

Mentoring Checklist

What is mentoring and how can you successfully implement a mentoring plan?

Introduction

Whether formal or not, you likely had a mentor in the military, or served as a mentor. Mentors serve a variety of important roles and can be a valuable resource and source of support.

In the military, developing others is a part of the job. Plus, your career path is well defined, so formal mentorship programs may not be as prevalent as they are in corporate America. But they're still there.

In the corporate world:

- Roles and career paths can be less well-defined. Likewise, reporting structures can be complex. As a result, individuals often seek guidance through mentorship, which is initiated by the person seeking guidance rather than the mentor.
- A mentor is someone who helps you navigate issues that are important to you and your development. A good mentor likely won't feed you bulletproof answers to problems, but instead will provoke you to find solutions by asking questions and sharing experiences.
- A mentor is someone you choose who provides a safe setting for advice and provides guidance, but may not be directly responsible for your career growth.

Key Actions

To build a successful mentorship, there are key actions you need to take. Use the table below to identify your goals for having a mentor, find a suitable mentor and build a positive relationship.

Action				
Identify your priorities	Look for someone with:	Shared personal experience	Similar job function	Different functional role
Personal: I want to discuss a personal issue, such as, military background, work/life balance or being a working single parent.		✓		
Professional: I want to discuss my current job, such as, improving needed skills, advice on how to succeed or navigating an issue.			✓	
Career: I want to plan my career growth and explore leadership opportunities.				✓
My priority is:				

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Select a mentor	Look for someone who:	Will help me meet my goals	Will Challenge me to grow	Has the expertise I lack
Once you have identified your priority for having a mentor, identify possible candidates. In addition to the overall characteristics for mentors (trustworthy, non-judgmental, has capacity to mentor), you should evaluate potential mentors on the items to the right. The perfect candidate will fill all three criteria.				
Candidate 1:				
Candidate 2:				
Candidate 3:				
The best candidate is:				
Confirm your mentor	Be ready to explain:	My priority	My goal(s)	Why this person
When you approach a potential mentor, be sure that you can explain your priorities, what you hope to achieve and why you have selected this person. Write a brief description in each of the boxes to the right.				
My mentor is:				
Before your first meeting	Answer these questions:	Will we meet in person or on the phone?	How often will we meet?	What are my expectations?
When your mentor has agreed to work with you, plan for your meetings. There are some important questions that need to be addressed. Answer these questions to the right. Remember you must take responsibility for setting up the meetings. Your expectations are probably related to your priority. If you want to be more successful in your current position, your expectations might be to gather suggestions on how to resolve current issues or improve your skills.				
Details:				

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At your first meeting	Be prepared to:	Describe who you are	Describe your expectations	Learn about your mentor
<p>Some items should be addressed in your first meeting. Your mentor needs to understand more about who you are and the kinds of things on which you are looking for guidance. Allow your mentor to describe his or her background and talk about the kind of assistance he or she can provide.</p> <p>Prepare a description for the first two columns to the right and a list of questions for the third column.</p>				
<p>Details:</p>				
Build the relationship	At each meeting:	Be prepared and be specific	Be professional	Respect the limits
<p>To build a long-lasting, successful relationship with a mentor, you need to take responsibility for managing the time your mentor is giving. Write down some things you can do to accomplish each of the goals to the right.</p> <p>For example, to accomplish “Be prepared and be specific,” you can prepare an agenda for each meeting. Completely open-ended discussions will be much less productive than focused, directed conversations.</p> <p>Being professional in a mentoring relationship involves respecting the mentor’s position, knowledge and time.</p> <p>Respecting the limits includes things like focusing on the big picture and not involving the mentor in minor issues, not making unreasonable requests such as directly asking for an introduction that may not be appropriate, or being too personal in your conversations.</p>				
<p>Details:</p>				
Final Notes				
<p>If you need guidance on a specific item, send your mentor a note before the meeting. Time permitting, your mentor will be able to gather his or her thoughts and be prepared. Do not, however, expect your mentor to have time to prepare and graciously accept your mentor’s suggestion on when they can get back to you. In some cases, your mentor may not have an answer or a suggestion.</p>				
<p>Respect your mentor’s time and schedule. If he or she seems too busy to meet, reschedule.</p>				
<p>Thank your mentor at the end of each meeting or whenever he or she provides useful information or guidance.</p>				
<p>A mentoring relationship can last for many years but many last a much shorter time. If your priorities have changed or your mentor’s availability has lessened, consider stopping your regular meetings. Be smart and make sure that you part on friendly and respectful terms, including a sincere thank you. You never know when your mentor might be a good resource or reference.</p>				