

An Introduction to a Successful Mentor-Mentee Process

In order for you to achieve the greatest possible benefit from the mentor-mentee process, we have drawn up some rules and guidelines that you can refer to during the mentoring process.

The **rules** are few and simple:

1. Rules concerning the general relationship framework:
 - a. The mentor-mentee relationship ends after approx. 1 year.
 - b. Both mentor and mentee commit to allocating time for the mentoring meetings. In addition, the mentee commits to allocating time to prepare the mentoring meetings.
2. Rules concerning relationship roles:
 - a. The mentee is the key person in the relationship and is responsible both for calling meetings and for preparing the agenda of the meetings.
 - b. The mentor is responsible for being both physically and mentally present at the meetings, for providing the benefit of his/her experience, and for ensuring that the conversation remains focused on the mentee.

Next, there are a number of **guidelines** you can refer to during the process:

The most important thing is getting off to a good start. The requirement for a successful mentoring relationship is that both parties know each other's expectations and agree upon the type of relationship that suits them. At the first meeting, it is therefore important to start by:

Aligning expectations

The alignment of expectations should refer to both the aims and the structure of the relationship:

Aims: The mentee is responsible for describing his/her aims in entering into the mentoring relationship. What should these aims be? What concrete challenges should the mentoring meetings deal with?

Structure: The mentor and the mentee together define the frequency and duration of the meetings. Where will the meetings be held? How should the issue of confidentiality be dealt with? Last but not least, both mentor and mentee determine whether there is anything that can cause a meeting to be can-

celled.

The alignment should be put in writing, so that you can return to it and check whether you are still on the right track.

The questions below may be helpful to clarify the alignment of expectations:

- What does the mentee want to achieve (implicitly/explicitly)?
- What kind of help does the mentee hope he/she will receive?
- What kind of help does the mentor anticipate to provide?
- How will the mentor and the mentee evaluate the meetings during the process, and how should they discuss the benefits of the process?
- How can confidentiality be ensured?
- How should cancellations or changes be handled?

(For a template on aligning expectations, see page 5.)

Duration and frequency of meetings

Experiences differ as to how long a mentoring meeting should be. Statistics show that meetings of under 1 hour do not achieve the necessary depth, whereas there is too much repetition in meetings that are longer than 2 hours. Generally, the mentor decides the length of the meetings, but in practice this is most often decided in collaboration between the mentor and the mentee.

The same applies to the question of how often the meetings are to be held. In the beginning, there will be shorter intervals between the meetings: You have to get to know each other, and the mentee may have some acute needs. After the first few meetings, the frequency may be changed to, for example, once every 5 or 6 weeks. To once again cite the statistics: Meetings that are scheduled more often than every 4 weeks become too superficial, while meetings at intervals longer than 12 weeks end up losing momentum.

Before the meeting ends, it is a good idea to schedule the next meeting. This provides the mentee with a deadline for his/her mentee work and it ensures that both parties prioritize the meeting.

The good mentoring meeting

A good meeting means that the mentee has prepared for the meeting. (For suggestions on how the mentee can prepare, see page 6.)

It is the mentor's responsibility to keep the mentee on the right track, but mentees can have so much on their plate that it can be difficult for them to focus. It can sometimes be beneficial for the mentee to unload, but the mentor must not serve as a dumping ground for the mentee's problems. If the mentee uses the meeting simply to voice his/her frustration, the situation for the mentee is likely to stay the same rather than change.

Talk about the outcomes of your meetings in order to ensure that the meetings are "on track." The mentor should also regularly make sure that the mentee's and the mentor's expectations are still aligned. (See page 7 for some suggestions on how to evaluate the meetings.)

As a rule, a productive meeting has a fixed agenda. An agenda may look like this:

- What has happened since the last meeting?
- Agreeing on the purpose of the meeting
- Exploring topics from the perspective of the mentee

- Drawing up of options for taking action
- Summing up the meeting
- Setting the date for the next meeting

The 4 teaching languages

Instruction	Advice	Guidance	Questions
The mentor typically says: <i>You have to do this and this!</i>	The mentor typically says: <i>If I were you, I would do this and this!</i>	The mentor typically says: <i>Have you tried doing this and this?</i>	The mentor typically says: <i>What have you considered doing?</i>
The mentor has all the responsibility	The mentor has a lot of responsibility.	The mentor and the mentee share the responsibility.	The mentee has all the responsibility.

As a rule, “instruction” will not benefit a mentoring relationship.

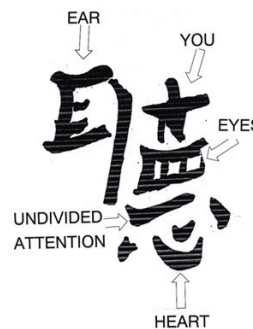
Try to keep to the right side of the above chart as much as possible. If the mentee asks for advice, then try guidance. If the mentee asks for guidance, then try questions.

Giving advice

Many mentors tend to give “a piece of good advice” even before the mentee’s problems have been fully revealed. This means either that the advice will not be good enough or that the mentee is not yet ready to realize how good the advice is.

Here are a few suggestions on how to avoid giving advice too soon:

- Help each other to accept pauses in the conversation.
- Have a piece of paper close at hand, on which you can write down your piece of advice for later use.
- Let the good advice come in the form of a story or an event that you have experienced in your everyday life – and ask if this can be of inspiration to the mentee.
- Be inspired by the Chinese character for listening. The character consists of ears, eyes, heart, you, and undivided attention – meaning that the listener’s attention is exclusively focused on the other party.



If a piece of advice is appropriate, remember that it is a gift. When a mentor has given a good piece of advice to a mentee, the advice is now the mentee’s property, and it is the mentee’s turn to adapt it to his/her everyday life.

Logbook

Use the logbook to remember what you have learned. Experience shows that it is a really good idea for both mentor and mentee to write down learning points, ideas, realizations, and thoughts.

Short notes from each meeting will help the mentor to discover whether the mentee repeats his/her actions, or whether there are areas that still have not been touched upon.

The logbook also helps the mentee to retain thoughts and learning points. By using it systematically throughout the process – both in and between meetings – the mentee will be able to monitor his/her own development, and once the process has ended, he/she will have available a personalized “development book.”

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Template for Aligning Expectations between Mentor and Mentee

The following has been agreed upon

betweenand:
mentor mentor

The mentoring relationship starts: _____ ends:_____

Describe what the focus of your mentor-mentee relationship should be (3 points max.):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

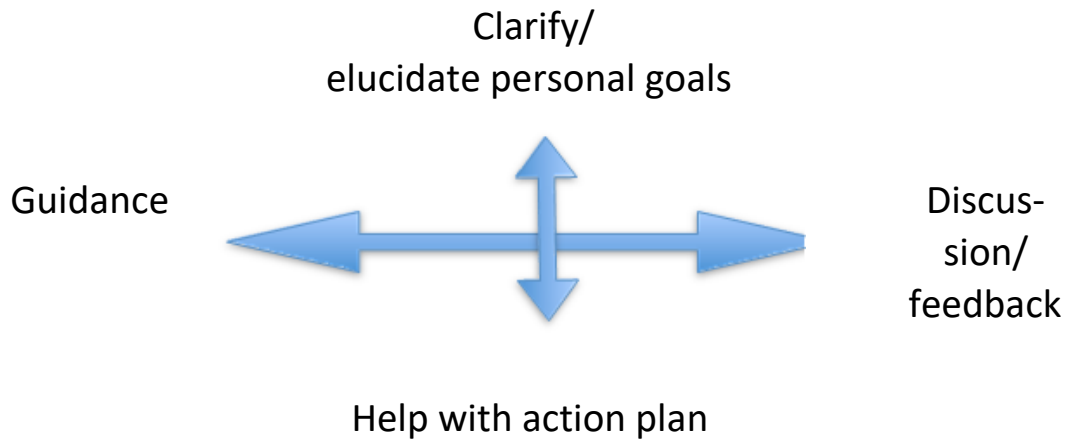
Describe how you want to structure the relationship (e.g., confidentiality, frequency of meetings, who initiates the meetings, etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

signature _____ date _____ mentor/mentee

Mentee: How to prepare for the first mentoring meeting

1. What do you wish to get out of the mentoring process? Describe your expectations in general terms.
2. What sort of help do you need right now? For example:



3. What do you need to know about your mentor?
4. What do you want your mentor to know about you?
5. What do you think should be included in the alignment of expectations?
6. What can you offer your mentor (e.g., enthusiasm, challenges, openness)?
7. How will you deal with the issue of confidentiality in the mentoring relationship?
8. What are your strong points? What are your greatest needs?
9. What topics do you wish to discuss straight away? Which ones are most important to you?
10. What examples can you use to illustrate the topics that are most important to you?

Learnings and Evaluation (to be used at the individual meetings)

To be filled out by the mentee:

1. At the start of or before the meeting: What do I remember from the last meeting?

2. The aim defined at the last meeting:

- How have I worked with it?
- What went well?
- What has been difficult?

3. At the end of the meeting:

Take a few minutes to answer, and discuss with your mentor, the questions below.

- What has been useful during this meeting?
- What should the mentor do more often?
- What am I going to work on for next time?
- How will I be able to tell that I am making progress?

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To be filled out by the mentor:

1. At the start of or before the meeting: What do I remember from the last meeting?

2. The aim defined at the last meeting: _____

3. At the end of the meeting:

Take a few minutes to answer, and discuss with your mentee, the questions below – *or use them as the basis for a conversation with your own mentor.*

- In what situations did I feel interest and energy in my role as a mentor?
- What have I taken away from this meeting?
- What aspects of myself have I become more aware of during this meeting?