



## How to Serve as a Mentor

Be yourself; you were selected for a reason! Get to know the participant and his/her needs and goals. Establish expectations for the relationship that you both agree on and are comfortable with. Provide more guidance than “answers”.

Consider the following:

1. **MUTUAL DISCLOSURE BUILDS RAPPORT**—Be human, reveal something about yourself that few people know. The participant may be in awe of you or your accomplishments. It is important that you are comfortable with one another for the relationship to be productive. You can set the stage by sharing something you have learned through experience or an unfulfilled dream that you still aspire to. Encourage the participant to share similar information about him/herself.
2. **LISTEN**—Ask open-ended questions that cause the participant to reflect and consider alternatives. Help participants examine the “why” of any given circumstance. Help participants consider the ripple effects of their actions and the big picture view.

Examples of questions include:

- “Is there another way to look at this situation?”
- “What other groups will be impacted by this decision?”
- “Why do you suppose that has been industry practice thus far?”
- “Why do you think she reacted that way?”
- “What could be done to make the situation better?”

Participants are often eager to share a specific story or article with you. They will often come to a meeting with an agenda of points they want to cover. Make sure they have a chance to cover it all or they will not consider the meeting successful.

Be conscious of “air time,” the participant should be talking close to 60% of the time. Avoid being the “sage on the stage” and help the participant talk through their issues, explore their own options, and do some thinking out loud.

3. **PROVIDE HONEST FEEDBACK**—Let the participant know that honest feedback is a valuable part of the relationship by delivering it. Help the participant recognize and capitalize on their strengths for their own career progress. At the same time, help him or her recognize where they fall short and together examine ways to remedy the

situation. **If you hold back honest feedback, the mentoring relationship will never realize its maximum potential.**

Sometimes there are gaps between the participant's current behavior and the behavior you know is required to be effective. Help the participant examine the gaps and determine what can be done differently. Ask questions like:

- “How else could you have handled the situation?”
- “What other options are you considering to resolve this issue?”
- “How did others respond to your handling of the situation?”
- “Why do you think the situation worked out so well?”
- “What are some of the things you did right in this situation that could be applied to other circumstances?”

*(Please see “Tips for Giving Feedback Effectively” for more details.)*

4. **GET OUT THE CALENDAR**—Work with the Mentee to initiate meetings that make sense for both of you. You can conduct mentoring conference calls, but you should meet live your Mentee at least per month for the first six months of the relationship and once a quarter there after. *Program guidelines call for:*

- Monthly face-to-face meetings lasting about 1 ½ hours for the first 6 month period and a minimum of 1 face-to-face meeting lasting about 2 hours once a quarter there after.
- Bi-Weekly conference calls in between meetings for the first 6 month period and monthly conference calls there after.

Involving participants in a mentoring relationship, and then not doing anything with them, may do more harm than good. The participant's expectations have been raised and they will now be disappointed if you are not available to them.

5. **“KEEP THEM DANCING”**—E-mail, telephone, voice mail, send articles or books, ask questions, seek their input. Do this proactively between meetings.
6. **FOLLOW UP**—After each session take some notes for yourself; this will help you to recall and be specific in your discussions going forward. At the next meeting, or even between meetings, ask the participant to let you know how things are going in some of the areas you have discussed. This demonstrates your interest and commitment to their development. It also encourages them to think about things before they do them and to reflect on outcomes afterwards. This process is pivotal to development. It will also provide a specific forum for more feedback on decisions and behaviors that are relevant to the participant.
7. **TAKE PARTICIPANT'S PHONE CALLS**—This simple act will reinforce the importance of the relationship, so do the best you can to be available when they need you.
8. **MAKE INTRODUCTIONS**—Provide the participants with introductions where appropriate and point them in the right direction.

9. **KEEP CONFIDENCES**—A truly open and productive relationship depends on confidentiality. Therefore most discussions will be between the mentor and participant.

