

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

SET CLEAR GROUND RULES

During your first meeting, together set some ground rules that include:

- the frequency of meetings
- level of confidentiality
- an exit plan (if goals are achieved early or the mentorship is just not working out)

When you talk about these things at the beginning of the mentorship, you avoid future problems and issues. Get to know each other. Learn about your each other's:

- professional and educational background
- preferred communication style
- personality type
- expectations for the mentorship
- feelings about who should drive the relationship (mentor/mentee roles)
- any potential conflicts of interest
- goals (*You can focus on choosing activities to achieve those goals at your next meeting!*)

DEFINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- determine the objective for the mentorship (skills development, career growth, networking)
- identify one to three goals
- mentees should take ownership when setting these goals
- mentors should encourage their mentees to break down their goals into manageable steps and action items
- track progress toward the pre-set goals; make changes as necessary

PLAN USEFUL ACTIVITIES

After you've figured out the main objective of the mentorship and defined the main goals, work together to create activities that will help you achieve them.

- If the mentorship objective is to improve skill sets, you could practice a specific career-related skill, such as sales or a mock interview.
- If the mentorship objective is career growth, the mentor could conduct a mini-360 review with the mentee's supervisor, peers and subordinates to identify areas for development.
- If the mentorship objective is networking skills, the mentor could introduce his/her mentee to appropriate senior leaders or both the mentor and mentee could attend a local conference together.

FIND YOUR OWN UNIQUE APPROACH TO THE MENTORSHIP

Some mentoring programs feature strict rules, tips and worksheets, excessive reading materials and formality but this is not always necessary. The best approach is a mix of formal and informal with basic guidelines and resources. No matter the preferred approach, whether it is formal or informal, a successful mentoring relationship is built on trust, respect and confidentiality.