

The stronger the connection between the mentor and mentee, the more each of you stands to benefit. Knowing some of the do's and don'ts of mentorship can help keep you both on the right track.

Do's



Engage the mentor by listening and goal-setting

You shouldn't shy away from getting advice. Receiving constructive feedback helps bring you closer to your goals. For example, if a mentor points out that you'd make a great manager of a department one day, you should take the time to understand why they feel that way and listen for ways you can start preparing for that role (if you want it).



Respond to your mentor's advice

A mentor may encourage you to take advantage of any advice or opportunities that they provide. These could be opportunities such as helpful workplace programs to advance skills or external opportunities for training. Of course, they can't know everything, so it can be helpful to ask them to recommend training for you. For example, a mentor may encourage a mentee to take a master class in sales to improve their objection handling skills. The mentee would, in turn, report back with their newly developed skills and share them with both their mentor and their team.



Celebrate with the mentor

One of the primary benefits to a mentor is the sense of fulfillment they get from helping you grow. A mentee can and should celebrate with the mentor when a goal or accomplishment has been achieved. For example, if you get the promotion that you interviewed for and your mentor helped you through the process then celebrate with them! They'll probably be just as excited as you are.



Provide feedback to your mentor

A mentor may feel a bit of imposter syndrome. The title of a mentor can sometimes feel intimidating. Be open and sharing with your mentor what they've helped you with will encourage them. Similarly, if there are things you'd like to see them start doing that they aren't currently it would help them become better mentors by knowing that. For example, your mentor may like to jump into problem-solving right away when you share a challenge you're experiencing. If you'd rather vent a bit before trying to solve it then let them know.

Don'ts



Talk more than you listen

Communication is key to working together, and if you cannot communicate well with your mentor, it could be a bad sign. Their role is as a teacher and a guide. So share your struggles and challenges but then take note of their answers. They may have more experience than you in that area.



Discredit their feedback

A mentor has more knowledge and experience than you. If you want to grow as a mentee it's crucial to try and absorb as much of that experience as possible. If discredit their feedback then you're only hurting yourself. For example, if you decide on how to approach a particular situation and tell your mentor about it just so they affirm your decision you aren't learning anything. Similarly, what if they think you could handle the situation another way? Will you take that into consideration or ignore their advice?



Provide vague or unactionable feedback

Few things are as frustrating as getting negative feedback that is unclear and doesn't provide actionable ways to improve. If your mentor became aware of a way of thinking, a behavior, or anything else that could have negative ramifications on you, you'd probably want them to tell you about it. In the same way, share with them what you'd like them to change about the way they mentor you.



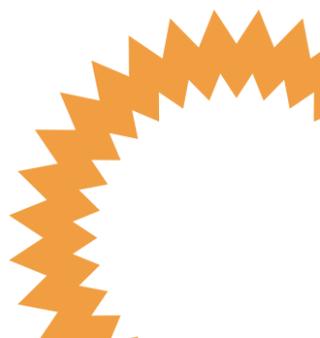
Not being able to receive constructive feedback

It can be hard for a mentor to deliver harsh feedback. It's great to celebrate successes, but to grow you'll need to experience constructive feedback. Remember that your mentor wants to help you grow and they can't do that if they only provide positive feedback. For example, a mentor may smooth over negative feedback about your mindset around a particular problem. Doing so would be a disservice to you because it could negatively impact your future. We all have things we need to work on and to grow we need to confront some negative mindsets or habits that may be holding us back.



Break trust

This may be obvious, but it is of the utmost importance to respect your mentor's privacy and respect their trust in you. Use your discretion, but do not share causally private details of your relationship. Your relationship with your mentor is built on trust. Respect that fact and don't do anything to jeopardize the trust your mentor has in you.



Further reading



If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

They include:



[Getting the Most Out of a Mentoring Relationship](#)



[How to Build a Successful Mentor Relationship](#)



During your sessions

How to cultivate a successful mentoring relationship



Be active

Mentees and mentors need to be actively involved in the relationship. Mentees need to define goals, seek out advice, attend meetings and ask questions. Mentors are responsible for offering advice, guiding goal achievement and encouraging a mentee to develop their skills and networks. Mentees are responsible to actively respond to the guidance they receive.



Get a good match

Finding a good mentor-mentee match doesn't mean you should connect two similar people. Sometimes the best mentorship is between participants who are opposite of each other. The two can challenge each other in new ways and help them understand different perspectives. Refer to the table of different types of mentors above and decide which one would be best for you.





Develop trust



Trust is crucial to a mentoring relationship. Yet, it can also take some time to build. Start your mentorship with a getting-to-know-you-style meeting. In this first session, both the mentor and mentee should exchange information about their backgrounds and interests. Refer to the section, How to create the foundation for a trusting relationship for more information on this. Slowly, as the relationship progresses, you can share more information, leading to more trust.

Have guidelines



Every relationship has a set of “rules” that govern it. For example, a mentorship should have some clear guidelines regarding behavior and responsibility of the participants. Early on in your relationship, both the mentor and mentee need to set some rules about their roles. Share what you both expect from the other person. Also, consider what you bring to the relationship. How can you help cultivate a successful connection?

Set goals



A big part of the job for mentees is to define the goals they want to accomplish during the mentorship. While this includes the career development steps they want to achieve, it is also important to understand what you want from the mentorship. By identifying these goals early, it can help clarify the type of mentor you should be. For example, are they looking to network, gain new skills, or get advice on significant career decisions?

Communication



In the mentorship context, the mentor needs to provide constructive criticism rather than harsh judgment. They should be sensitive to the mentee’s feelings. The mentee also needs to be able to express themselves clearly. If they feel that a mentor does not understand something or offering advice that they are not comfortable with, a mentee should say so in a diplomatic way.

Guidelines for meetings

Prioritizing meetings with your mentee throughout the relationship is critical for both to benefit fully from the relationship. Ensure a productive, successful relationship by implementing the following guidelines:

1. Prepare a day before the meeting using your agenda

If you're using Together's platform you'll have access to an agenda that will also be emailed to you before each meeting. Be sure to come prepared to the meeting by reviewing the Before & During notes to have a more effective mentorship session.

2. Identify next steps after each meeting

Set next steps at the end of each discussion and clarify who is responsible for each of them. You can leverage the Shared Notes functionality in Together's platform or create an "Action Item" for your partner. If follow-up poses a challenge for either of you, use the opportunity to problem-solve together.



3. Follow up

After each meeting, use the Shared Notes functionality to describe how you benefited from the conversation; ask him/her to share his/her thoughts too.

4. Set reminders for yourself to share resources

Set a reminder on your calendar to send an interesting article to your mentee each Friday. You can add these directly to Shared Notes in the Together platform.

5. Don't forget important events

Note important personal events in your mentees' lives, such as their birthday and anniversary date with the organization. In addition, you can use your Personal Notes for any reminders or items you'd like to keep top of mind during your mentorship sessions.

6. Share with them upcoming educational events

Attend educational events (internal and external) together, such as lectures, talks, and discussions.

7. Reflect and share what you've learned together

One of the best ways to learn is through taking time to reflect on where you've come. In the moment challenging feedback can be hard to swallow. It's only afterward that we realize how helpful it was. In those cases, share with one another how you help one another grow. That's what the program is all about.

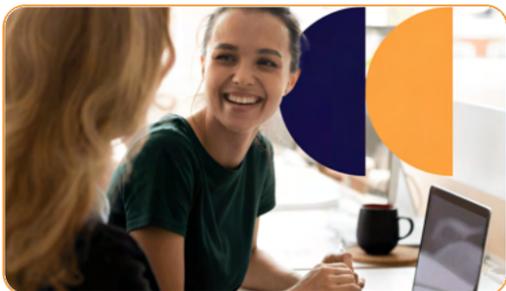


Further reading



If you want to go deeper on the topics discussed above, we have resources on our website that unpack them further.

They include:



[Tips for Effective Mentoring at Work](#)



[Common mentoring challenges](#)



[How to Build a Successful Mentor Relationship](#)



[Building an authentic connection when mentoring](#)





Conclusion

We hope this Handbook has and will continue to help you in your mentoring relationship. The Handbook's purpose is to provide a starting point for developing strong and fruitful relationships with your mentor.

The tactics and recommendations can all be reduced to clear communication, transparency, and a growth mindset. If you have those qualities when you meet with your mentor, you'll be well-positioned to grow both personally and professionally.

