



# 5 Steps for Developing Effective Mentoring Relationships

## Purpose

This job aid is designed to support learners in developing effective mentoring relationships in which mentors offer their knowledge, insights, and guidance to foster the professional growth and development of their mentees. Through mentoring, mentees can better align their career goals with the broader objectives of the organization. This information is particularly useful for learners enrolled in [Cultivating Productive Mentoring Relationships \(TRN465\)](#).

Sometimes mentoring relationships can be two-way exchanges where mentors gain valuable insights into different perspectives as the mentee shares experiences and challenges. Such a reciprocal mentoring relationship, in which both parties are committed to engaging in supportive behaviour and offering and accepting advice from each other, is an invaluable contributor to trust and respect between the two individuals.

Ninety-eight percent of Fortune 500 companies provide formal mentoring programs to their employees in some capacity. These organizations are more successful and more resilient against the impacts of quiet quitting and low productivity.

Mentoring Impact Report 2025 Edition, MentorcliQ

Taking a structured approach to developing mentoring relationships improves their success.



1

### Build rapport:

Be aware of the level of compatibility between a mentor and mentee in an initial meeting. A strong rapport forms the foundation of a successful mentoring relationship. The pairing must be a good fit: both parties should feel comfortable and curious. Pairing individuals from diverse backgrounds fosters inclusion and encourages idea exchange and continuous learning.

2

## Set a clear goal and direction:

Mentoring relationships require a clear and measurable goal from the outset. When the goal is set, both parties should work together to create a plan with clear intent and expectations. This ensures that the mentor and mentee are aligned in their approach and progress. The direction a mentoring relationship takes will be unique to specific situations and can change over time as the mentee improves in the development areas identified. Both the mentor and mentee should remain flexible as needs change and goals are adjusted.

**Quick Tip:** When setting developmental goals, it helps to take a flexible approach. Adopting “REAL” goals is recommended, as they are particularly useful when the journey and personal growth are as important as the destination. REAL goals are:

R

**Realistic**

E

**Engaging**

A

**Actionable**

L

**Linked**

- **Realistic:** achievable and grounded in reality
- **Engaging:** compelling, motivating, experiential and evoking passion and curiosity
- **Actionable:** aspirational, something to take concrete steps toward achieving
- **Linked:** focused on learning and growth to gain capability, may be linked to values and purpose

3

## Clarify meeting logistics:

Agreeing on the meeting logistics and parameters at the start of the mentoring relationship will support its success. Logistics include meeting frequency, location, methods of communication and response times, and who is taking responsibility for what.

4

## Acknowledge successes and challenges:

Mentoring works best when there is trust, open communication and flexibility to experiment with different approaches. Celebrate what goes well, and when challenges come up, talk them through and figure out next steps together.

**Quick Tip:** Development can only be achieved when there is time to reflect on both the challenges and successes experienced. Reflecting on both provides valuable information that mentees can use to reach their goals.

**5**

## Determine success metrics:

Decide how to measure success or progress toward a developmental goal at the outset of a mentoring relationship.

## What are some useful skills to develop as a mentor?

The development of a mentee involves exploring their career aspirations, strengths and weaknesses and working together to create a plan to achieve their developmental goals. Collaboration is key to identifying the steps and strategies needed to reach those aspirations. Throughout the process, the mentor plays a vital role by offering guidance, sharing wisdom, and drawing on past experiences to help the mentee navigate challenges and opportunities. Ideally, mentors:



- listen actively to understand



- communicate openly, with respect and vulnerability



- share expertise to develop capabilities



- provide feedback that is specific, constructive, and actionable to foster a culture of continuous improvement



- prioritize time in their schedule for a mentee



- encourage and inspire



- build trust



- manage confidentiality and potential conflicts



- open doors

## What are some important skills to develop as a mentee?



A mentee's development depends on exploring career aspirations, strengths, and weaknesses; collaborating on the plan to "get there"; experimenting with different approaches and strategies; and evaluating along the way. Ideally, mentees should be able to:

- articulate a professional goal and current reality
- commit to self-development
- listen actively and ask questions
- be open to feedback and ask for it
- follow through on commitments
- give feedback on what is working and what is not working in the mentoring relationship

**Quick Tip:** The goal a mentee chooses to work on during a mentoring relationship should be the one that will make the greatest impact personally. The goal must be:

- unique to a mentee's situation
- flexible enough to change as a mentee progresses with their development

## Other related job aids and websites



- [Structuring Mentoring Conversations for Success \(TRN4-J49\)](#)
- [Shape Your World with E-Mentoring \(TRN4-J07\)](#)
- [Cultivating Productive Mentoring Relationships \(TRN465\)](#)
- [Using the GROW Model in a Coaching Approach \(TRN4-J31\)](#)
- [Peer Coaching Process: Using the GROW Model Approach \(TRN4-J32\)](#)
- [Mentorship](#)
- [Mentoring - Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#)