

Mentoring can play an important role in an individual's career development through the sharing of experience and expertise to help with personal and professional growth. For mentees, a mentoring relationship can offer:

- Excellent networking opportunities
- Opportunity to develop skills such as problem solving and communication skills
- Access to professional role model/s
- Opportunities to professional growth and development areas
- A framework of support to set goals and work towards them

A mentor brings a significant wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise to the table and in order to get the most out of their partnership, the mentee must be prepared to equally contribute.

Three key factors in being an effective mentee, each focusing on maximizing the value of the experience for both members of the relationship, include:

1. **Communicate.** As a mentee, you must communicate what it is that you want to get from the relationship. This includes clearly articulating questions and concerns and suggesting to your mentor specific actions that can assist you..
2. **Listen.** Be prepared to hear new ideas and feedback. One of the values that a mentor brings is a “fresh look” at some of the challenges you are facing. Listen to that perspective as well as to constructive feedback and criticism. Be prepared to be challenged by your mentor and be open to considering suggestions that you may not have considered previously
3. **Act.** The mentoring relationship is only as effective as the resulting action. Once your mentor has provided advice, feedback or introductions, immediately take action and follow up.

Getting started

In preparation for your first meeting, send your mentor a brief introduction about yourself together with your CV and a summary of your objectives for the mentoring relationship. Think about what you want to gain from the mentoring relationship and how it can assist in your career development.

Your first session provides an opportunity to meet each other and decide if the “fit” is right. This often is an informal meeting held perhaps in either person's office or at the university coffee shop. Discuss what you are looking for from mentoring at the first meeting and discuss what your mentor is able and willing to provide.

Subsequent meetings

Agree on time frames and a mutually acceptable meeting place for each meeting.

At each new meeting review how things have gone since the last meeting. Articulate your ideas, questions and concerns. Agree on the focus for each meeting with your mentor – for example, a decision on whether to write an invited book chapter or how to prepare for an upcoming and challenging meeting or how to approach a particular work-related problem.

It may be helpful for you to email what they want to talk about before the meeting. This can help your mentor to prepare and enables most productive use of time. At the end of the session, it's a good idea for each to summarise next steps and subsequently, for you to send an email summary of this discussion.

Reach agreement with you mentor on acceptable timeframes and location for each meeting, and decide on a beginning and end time. Make your meetings with your mentor a priority and ensure that you plan ahead.

Sustaining a mentoring relationship

Some mentoring relationships extend over many months or years, others for much shorter periods of time. Mentoring relationships should only continue as long as both parties are able to commit to the relationship and it is meeting the agreed needs and purpose.

Boundaries

Different mentoring partnerships have varying 'rules' about what is discussed and what mentors are willing to assist with. There are no right or wrong examples, but it is important that both mentee and mentor agree on what can comfortably discussed and what can't. .

Likewise, confidentiality is an essential part of the mentoring partnership. It is a good idea to discuss this issue early on in the relationship and agree on what information remains confidential.

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