

Mentor/Mentee Guide

One of the many ways you can grow in your career is to have an individual, a mentor, to ask questions of and navigate career decisions with that gives you the benefit of an outside perspective to your life and career. As the individual receiving the advice, a mentee, there are some best practices for getting the most out of the relationship. This guide serves as a starting point in developing and growing the mentor and mentee relationship with a focus on career mentorship.

Definitions

Mentor – an experienced trusted advisor; a trusted counselor or guide

- Who can be a mentor?
 - Typically (in a career setting), a mentor is someone who is further along in their career and often considered to be an expert in their field.

Mentee – a person who is advised, trained or counseled by a mentor

- Who can be a mentee?
 - Everyone! Even the best mentors usually have been or are currently a mentee of someone else.

How to Find a Mentor

It can often be difficult as a prospective mentee to find a suitable mentor. Sometimes Mentors find you and guide you in your career. This is rare and typically as a prospective mentee you will need to take steps to find a mentor. Here are some tips to finding a mentor.

- Find someone you want to be like. Not just in the job that you want some day but that has similar characteristics as you or characteristics you hope to emulate one day.
 - You may have to move out of your comfort zone to find a mentor. Great places to meet potential mentors include, CAAA alumni networking events, industry conferences, your work place, LinkedIn, friends, and even extended family.
- Study the person. Follow them on LinkedIn, read what they are posting, get to know their strengths and weaknesses. Try to determine if they would be a good fit.
- At the end of the day you want this to be a relationship that you can grow and nurture. Once you think you have found someone, make “the ask”. It is probably not a great idea to ask a person to “be your mentor” right away, but instead ask for an initial meeting, take them to coffee or lunch and get to know them. Come prepared with questions but let the conversation flow naturally. If you are feeling good about it there is no shame in asking, but it may be helpful to have a few meetings and conversations with the individual before asking them to be your mentor.

How to Find a Mentee

Congratulations on wanting to share your knowledge and wisdom to help another person in their career journey. Helping someone grow and maybe avoid some pitfalls on the way is a noble endeavor.

- Like those looking for a mentor, individuals looking for a mentee should find someone you see a bit of yourself in. But, as the prospective mentor, be open to individuals that you may not think would be a good fit. Remember the goal is to help an individual grow into who they are or want to be.

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- Great places to meet potential mentees include, CAAA alumni networking events, SAA Student Alumni Networking Nights, industry conferences, your work place, LinkedIn, friends, and even extended family.
- *Tip: If you are looking to mentor individuals in your workplace it can be helpful to form mentor relationships with employees that are not under your direct supervision. This is not a hard and fast rule and you should look to support employees that work for you, but it may be easier to have a true outside perspective and have hard conversations when it is not an employee you supervise.*
- Take interest in the work a potential mentee is doing. Consider taking them to lunch or coffee to understand what they are looking to do in their career or what kind of work they want to be doing.
- At the end of the day you want this to be a relationship that you can grow and nurture. Once you think you have found someone, make “the ask”. See if the potential mentee wants to continue meeting and offer to create some level of formal meeting structure to create space for regular conversations.

How to be a Mentor

- Establish expectations and ground rules. Setting up ground rules around what kind of topics you are willing to talk about, what the mentee should come prepared with (questions/solutions to discuss), what a respectful working relationship looks like (showing up on time, being treated as a professional), and what you are willing to do (teach, coach, open relevant doors).
- Set mutual goals. Discuss what is important for you both to get out of the relationships and sketch out goals on how you will get there.
- Create a contact schedule. Are you willing to be always on call? Do you just want to meet once a month? Or quarter?
- Guide the mentee to help them come to their own conclusions. Walk them through different angles and viewpoints of their current situation or opportunity. But let the mentee make their own decisions.
- Be willing to open doors for your mentee. Introduce them to your network when appropriate.
- Check your biases and impulses. Make sure you are not clouding up the relationship with your own preconceived notions. Don't assume anything about your mentee. Be willing to ask them questions to get a better well rounded picture of your mentee.
- Ask yourself questions like: How will I know when my mentee is successful? What do you hope your mentee development looks like over the course of your mentorship? What are the goals of the mentee and how can I help move them forward in their goals?
- Have a genuine interest in your mentee as a person. Get to know them. What they like/dislike. Build the relationship to be more than just a transaction of information and connection.
- Be an active listener.
- Be willing to share the mistakes you have made in your career and how you handled them (good and bad) and how you might handle them differently in the future.
- Celebrate your mentee's achievements.

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- Be willing to offer constructive criticism. Constructive criticism coming from a trusted mentor in the context of a safe relationship is where mentees can grow the most if they are willing to hear it and act on it.
- Motivate and inspire your mentee. Show the mentee that they have the strength and ability to do the uncomfortable and succeed.
- When possible give more to the relationship than is asked of you.
- Be patient. Be kind. Be generous.

How to be a Mentee

- Be worth the time and energy for the mentor. Invest at least as much if not more into the relationship. Be all in.
- Set short and long term goals (professionally) and for your mentor/mentee relationship. Update your mentor regularly on your progress in meeting those goals.
- Know what you want and ask for what you need. Mentors want to help you. Communicate regularly about what you want out of the relationship and what you need to be able to move forward with your goals.
- Be willing to receive constructive criticism. Constructive criticism coming from a trusted mentor in the context of a safe relationship is where a mentee can grow the most if they are willing to hear it and act on it.
- Take action on advice that is given from your mentor. Show your mentor that you are willing to take the steps and do the hard work to grow both personally and professionally.
- Be an active listener and ask thoughtful questions. Great questions yield the best answers from mentors.
- Have realistic expectations for your mentor. Mentors have lives, family, jobs, and other commitments. Be sure you are respectful of their time and are realistic about what you can accomplish with your mentor.
- Respect your mentor. Consider their time, be prepared for your meetings, don't over call/email, and don't ghost your mentor.
- Be committed. Ideally a mentor/mentee relationship is a long term commitment (though not always). Be willing to commit to a mentor for some time and that they are willing to commit to you. Ideally mentors can walk with you through many stages of your life and career.
- When possible give more to the relationship than is asked of you.
- Be patient. Be kind. Be willing to learn.