Relationship Tips for Mentors and Mentees

**Mentor**

Guide, advisor, partner, diplomat, pupil

- **Listen.** Your first task is to determine: (a) what are the strengths and weaknesses of this venture, and do you and the venture agree about the strengths and weaknesses? and (b) what primary challenges does your venture want to focus on in their work with you, and do you agree that this should be the focus of your work together?

From this and ongoing consideration of the above, you can (c) decide together what is the best road map for moving forward in building your relationship and growing this venture.

Your venture should be able to articulate at the outset what they expect from this relationship. If not, then you can work with them to establish this.

- **Be respectful,** but direct & thorough in your feedback. ‘Do not’ is at least as important as ‘do.’
- **Push back.** Be assertive in your advice if you feel strongly about it.
- **Be sensitive** to your role: as a senior business leader, your venture looks to you for advice and guidance, as a role model. Your advice may be taken more literally than you intend.
- **Be clear** about your core competencies, and how much weight the venture should give to advice within and outside these competencies.
- **Establish clear expectations** and commitments: express your expectations and commitments to your venture, and ask for the same.
- Establish preferred feedback style (written, verbal, direct, highly critical, etc.).
- Establish clear communication channels and timeline for interaction.
- Let your venture know if your schedule changes. They will depend on the time that you commit.
- Give homework. Your mentee will love you for it.

**Mentee**

Pupil, collaborator, doer, partner, diplomat, teacher

- **Listen.** Your first task is to determine: (a) how do your needs fit with the core competencies of your mentor, and what specific challenges do you want them to help you address? and (b) do you and your mentor agree about your own strengths and weaknesses, and how you should work together, and if not, why not?

From the above, you should work with your mentor to (c) decide together what is the best road map for moving forward in building a relationship and growing your venture.

You should be able to articulate at the outset what you expect from your mentor. If not, you can work with your mentor to establish this, but do so quickly.

- **Be respectful and responsive to feedback,** whether or not you implement the advice. Be clear about your use of feedback.
- **Push back.** Express respectful reservations if you feel advice is inappropriate, or not feasible.
- **Take your mentor’s advice** seriously, even (and especially!) if it is difficult. You must also put this advice in your own context to determine its role for you.
- **Be clear** about your core competencies, and weigh this in how you utilize the advice that your mentor is giving you.
- **Establish clear expectations** and commitments: express your expectations and commitments to your mentor, and ask for the same.
- Establish preferred feedback style (written, verbal, direct, highly critical, etc.)
- Establish clear communication channels and timeline for interaction. **ASK** for what you need.
- Use your mentor’s time well. Be prepared, focused and concise in each meeting. Let them know in advance if your schedule changes.
- Do your homework. It’s good for you.

*Adapted from the Women’s Technology Cluster, Social Fusion Program: [www.wtc-sf.org](http://www.wtc-sf.org).*
Tips for Mentors

As you prepare for your role as a mentor in the program, consider the following 10 Tips to being an effective mentor. Being a mentor in the program will allow you to reflect on your own path, assess what has worked and not along the way, and to assist an emerging leader along the path. As a mentor you will be part teacher, part thinking partner, and a curious listener and coach. The mentoring relationship is about growth for the mentee, certainly; and we hope you will find it is about growth for the mentor as well.

1. **Consider your own past and path.** Before beginning with your mentee, take time to reflect on when you were in the same career place as your mentee. What was most useful to you at that time in moving to the next stage? What did your mentors do that were most effective for you?

2. **Make time for real conversations.** Clear time to have “real” conversations rather than rushed check ins with your mentee. Get to know your mentee on a personal as well as professional level and allow them to know you. Share your thinking and insights with your mentee and ask him/her to do the same.

3. **Give them a structure for success.** The mentoring conversations should be **purposeful** and not just interesting. The relationship should have a progressive feel to it; resulting in action for the mentee. A useful model to guide a conversation with your mentee about their goals, aspirations and actions is as follows:
   - **Goals:** What are your goals?
   - **Action:** What do you and I agree to in order for you to take action toward your goals? What actions did you take or will you take?
   - **Progress:** What progress are you seeing? What needs to be adjusted?

4. **Share your stories.** Mentoring is partly about sharing our own experiences and largely about helping the mentee discover their own path. As appropriate, share knowledge or insights that would be useful to the person you are mentoring. Often, this will involve stories of your major points of growth and change along the way—what allowed you to reach the next level?

5. **Ask as much or more than you share.** Mentoring helps people uncover what is important to them, their goals and aspirations. It helps the mentee clarify their thinking and put actions in place to move forward. Asking questions in addition to simply “telling” allows the mentee to access their own internal wisdom. Listen deeply to what matters most to your mentee.

6. **Be curious.** When was the last time you asked someone what was important to them and why? What their aspirations are in work or life? Get curious with your mentee. Suspend your judgment and just explore. Notice how much more is uncovered with a “What” question than with a “Why” question. The former opens up the conversation and reveals the next layer of depth. The mentoring relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and freedom of expression.

7. **Help your mentee see things differently.** We often try different actions again and again with little if any difference in results. Helping your mentee see their problem or goal differently will allow new and untried actions to be available, which leads to different results. An effective mentor “lends their eyes” to the person being mentored so
that they can see things from a new perspective. An effective mentor also models and assists the mentee with the skill of reflecting before acting.

8. **Help your mentee see what they do well.** We are so often only given feedback when there is a problem; and, by nature, we tend to look at our own “gaps.” Help your mentee discover their strengths and utilize them. What do you see that they may not? What can the mentee do to use this strength even more—is there a way it can help compensate for a weakness? Focusing on what is working begets a higher level of performance and builds confidence.

9. **Help your mentee see their blindspots.** Just as we cannot always see what we do well, we often do not see our blindspots. A blindspot is what others see about us, but that we do not see (or acknowledge) in ourselves. Helping someone uncover this is a core part of change and development.

10. **Share resources and connections.** The mentee is looking to you for your experience and for the path you have traveled before them. Share resources that you have found useful along the way—books, articles, websites, associations, etc. Also, think about your own network and connections; who would it be useful for the mentee to know or connect with given their goals?

http://www.unionplus.org/mentoring-toolkit/best-practices/tips-for-mentors
Tips for Mentors

At the core of virtually all successful and personally satisfying mentoring is a meaningful relationship with another person. In the past mentors may have connected with others because of a number of visible or documented characteristics they had in common. However, in the world today such commonalities may be more difficult to discern and formal mentoring programs may present a challenge to a mentor as to how to initiate and maintain a quality mentoring relationship.

The following few tips are based on the experience of Rey Carr who has engaged in dozens of informal and formal mentoring relationships.

- **Make a list.**
  Preparing for your first meeting: I make a list of things that I would have wanted to know when I was in the position of the person who I will be meeting with. My list might include information about me (as the mentor) about the organization or position, about what it was like to be starting out, about what it was like in a new organization, or about expectations concerning our relationship. I write these details down in note form and then I send them to the person I will be mentoring.

- **Take the initiative.**
  I often take the initiative to make the first call, although I do appreciate it when the other person will call to arrange a meeting. I hold my meeting time as essential. I don’t shift it around to accommodate my busy schedule. Only an emergency will alter my date.

- **Be clear about purpose and boundaries.**
  Gift-giving, acting as an advocate for career advancement, loaning money, or becoming involved in dispute resolution are all out-of-bounds for me in my mentoring relationships. I feel comfortable talking about ethical or moral issues, however, and I like to be clear about ground rules. I have had different experiences with having a formal agreement. Sometimes I do not have one and other times we may develop a comprehensive agreement document. I have provided example agreement forms used in previous mentoring partnerships.

- **Create an agenda.**
  When we meet I ask the other person if it is okay if I identify some items for an agenda. I list two or three and then ask the other person if they have any items they would like to add. Some of my typical items are (1) getting to know each other, (2) logistics, (3) goals and expectations, (4) concerns that might interfere with our meeting together, (5) initial impressions, (6) questions I have about you, and (7) why I think I can be a worthy mentor. Although this might seem trivial, I always make sure that I call the person by the name they prefer to be called. I even have a fun activity that makes this a valuable learning.

- **Listen deeply and ask powerful questions.**
  The two skills that I think are essential for successful mentoring are (1) in-depth listening, that is, suspending judgment, listening for understanding and providing an accepting and supportive atmosphere; and (2) asking powerful questions, that is, questions that are challenging in a friendly way and questions that help the other person talk about what is important to that person. I seldom ask "why" questions. Most of my questions can be described as "open-ended" and usually start with "how"
or "what." I have created a list of the One Hundred Big Ones (Powerful Questions) to assist mentors with this task.

- **Plan for the next meeting.**
  When we come to the end of a meeting I usually ask to review our mutually developed agenda to determine our progress. I then solicit any ideas about what we might want to discuss at our next meeting. I also usually ask for an impression of how this meeting went and what we might be able to do (or stop doing) next time to make the next meeting as good or better.

- **Experiment with process.**
  Over a period of several meetings, I might use coaching, role plays, simulations, role rehearsals, experiential learning activities, brainstorming, mind-mapping and other techniques that feel perfectly natural to me. I might also just be. Going for a walk together; sitting on a bench sharing lunch, or in some cases, attending a special event all have meaning for relationship building.

- **Focus on wisdom.**
  I see myself as a resource, catalyst, facilitator, idea generator, networker, and problem-solver, but I do not see myself as a person with answers. I do have experience and I think I have learned from those experiences, but I do not see my mentor role as one in which I "tell" another person what to do or how to do it. I freely share what I have done (or have learned), not as a prescription, but more as an example of something from which I gained some wisdom. I also feel comfortable contributing ideas or suggestions, not as a sage, but as a collaborator. (I have heard others reject the role of becoming a mentor because they did not consider themselves to be experts in a particular area. As Grey Owl has said, "I wouldn't let knowing get in the way of being."

- **Maintain and respect privacy, honesty, and integrity.**
  I have had experience participating in events where these key values have been jeopardized. I know first hand the disastrous consequences that can accompany violating these values. I can't offer confidentiality in the legal sense, but I can do the best I can to ensure that "what is said in this room stays in this room."

http://www.mentors.ca/mentorideas.html
Corporate Mentoring Tips: 7 Habits of Highly Successful Mentors & Mentorees

Two questions people often ask me: 1) Can anyone be a mentor? 2) Can anyone be mentored?

Let me start with the last question. I believe anyone can be mentored if the person is open to the concept and is willing to do the work.

Regarding the first question: if someone wants to be a mentor, it’s possible. Mentoring skills can be learned, developed, and nurtured.

That said, I’d be remiss if I didn’t point out that the most effective mentoring relationships take place when the mentors and mentorees bring certain skill sets to the table. And that’s the subject of this month’s newsletter.

Use these 7 Habits of Highly Successful Mentors and Mentorees to identify the perfect candidates in your organization for your existing mentoring program or to show upper management that you have the right mix of people to launch a program.

1. **Active Listeners.** Active listening takes energy. People who listen actively don’t simply sit back and allow words to hit their eardrums. They sit up straight. They take notes. They ask questions. They repeat or "mirror back" what they’ve heard to ensure they’ve understood it properly. Active listeners are the ones who provide non-verbal gestures (e.g. eye contact, nodding, etc.) that indicate they’re following (or not following) what you’re saying.

   *Why is this habit important?* Mentors and mentorees spend much of their relationship talking and listening to one another. Active listening is critical for both parties.

2. **Dedicated to Their Success.** I’m not suggesting that people should have a myopic view and are dedicated to only their own success. What I’m saying is that people who take pride in their work, who want to grow, and who truly care about their career trajectory are assets because of their high expectations.

   *Why is this habit important?* It stands to reason that people who are dedicated to their own career success will want to make the most out of their involvement in the corporate mentoring program. The most effective mentors and mentorees are people who are dedicated to the idea of making their relationship work.

3. **Dedicated to Others’ Success.** I put the "success" habits back to back so that it’s clear they work in tandem. The most successful (and happiest) people in life are not in it just for themselves. They care about the organization and the people within that organization and have a genuine desire to see everyone and everything succeed: the company, the employees, and the mentoring program as a whole.

   *Why is this habit important?* People who realize that "it’s not all about me" are much more willing to make a genuine investment in the mentoring relationship.
4. Curious. People who are naturally curious tend to follow the "if there's a will, there's a way" philosophy. If they don't know the answer or if they need help with something, they won't sit back and wait; they'll go looking for the answers.

*Why is this habit important?* I've found that the "curious types" are the ones who'll take the time to read articles on [mentoring best practices](http://www.management-mentors.com/resources/june-2010-mentor-mentoree-habits/), listen to tutorials, and seek out help from [Program Managers](http://www.management-mentors.com/resources/june-2010-mentor-mentoree-habits/), all of which help in making a successful mentoring relationship.

5. Engaged with their surroundings. These people view their work as more than just a job. They show interest in the industry, in the world around them, in the work that other departments are doing, and in the charitable events associated with their company.

*Why is this habit important?* Having a "big picture" view of the world allows people to see how the success of their mentoring relationship affects more than just the two people in the relationship.

6. Willing to step out of their comfort zones. These people are willing to try new things, consider new thoughts, and think outside of the proverbial box for the sake of personal and professional growth.

*Why is this habit important?* Prospective mentors and mentorees who are willing to try something new and give it a "go" will have the best chance at reaping the most benefits from the mentoring relationship.

7. The 3 R's: Responsible, Respectful, & Ready. People who are responsible, respectful, and ready to get started with new projects help make the day-to-day work experience a better one not only for themselves, but also for everyone around them.

*Why is this habit important?* Being a mentor or mentoree requires diligence -- you need to commit to regular meetings (and actually meet), chart progress, and learn to navigate a new relationship (and all the ups and downs) with aplomb.

Tips for Mentors

What to discuss
When students and new professionals initiate discussion, it usually focuses on asking their mentor about their career experiences. There may be other topics that might prove fruitful for discussion. You may want to reflect back on your school experience and identify information that would have proven useful to you back then. Other topics may concentrate on accommodation issues, client interactions, disclosing a disability, career challenges and milestones, administering psychological tests and assessments, writing for publication, the internship process, and so forth.

The purpose of the mentor relationship is to promote the mentee's professional growth. Mentors should assure that interactions with mentees comply with applicable ethical standards.

Maintain contact
Maintaining regular contact and soliciting the same will aid in developing a successful mentoring relationship. Sometimes a short sentence acknowledging receipt of a note and saying you'll be in contact later will suffice during a busy time. Plus, it will assure your mentee of future contact. You may even prompt or encourage your mentee to do the same. A quick line, such as "I haven't heard from you lately, are you very busy with school/work?" may help bridge a lag in communication.

Set expectations
You may want to communicate with your mentee about your busy schedule, any times you will be out of town, and when you will have limited access to email. Also, you may want to let your mentee know whether your employer restricts email access and so you are limited to contacting him/her during the evening.

In a few instances in our pilot program, mentors expressed concern over the mentee expecting the mentoring program to double as a job service. It doesn't. On the other hand, you are certainly free to provide internship and job opportunities to your mentee.

What if your mentee is going through a rough time?
Academic and professional life can be very stressful for some individuals. Mentors, however, are not intended to serve as mental health professionals, legal professionals, or parents. Universities, colleges, and employers often provide various resources that can assist with personal issues and difficult times. If at any time the mentoring relationship is extending beyond what you are comfortable with, please feel free to forward your concerns to us. We can then address the situation by pointing your mentee to the appropriate place for assistance.

Evaluation of the program
To evaluate and improve the mentoring program, we will be asking you periodically to answer questions about the program. These questionnaires will not take up much time. Your responses are crucial in shaping the future of our program.

The primary characteristics of effective mentoring include the ability and willingness to:

- Value the mentee as a person
- Develop mutual trust and respect
• Maintain confidentiality
• Listen both to what is being said and how it is being said
• Help the mentee solve his or her own problem, rather than give direction
• Focus on the mentee's development, and resist the urge to produce a clone

10 Mentoring Tips for the Corporate Mentor
By Management Mentors

Are you currently mentoring someone in your organization, or are you thinking of becoming a mentor? Do you have a mentor yourself? Or are you the manager of corporate mentoring program? Regardless, it's important for everyone--mentor, mentee, program manager--to understand a mentor's true role in the mentoring relationship.

Here are 10 key points that mentors should keep in mind:

1. **Facilitate not clone.** Remember that you are sharing your mentee’s journey, not yours. If you act more as a facilitator for knowledge, experience, and personal development, you’ll avoid the temptation to create another “you” and you’ll allow the person to develop into the “who” they want to be.

2. **Uniqueness is important.** What makes every mentoring relationship different is the uniqueness of each individual. This is especially true when it comes to diversity. "It doesn’t matter to me that you’re a woman or African American, etc.”, though intended to remove a barrier, actually reinforces the barrier. It should matter to you, because it matters to me.

3. **Consistency is critical.** Relationships develop through ongoing contact. Keep your commitments to engage on a regular basis. The golden standard is every other week for 1 to 1.5 hours; however, agree on what will work and do it regularly. This gives the mentee the assurance that you are genuinely interested and that he or she can count on you.

4. **Faking it is not making it.** Genuine and honest feedback is the only credibility that will work in mentoring. If you don’t know something or feel uncomfortable about a discussion, share that with your partner rather than trying to project that you’ve always got it together. Perfection is hard to emulate, and your mentee will respect you more when he or she gets to know you as someone who’s had disappointments and setbacks.

5. **Empower rather than solve.** Because mentors are often in a managerial or leadership role, they are problem solvers. The tendency is to take this skill directly into the mentoring relationship and provide solutions. The problem is the solution is the one that worked for you and may not work for your mentee. In addition, a mentor should be empowering the mentee to arrive at their own solutions. As the old adage says: “You can provide a fish and feed someone for the day or teach them how to fish and feed them forever”.
6. **You are not responsible—you have shared responsibility.** Mentors feel responsible for their mentee. This is fine if you understand that to mean that you should act responsibly, but this should not go so far as to believe that you are primarily responsible for your mentee’s success. It is a shared responsibility. However, the mentee bears the larger portion since it's up to him or her to act on what is discussed during the mentoring relationship.

7. **Appreciate what you’re giving.** In an effort to be helpful, mentors often feel they never give enough. This can lead to your missing out on a real benefit for you in mentoring: seeing how helpful you have been. The best way to learn what you have contributed is to ask the person most directly affected—your mentee. Asking will do two things. First, it will provide you with valuable information about what you’ve given. Second, it will allow the mentee to be aware of this and to be appreciative.

8. **It’s not coaching; it’s mentoring.** Mentors certainly coach in areas of skill development and knowledge acquisition, but mentoring is more than that. It’s about having a personal relationship with a mentee that moves beyond coaching to discussing who the person is and what his or her dreams and aspirations are. Share the dreams. Share the journey. Don’t mistake the advice for the journey.

9. **Honor your limits and boundaries.** It is never healthy for any of us to give without limits. This only depletes us and makes us less available for others. You have a right to your own boundaries, such as how frequently you can meet/communicate, areas of discussion that may be off limits, contacts you don’t want to share. State those clearly to your mentee so that he or she will respect them. Ask your mentee to do the same so that both of you gain a mutual understanding of the boundaries in your relationship.

10. **Listening is hard, but advice is easy.** We could all use more listeners in the world. We are all more prone to commenting or giving advice without first truly listening to the issue being presented. That’s why some solutions don’t work—someone wasn’t listening. How do you listen? By asking good, open-ended questions and letting the other person speak: “What makes that hard for you?” or “What could you have done differently?” The other advantage to asking good questions and listening is that it gets you out of the “I'll solve this problem” to “I’m facilitating this conversation to arrive at a solution that the mentee thinks is best.”