

The Mentor Toolkit

Your Single Guide to Driving Development Through Social Learning



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Thank you for being a mentor.

Mentors are the invisible force behind so many individuals' success. Mentors push and challenge, listen and question. Mentors often are there to share the right idea at the right time, which changes everything. Even more often, mentors consistently help us to hold a mirror up to ourselves, so we can better understand the impact of our own choices. Whether the insight gained from mentorship is immediate and catalytic, or sustained and ongoing, mentors can change the trajectory of a career.

Early in my own career, I received advice from a mentor that changed everything. I had been conducting meetings with executives about an upcoming leadership development program and before each meeting I was prepared with about 568 questions I wanted answered in our short time together. My mentor, Chris G., was in the room with me, and jumped in right away asking these executives, "How did your son do in his soccer game last weekend?" and "Can you believe we're drafting so-and-so?" and "Hey, did you ever hear back from that contractor I referred you to?" I was steaming mad! He was eating up my precious time with these high-level folks! After several instances of this, I cornered Chris and was going to let him know how frustrated I was. Instead, Chris shared one piece of advice that has stuck with me forever.

“People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care”

—Theodore Roosevelt

The same can be said of mentoring relationships. In order to do the good work you are setting off to do, to help your mentee grow, you must first work to establish mutual respect and deep trust within the relationship. You must show how much you care. Mentoring is a sustained social learning relationship, which means, as is the case of any relationship, it requires patience, purposefulness, and attention. The hard work of being a mentor is not in helping someone identify their next steps, but in working on the relationship so that they trust and believe you when you give them advice.

We hope this guide helps you to do the challenging, but rewarding, work of preparing for your mentor role and seeing success throughout your mentoring relationship. Thank you for the journey you are about to start, and thank you for the work you are doing to help those around you grow.

—Jenn Labin





Relationship-Driven Results

Mentoring can have a profound impact at both an individual and strategic level. Organizations create mentoring programs as solutions to many talent issues, such as:

- Stimulate the creation of relationships throughout the organization
- Help people feel more connected to the organization
- Promotes career and leadership development
- Encourages big picture and strategic thinking
- Supports diversity & inclusion efforts
- Manages knowledge within the organization
- Facilitates the growth and development of high-potential leaders
- Aids in the recruitment and retention of talent
- Improves technical knowledge

^From "In Action: Coaching for Extraordinary Results" Darelyn Mitsch

Individuals who participate in mentoring, as both mentor and mentee, can see tremendous development in professional skills, engagement in the work, and increased commitment to the organization. Mentoring relationships are an important tool to drive results because the individual and organizational impact is clear.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This toolkit contains a series of critical mentoring concepts within three sections: prepare for your upcoming mentor role, get the mentoring relationship started the right way, and create progress throughout the relationship. Each concept provides a brief overview, and a series of exercises and tools to help you practice and apply the concept.

Mindset exercises are reflections and thoughts to help you process the information. Skillset activities are opportunities for application. Toolset items are take-aways or exercises that can be used several times over your mentoring relationship.

You may choose to work through this toolkit in order, or use the table of contents to pinpoint your prioritized areas of development.



Preparation Checklist

- Understand the Mentoring Landscape
- What is Mentoring?
- Why Mentoring?
- Clarify Your Purpose
- Invest in Yourself
- Know the Role
- The Commitment

“

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.

”

COLIN POWELL

Understand the Mentoring Landscape

Think of the Best Mentor you've ever had. Why did that person come to mind? What did they give to you, say to you, or do for you that made them so important? Did this person inspire you to develop others? Maybe you are taking on the important role of Mentor because of their influence. I've met thousands of people and heard their Mentor stories, which tend to highlight two kinds of people as the Best Mentor:

1. A family member, sports coach or other youth leader who informally acted as a role model and challenged you.
2. A boss or professional colleague who gave you the right feedback at the right moment which led to a pivotal realization.

Maybe your Best Mentor isn't one of these two people but, chances are, they are in the same general description.

One fascinating aspect of these anecdotal results is that most people mention a natural, or organic, Best Mentor - someone who was a part of their lives, or maybe assigned to watch over them. These informal social learning relationships are critically important.

However, it is imperative to keep in mind that matched learning relationships, often called formal mentoring, can be just as impactful. A formal mentoring relationship that starts right away from a place of self-awareness, trust building, and goal setting can achieve deep and lasting results. Mentoring relationships that continue to challenge and inspire both parties can drive performance. Therefore, as a Mentor you get to make decisions that will either bring your formal learning relationship closer to that Best Mentor example or further away. Each interaction will be an opportunity to strengthen your relationship, build trust, empower, support, guide, and challenge.

We believe you have everything you need to be a good mentor. The intention of this guide is to help you be the Best Mentor.



Mentor Mindset

1. Reflect on your Best Mentor. Why were they your Best Mentor? In what specific ways did they impact you?
2. How did your Best Mentor benefit from your learning relationship?



Mentor Skillset

Express Gratitude: If your Best Mentor is still in your life, reach out to that person and share the impact that they made on you. Ask about their experience in mentoring you. Ask for guidance as you prepare to mentor others.



Mentor Toolset

Mentoring Expectations: If you are participating in a formal mentoring program, ask your program leader for a description of expectations for mentors in your program. Review the expectations and identify any that are outside of your comfort zone. If you are not in a formal program, view the list of expectations on Appendix A to complete the activity.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring has been defined many ways, and continues to be mixed up with the concept of coaching. To equip you as a mentor, consider this working definition:

Mentoring is a mutually beneficial social learning relationship between two (or more) individuals, built on mutual trust and respect, for the purpose of achieving specific identified developmental goals.

Let's define some important pieces:

- **Mutually Beneficial:** Mentees are clearly participating to learn from, and work with, mentors. Hopefully, mentees are clear on their purpose for participating. However, mentors should also expect that the relationship will be beneficial to them through increased networking, advancing leadership skills, creating a legacy, etc.
- **Social Learning Relationships:** The rapport built between two or more individuals for the occasional purpose of growth and development.
- **Mutual Trust and Respect:** Two aspects critical to building deep, lasting relationships. These characteristics are pivotal in effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving.
- **Developmental Goals:** Mutually agreed upon, challenging and learning-based goals for the mentee.

While we will examine these various aspects more later, it's important to see that our definition covers a broad array of applications. For example, your program may be associated with leadership development, career coaching, new hire onboarding, etc. and this definition can still apply.



Mentor Mindset

1. What parts of the definition above resonate with you? Why?
2. Does this definition differ from your expectations of mentoring? If so, in what way(s)?



Mentor Skillset

Set Goals: In what specific ways do you expect to grow from your role as a mentor?



Mentor Toolset

Mentoring Definition: If you are participating in a formal program, locate your program's definition of mentoring. What parts of the definition resonate with you? Why? If you are not in a formal program, write your own definition for mentoring using the one above as a starting place.