



Roles & Responsibilities of a Mentor

A Mentor wears many hats.

Depending on the mentee's needs and goals, the mentor will act as teacher, advisor, sponsor, validator, positive role model, confidant, motivator, leader, and friend. The relationship can have a long-range impact on the growth of both partners.

Responsibilities of the Mentor:

- Assist your mentee in identifying professional growth goals and objectives.
- Assist your mentee in establishing explicit goals and objectives for the relationship.
- Assist your mentee in developing and maintaining the Mentoring Agreement.
- Commit to meeting with mentee on a regular basis. Establish how and when those meetings will take place.
- Complete progress reports and regularly reassess needs.
- Review agreements reached in the Mentoring Agreement at regular intervals of the partnership.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the relationship.

The following behaviors are generally associated with mentoring. Not all mentors will perform all functions at the same level; behaviors will be gradually initiated as the relationship develops.

Teaching: The mentor instructs the mentee in the specific skills and knowledge necessary for successful job performance or otherwise assists in the person's career development. The instruction can be formal or informal, direct, or subtle.

Advising: Teaching and guiding are mentoring behaviors usually initiated by the mentor, while advising often occurs in response to a request by the mentee. The difference between the advice of a mentor and the advice of others should be the quality of the advice. The mentor should be imparting wisdom based on a high degree of competence and extensive experience. In a relatively short time, the mentee benefits from experience that often has taken a lifetime to accumulate.

The mentor usually helps the mentee clarify career goals and develop action plans to achieve them.

Coaching: A coach provides motivation and feedback. Positive feedback to reinforce behavior and constructive feedback to change behavior. Both types are critical to the professional growth of the

mentee. Positive feedback is a great motivating tool for removing doubt and building self-esteem which results in a sense of accomplishment.

Counseling: The counselor role establishes a lasting and open relationship. Respect and confidentiality are baselines for this relationship. A mentor encourages the mentee to identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop problem-solving skills.

Supporting: The mentor provides emotional support in stressful times. The mentor listens to the mentee's concerns and communicates in a way that is empathetic and understanding yet always authentic. Be honest and open about what you will support and what you will not or cannot support.

Motivating: In motivating, the mentor provides the encouragement and impetus for the mentee to act toward achievement of stated goals.

Sponsoring: The Mentor's influence or clout can sometimes provide growth and networking opportunities for the mentee. However, the mentor does not always have to "pull strings" to be helpful.

Role Modeling: Role modeling usually occurs subtly as an outcome of the relationship rather than by conscious design of either mentor or mentee. Be sure you are an example. You are being observed.

Guiding: Every organization has its "unwritten rules." The more experienced mentor orients the mentee to these rules.

Validating: The mentor evaluates, possibly modifies, and finally endorses the mentee's goals and aspirations. In essence, the mentor validates the mentee's aspirations. If a mentor cannot accept the possibility of the mentee achieving these goals, it is doubtful the relationship can be maintained for long. Validating involves helping mentees believe in their goals.

Risk-Taking: The mentor serves as a buffer for the mentee's risk-taking and provides a safe environment where the mentee can make mistakes without losing self-confidence. The mentee learns not only how to succeed but also how to fail without feeling defeated. This aspect of mentoring helps the partner learn more about making decisions and acting even without adequate information.

Communicating: The mentor establishes open lines of communication through which concerns can be discussed clearly and effectively. Communication is insufficient by itself to ensure good mentoring. However, the effectiveness of the other mentoring behaviors is largely determined by the mentor's effectiveness as a communicator. Expertise means little if it cannot be communicated.

Example Activities for Mentors:

- Tell a career story. Share examples of personal highs and lows.
- Spend time discussing the mentee's project management needs and aspirations, studying the organization, and developing action plans over the duration of the relationship.
- Help establish a training plan for the mentee.
- Advocate for and assist the mentee in gaining exposure to special training as appropriate to related goals.
- Look for ways that allow the mentee to assume a different role for short periods of time.

- Have a discussion on a book or article related to leadership or professional/technical work.
- Help the mentee write short-range and long-range career development plans.
- Involve the mentee with partnering agencies and interested and impacted parties. Introduce them to someone in another agency who does similar work.
- Listen. There is no greater honor than being listened to. And the listening mentor can learn a great deal about the mentee's barriers, perceptions, and needs.
- Help the mentee understand the world of project management in state government.
- Discuss today's historic moment for your agency(ies) or Oregon State Government within the context of your mentorship goals
- Attend a public meeting or event together.