

A Proven Process for Successful Mentoring

A poorly planned and unstructured mentoring relationship can be a waste of time. Using a systematic process, mentors and mentees can be more effective and productive in their relationships.

Here is a brief description of our research-based process that can help you form a mentoring relationship more easily, work together productively and end the partnership in a natural, fulfilling manner. The four steps in our process overlap a bit, so you sometimes may work on more than one step at a time.

The four steps that mentors and mentees need to take for effective mentoring are:

- ✧ Building the relationship
- ✧ Negotiating agreements
- ✧ Developing the mentee
- ✧ Ending the relationship

Step 1: Building the relationship

“Spending time getting to know my mentor was one of the most important things I did,” according to a mentee who recently participated in a successful mentoring relationship. “Because my mentor and I took time to build a trusting relationship, we really felt comfortable sharing our goals and discussing our challenges.”

Don't rush this vital first step. Building a trusting relationship requires sufficient time and dedicated effort. Sometimes we're tempted to hurry the process or neglect this step altogether. When we do, we cheat ourselves out of valuable mentoring experiences and decrease the likelihood that the relationship will succeed.

Focus on getting to know each other and establishing a foundation of trust. Begin to explore the experiences and goals of both the mentee and the mentor. Relax and realize that becoming acquainted is a critical step that will lead to positive results. While you build your relationship, this step also includes planning your meetings, making them more frequent at first, and ensuring that both of you are actively involved in the mentoring process.

MediaPro has learning tools to help mentors and mentees get acquainted, plan meetings, and be actively involved in the relationship.

Step 2: Negotiating agreements

“My mentor and I were careful to clearly define our expectations, clarify logistics, and discuss working preferences,” a mentee noted. “We knew exactly how often we’d meet, when and where our meetings would be held, and how to best approach the task at hand. Negotiating these things from the beginning made my mentoring experience a success.”

After you’ve become acquainted, you’re ready to create a set of operating agreements for your mentoring relationship. For example, define your role as a mentor or mentee, determine your schedule and meeting logistics, and clarify any limitations or preferences in the relationship.

Negotiating clear expectations will help the relationship run smoothly and help each partner achieve his or her mentoring goals. This step includes establishing measures of success, discussing confidentiality, determining the role of the mentee’s manager (if any), and clarifying the expectations of the mentor and mentee.

MediaPro has learning tools to help mentors and mentees discuss confidentiality, clarify expectations, determine the role of the mentee’s manager, and plan the first mentoring meeting.

Before you discuss your expectations, it may help to read the article, “Reasonable Expectations for Mentors and Mentees.”

Step 3: Developing the mentee

“I had a long list of goals at first,” a mentee wrote. “However, I quickly realized that I needed to be more realistic about my expectations since my time already was so consumed with work and outside activities. My mentor and I decided to focus on just one career-related goal so we could work on specific objectives and effective development activities. At the end of the year, we achieved all of our objectives and I reached my goal.”

Developing the mentee is the longest step in the process and will comprise most of your mentoring efforts. During this step, the mentoring partners will:

- ✓ Set one or more goals
- ✓ Choose objectives to reach the mentee’s goals
- ✓ Select development activities to achieve the objectives
- ✓ Maintain regular contact with each other.

MediaPro has learning tools to help mentors and mentees set goals, choose objectives, select development activities, and maintain regular contact.

Step 4: Ending the relationship

“During the final month of our mentoring partnership, my mentor and I evaluated the accomplishment of my goal and had a little party to celebrate,” a mentee noted. “We ended our formal relationship, but we still like to keep in touch to share interesting experiences, concerns, and successes.”

Scheduling a formal ending is an important event in the mentoring relationship where you can celebrate your accomplishments and plan for the future. A formal ending prevents the relationship from dwindling without focus or disintegrating from inactivity. It also gives each mentoring partner a needed sense of closure and a transition into a less formal partnership or a new mentoring arrangement. It’s an excellent time to evaluate your work together, finish your last objectives, and plan for future options.

MediaPro has learning tools to help mentors and mentees schedule an end date, evaluate the relationship goals, and evaluate future options.

Conclusion

Following the proven four-step mentoring process helps mentors and mentees maximize the benefits of their relationship for themselves and their employer. Remember, the four steps are:

- ✧ Building the relationship
- ✧ Negotiating agreements
- ✧ Developing the mentee
- ✧ Ending the relationship

Mentoring partners who follow the process find that they can quickly build a good working relationship and successfully achieve the mentee’s goal.

For more details on the benefits of effective mentoring and MediaPro’s “Business Mentoring,” please contact us at (425) 483-4700 or at mentor@mediapro.com.