

# Mentee Toolkit

## Ten Tips for Mentees

- 1) **Initiate.** In order to sustain the mentoring relationship, take the initiative to ask your mentor a question, to let him or her know your educational and professional interests and objectives, and to ask about his/her own experiences.
- 2) **Honor your commitment.** Your mentor probably has a very demanding job. He or she has volunteered to take on the added responsibility of mentoring. Please be appreciative of your mentor's time and investment; respond in a timely manner to your mentor's questions and comments. If you don't have the time to respond at length, send a short message letting this person know you will be in contact when you have the opportunity.
- 3) **Help Your Mentor Help You.** Tell your mentor how she/he can be most helpful to you.
- 4) **Expect Support, Not Miracles.** You can expect a certain level of support and advice from a mentor, but he or she can't solve your problems for you. Perhaps the most valuable quality a mentor can offer is an alternative point of view. A mentor can put the situation in perspective, offer feedback, serve as a sounding board, and identify others whose brain you might pick or activities you can engage in or small ways you can position your work to meet your goals as well as resources that may be helpful to you.
- 5) **Communicate clearly.** Initiate contact with your mentor if you have questions or would like to discuss something. Identify your needs and communicate them as clearly as possible to your mentor. It may be helpful to put some focused energy into organizing your thoughts and concerns before talking to your mentor, so that the time is spent wisely.
- 6) **Be Teachable.** Be willing to learn new things, obtain another perspective, and be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism.
- 7) **Keep Up Your End.** Work hard at being a good mentee.
- 8) **Follow Through.** When you decide to act on your mentor's suggestions, act in a timely manner and then report back to him/her.
- 9) **Look ahead at your calendar.** Are there any days you know that you'll be offline or ultra-busy? If so...let the other person know, so that if s/he doesn't hear from you, she knows it's because you're away or you're swamped.
- 10) **Correct Misunderstanding When They Happen.** Get in touch with your mentor before a concern becomes a problem.

# 7 tips for being a good mentee

## Be ready to work at the relationship

Good relationships don't just happen; they take work. This applies to relationships with family, friends, colleagues and your mentor. It takes time and effort to get to know each other and build trust. Establishing and maintaining trust is essential to a good mentoring relationship.

## Be open-minded and willing to learn

No matter who your mentor is, s/he has experience and expertise to share with you. You and your mentor may have a lot in common or very little. Regardless, if you remain open-minded and want to learn, you will learn and become a better professional as a result.

## Be honest and real

Your mentor will be better able to help you if you are open and honest about who you are and what you want professionally and personally from your life. Talk about your background, current status, hopes, fears, and goals for the future.

## Be proactive and take initiative

Mentoring should be an active and engaging experience for both student and mentor. As a student, you should not rely on your mentor to do everything. Make sure that you are in frequent contact with your mentor and that you are initiating most of that contact. Let your mentor know when you need help. Ask questions. Follow-through on items the two of you discuss. Demonstrate a good work ethic.

## Be prepared for your meetings with your mentor

Think about the topics you would like to discuss with your mentor ahead of time, write them down and possibly even email them to your mentor in advance of your meeting. The more you prepare, the more you will get out of your meetings with your mentor.

## Be a good listener

It is your mentor's job to give you honest feedback and advice, some of which will be positive and some of which will be constructive. Rather than ignoring your mentor's criticism or constructive feedback, or letting it make you feel bad, listen to what your mentor has to say and consider how you can use that information to improve yourself. Regardless of whether you choose to take your mentor's advice, listening to what your mentor has to share with you is important.

## Be forward-thinking

Talk to your mentor about where you are presently but focus your energy on building for the future. Define your goals for the semester, year, graduation or early-career. In conversation with your mentor, determine the skills sets, knowledge, and abilities you need to acquire in order to achieve these goals.

## References:

Zachary, L. J., with Fischler, L. A. *The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Institute of Food Technologists (IFT). (Date Unknown). How to be a Good Mentee. *IFT Career Center eMentoring*. Retrieved December 20, 2012, from <http://www.ift.org/careercenter/ementoring/how-to-be-a-good-mentee.aspx>

# 10 Mentoring Tips for the Corporate Mentoree

Being a mentoree (also known as "mentee") is a powerful opportunity to grow. Still, being a mentoree is a "job," just as it is for the mentor. Regardless of what role you play in corporate mentoring, it's important for everyone--mentor, mentoree, program manager--to understand a mentoree's true role in the mentoring relationship.

**Here are 10 key points that mentorees should keep in mind:**

- 1. It's your job, not theirs.** The focus of mentoring is on you, the mentoree. Therefore, don't expect your mentor to do all the work. His or her role is to facilitate your development, not do it for you. Take the initiative and follow-up on agreed upon goals.
- 2. Think commitment, not lip service.** Regular, ongoing contact is one of the most important building blocks for successful mentoring. Agree with your mentor to meet on a regular and ongoing basis and avoid canceling appointments.
- 3. Show up for the relationship.** Be prepared before your meeting with anything agreed upon and with an issue to discuss that's important to you. There's always something to discuss since events have occurred between the current meeting and the last one. The issue need not be monumental--sometimes simple things can lead to great discussions and insights.
- 4. Give back and get more.** Mentors don't usually ask how the mentoree has benefitted from the relationship. Take the time to share examples and to say "thank you" on occasion, and you'll often find that the mentor will give more without your having to ask. Sharing how a mentor has been helpful in the past gives the mentor guidance on how to be helpful in the future.
- 5. Keep expectations realistic.** Unstated assumptions or expectations can easily derail a relationship. To avoid this, you and your mentor should both discuss your expectations of each other and the relationship. For example, discuss how often you'll meet or what areas you will work on. When there's a change in expectations, discuss this as well. Relationships grow and change and so do expectations, so those agreed upon early on may not be the same later. Have periodic conversations to discuss your mutual expectations.
- 6. It's risky, but it's healthy.** A mentoring relationship is not meant to make you comfortable with where you are. It should challenge you both professionally and personally. This can't happen unless you're willing to take risks. What kind of risks? Whatever makes sense, but things like discussing your lack of confidence, challenging a mentor on an issue, trying something completely outside your comfort zone are all examples. Taking risks is an integral part of growth and well-being. So by taking risks, you're actually getting healthier!
- 7. Be yourself; we already have everybody else.** You needn't act exactly like your mentor. You are a unique person. Recognize your uniqueness and resist the temptation to clone your mentor. This is especially important when considering [diversity initiatives](#). For example, it's been documented that when white males mentor non-whites, there's sometimes an inadvertent attempt to make the mentoree "more white." Recognizing our differences allows us to remain who we are.

- 8. Don't be afraid of your mentor's silence.** You're in a mentoring session and you seem to run out of things to say, and your mentor isn't helping because all she or he is doing is keeping quiet. This is a good thing! Your mentor's silence is inviting you to probe more deeply into what is on your mind, and it's an opportunity to share more deeply in the relationship. In this situation, pause and look inside yourself to try and get at what is of immediate concern or on your mind and share that with your mentor. The possibilities of what may happen are endless.
- 9. The elephant will crush you.** Don't sit with an issue that you should discuss with your mentor; otherwise, it will severely impact and could derail your relationship. If something is not working in the relationship, chances are your mentor is feeling similarly, but neither one of you is taking the responsibility to deal with it. Here's an example: the relationship is not going well and you or your partner frequently cancels appointments. Instead of discussing the issue, you both avoid it. Your relationship is doomed and probably will be a waste of time. Talking about the elephant in the room will remove the elephant and give you the opportunity to reframe your relationship in a positive way.
- 10. Pass it along.** Since you're enjoying the mentoring experience, give back by becoming a mentor to someone else. Whether it's a peer, a subordinate, a family member, share with others so that what your mentor has shared with you gets passed along through you.

<http://www.management-mentors.com/resources/april-2009/>

# How to be a Good Mentee

Having a mentor can help you to learn how to operate in the world of work. Your mentor will connect you with people and perspective that you need in order to move ahead. He or she may provide advice on how to handle situations and people. She will draw from her own body of experience to share insight, wisdom, and knowledge. He or she will support positive change in your life and will challenge your thinking, thereby expanding the possibilities for you.

However, you will not automatically receive these benefits of the mentoring relationship. Experienced mentees know that, to have the relationship they want, much depends on them. As a mentee, the success of the mentoring relationship depends on you.

## **You are the driver of your own development.**

If you are serious about learning from your mentor, your frame of mind will be: "I am here to learn, and I am open to new ideas. I am responsible for my own life and for making my own development and career path happen."

Below, you will find tips on how to get the most from your mentoring conversations.

## **Tips for Mentees**

**1. Be prepared for your mentoring sessions.** Model professionalism in your mentor meetings by being prompt, prepared, and maintaining a professional attitude. Preparation means coming to the conversation with a good idea of what you would like to focus on during the time together. Be punctual, well organized, and ready to give a brief update on recent progress and developments and to propose an agenda for the conversation today. You might even email the topics to the mentor ahead of time, if you think the mentor would appreciate it.

**2. Establish a mutually agreeable plan for mentoring sessions, including how much time each of you need if a session has to be postponed.** Schedule the sessions on your calendar immediately and build in enough time around the sessions to prepare. Your mentor is a volunteer whose extra time is scarce. By establishing a time commitment and ensuring that conversations start and end on time, you will demonstrate respect and responsibility to your mentor.

**3. Let your mentor know who you are.** Share your hopes, fears, ideas and goals openly, even if your mentor has quite a different background or style. Do share your life situation as well as your professional goals. Your mentor will then be able to put your situation in perspective.

**4. Focus on the relationship, rather than outcomes.** Your mentor's role is not to get another job for you. Be realistic in your expectations and focus on building a relationship, not obtaining a particular kind of help from the mentor.

**5. Ask direct questions about what you most want to know.** Since the mentee is the one who establishes the agenda for the conversation, you are in a position to set up the conversation in a way that provides the most relevance and value for you. Let your mentor know what is most on your mind and what would be most helpful to you to talk about. If the conversation strays, just prompt the mentor to return to the original topic. You are responsible for ensuring that the conversation meets your needs.

**6. Practice learning from anyone.** In the past, people believed that a strong personal connection was essential to a mentoring relationship. However, mentoring serves many purposes and most don't require a deep personal connection. Mentoring may be short-term, specific to a situation, focused on a particular area of development, or mentoring may turn out to be a life-long conversation. By recognizing that you can benefit from a variety of perspectives and styles – even those quite different from your own – you will open yourself up to new ideas, valuable information, and a wide range of perspectives. You and your mentor don't have to have everything in common to have a productive exchange.

**7. Listen with an open mind.** Often, we turn off our listening when we believe that the perspective being offered isn't pertinent or that the person speaking is "different" from us. However, your mentor's experience – however distant in time or industry-specific it may be – will carry a nugget of learning for you. Challenge yourself to find the connection, rather than rule out the advice or perspective that you are hearing. Be ready to learn something new as a result of the conversation.

**8. Ask curious questions.** The most enjoyable mentoring sessions flow with a natural back-and-forth dialogue. Relax and enjoy getting to know another person. Don't be shy about asking curious questions, such as, "What was that like for you?" or "How did you feel at the time?" Ask a question or two at the start of each session to get to know your mentor's experiences, such as, "I'd love to learn about your career path..." or "What do you know in hindsight that you could share with me about how you achieved professional success?"

**9. Take notes.** It's difficult to remember key points and commitments after the meeting. Keep a notebook and jot down ideas and insights during the session, and in between sessions. Do capture the commitments that you and your mentor make to each other so that you are able to follow up appropriately.

**10. Provide context and brief updates to help your mentor to understand you.**

While the mentor doesn't need to know every single thing about you, it's helpful to both of you if you use the first session to get to know each other. At the beginning of each session, provide a brief update on progress since the last conversation.

**11. Respect your mentor's boundaries.** The mentor's role is to support your development through regular conversation. Outside of the session, most mentors have very limited time to engage with mentees. Communicate respectfully with the mentor. Be careful not to inundate the mentor with emails or phone calls outside of the session. Respect the time boundaries of the session and do all you can to end at the agreed upon time.

**12. Follow up on agreements.** If you've committed to take a step as a result of the mentoring session, make sure you do so. It is discouraging for the mentor if you have made commitments that you don't act upon. You can also help the mentor to keep his commitments by sending a brief thank you note after a session that also lists any agreed-upon actions from either of you.

**13. Say "thank you!"** Remember to say thank you after each session and give appreciation for specific insights or examples that helped you. This information will let your mentor know more about what you value and how he is making a difference for you

<http://www.ift.org/careercenter/ementoring/how-to-be-a-good-mentee.aspx>

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## **Expect support, not miracles**

You can expect a certain level of support and advice from a mentor, but he or she can't solve your problems for you. Perhaps the most valuable quality a mentor can offer is perspective. A mentor can put the situation in perspective, offer feedback, serve as a sounding board, and identify resources that may be helpful to you.

## **Communicate clearly**

Initiate contact with your mentor if you have questions or need to discuss something. Identify your needs and communicate them as clearly as possible to your mentor. It may be helpful to put some focused energy into organizing your thoughts and concerns before talking to your mentor, so that the time is spent wisely.

## **Be teachable**

Be willing to learn new things, obtain another perspective, be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism.

## **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 successful mentees include the ability and willingness to:**

- Clearly articulate personal and professional needs
- Assume responsibility for your own professional growth and development
- Listen both to what is being said and how it is being said
- Establish goals and make decisions to achieve those goals
- Spend time reflecting on your achievements
- Be receptive to constructive feedback

<http://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/mentoring/tips-mentees.aspx>

# Tips for Mentees

As you prepare and progress on your journey as a mentee in the program, consider the following 10 Tips to being an effective mentee and getting the most of the mentoring relationship.

1. **Be clear on what you want to gain in the mentoring.** Before beginning with your mentor, take time to reflect on the key areas you want to focus the mentor's assistance to you. Use the Setting Mentoring Goals forms to clarify what it is you are moving toward at this time and how the mentor might help you.
2. **Have real and purposeful conversations.** Clear time to have "real" conversations rather than rushed check-ins with your mentor. Get to know your mentor on a personal as well as professional level and allow them to know you. Use the session preparation form to be clear and purposeful in your sessions. Share your thinking and insights with your mentor and ask him/her to do the same.
3. **Make clear requests of your mentor.** The mentor is there to share their knowledge, professional experience and resources or contacts they may have that will assist you. However, the mentor is *not* a mind-reader. Articulating what you need through clear requests of your mentor will make the relationship more productive and satisfying for you. Requests should be within the scope of the mentoring. Be clear in your requests, knowing that you won't get what you don't ask for; and the mentor always has the option of saying "no."
4. **Take action toward your goals.** The mentoring relationship offers you the rare opportunity of having someone committed to your progress toward goals. The mentor will help you think about ways to remove barriers and actions you can take. However, without trying some new actions, there may be little substance to the mentoring. Try new actions, assess what you learned, and use this to guide the mentoring conversations.
5. **Take a step back to see things differently.** We often try different actions again and again with little difference in results. Ask your mentor to help you see your situation differently and/or from their perspective so that you may open up new and untried actions, which may lead to different results.
6. **Be curious.** Get curious with your mentor. Ask him or her about past experiences, their journey, etc. Suspend your judgment and just explore. The mentoring relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and freedom of expression. Ask them to share their stories of major points of growth and change along the way—what allowed them to reach the next level, to attain goals similar to the ones you are exploring?
7. **Acknowledge what you 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." Make sure you are also discovering and utilizing your strengths. Ask your mentor what they see that you do/have done well that you might not be able to see? What can you 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.
8. **Take a look at your 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. Ask your mentor what blindspots they may see, particularly as it relates to the goals you are trying to achieve.

9. **Don't put your mentor on a pedestal.** Your mentor will likely be at a substantially higher "level" than you are. At the same time, this is just the *role* they hold, not *who* they are. Be careful not to put your mentor on a pedestal, as this can prevent you from relating to him or her as partner.
10. **Have fun!** The mentoring experience will hopefully be one you look back on throughout your career. And, while there is serious work involved, don't forget to have fun; laugh with your mentor, be adventurous and don't take things so seriously as to get in your own way!

<http://www.unionplus.org/mentoring-toolkit/best-practices/tips-for-mentees>

## Reasonable Expectations for Mentors and Mentees

Mentors and mentees typically enter their relationships with assumed expectations of each other. At times, some can experience disappointment because expectations weren't met or even discussed. To prevent this and help you with your planning, the table below lists some common, reasonable expectations. In many cases, the expectations are similar or the same. A mentoring relationship is a partnership, with both people showing respect and support for each other.

Discuss these expectations early in your mentoring partnership. You may want to add other expectations the two of you identify.

<b>Mentors</b>	<b>Mentees</b>
Meet as often as your schedules permit.	Meet as often as your schedules permit.
Provide help by answering questions. Serve as a learning broker, and be a sounding board for issues relating to the mentee's career goals and development. Talk about skills mentee could acquire to add value.	Take initiative to drive the relationship and be responsible for your own career development and planning. Ask questions.
Discuss eliciting getting feedback and help mentee look for information on impact he/she is having.	Focus and be interested in getting feedback and measuring how you are perceived.
Provide suggestions and advice on goals and activities that lead to effective and rewarding work at the Bank. Tell stories about how others made their way in the Bank that might be relevant to the mentee.	Ask for suggestions and advice early in the relationship. When advice is given, listen to the mentor, apply at least some of their ideas, and let him or her know the results.
Be a catalyst for mentee developing his/her own network. Point to others he/she might reach out to and engage.	Elicit Mentor's advice on developing other informal mentoring relationships
Keep any commitments made.	Keep any commitments made.
Keep confidences with mentee	Keep confidences with mentor.
Work out any minor concerns about the relationship.	Work out any minor concerns about the relationship.
Evaluate the relationship at various Points.	Evaluate the relationship at various Points.

## **Unreasonable expectations regarding mentors**

There are some common unrealistic expectations of mentors that can cause irritation and disappointment on both sides. As a general guideline, the mentor should not be expected to:

- Provide the mentee with personal introductions to other people unless they're comfortable doing so.
- Spend more time on the relationship than he or she is able to give.
- Take the lead in the relationship, setting up all meetings and driving the mentee's career development.
- Continue the relationship beyond the agreed-upon time period.

## **Specific tips for mentees**

These practical strategies can help mentees build a relationship with their mentors:

- Remember that you own your development, your mentor doesn't. It's up to you to identify objectives as well as keep the relationship focused and moving forward.
- Use active listening skills in discussions with your mentor.
- Be prepared to ask for specific advice on your skill set, ideas, plans, and goals. The more specific you are, the easier it will be for your mentor to respond.
- Be complete yet succinct in your comments and explanations.
- Make it easy for your mentor to give you honest, specific feedback. Ask for it early in your relationship.