

Tips for Mentees

A mentee is bright, motivated and the future of an organization; the insurance that a well-trained, high-quality workforce will exist to meet long-term needs of the organization. Mentees represent a wide range of individuals in terms of age, background and work experience and personalities will vary greatly. This is a good thing, because 'clone' leaders will not drive an organisation forward. We need different strengths and approaches in our senior leaders of the future to deliver success in different areas, in different ways and in different situations.

So, potential is key. However, the future leaders of our organisation must also demonstrate certain personal characteristics. Some of these qualities are listed below (but please note that the list is not exhaustive, and not all mentees will display all of the characteristics).

Good mentees:

- Are eager to learn
- Are ambitious
- Have the ability to work as a team player
- Are patient
- Try new things and are willing to take risks
- Have a positive attitude
- Are open minded
- Take responsibility for own development and results
- Initiate and participate in discussions
- Actively seek information and opinions
- Are proactive in own development
- Suggest and constantly update plans for reaching goals
- Learn from mistakes and disappointments
- Clarify or elaborate on ideas
- Analyse the information and insights they are given
- Are diplomatic and able to resolve differences
- Are fair with praise and criticism
- Accept praise and criticism.

Developing Trust and a Co-operative Relationship

Relationships develop at their own pace, and there is no 'magic formula' to making one work. However, the following tips will help you to build a great and mutually beneficial relationship with your mentor.

a) Be predictable and consistent. A mentee should keep their promises and be reliable. For example, if an appointment is scheduled to meet your mentor at a certain time, it's important to keep it except in exceptional circumstances. Their time is important, and should be respected. Being consistent with your attitude is also helpful.

b) Establish and respect confidentiality: In a mentoring relationship, the mentor will share private thoughts and personal experiences to aid the mentees development. These conversations should be kept private.

c) Develop closeness and loyalty: Once mutual respect and trust is established, a close and unique relationship should emerge. This doesn't necessarily mean that mentor and mentee spend a lot of time together, or start to neglect other important relationships. Rather it means that there is definite rapport, and both parties feel comfortable initiating contact and raising issues for discussion.

d) Maintain communication: All relationships have their ups and downs. People get different pressures from different sources, and sometimes this affects relationships, including the mentoring one. Sometimes there will be disagreements about what should be done, when or how. This is normal. Bright, successful people, do not always think alike. Indeed, it is often through differences that the most useful learning can occur. During these times though, it is important keep communicating and remain non-judgemental. Eventually, the relationship will re-establish itself.

e) Be honest: The mentee must be open and speak honestly to the mentor about what they want to achieve and the difficulties they are facing. If they have concerns, don't understand or disagree with the mentor it is vital to be open about this so it can be discussed. A mentor cannot help to overcome difficulties if they do not know what they are.