



NXT Gen Scholars Programme

A Guide for Mentors

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Introduction

The impact and importance of mentorship are not talked about enough. In a global competitive market, mentorship makes sure that everyone has a fair chance of career success. Research has shown that mentorship can be a life-changing experience - a survey carried out by Forbes in 2019 found that 76% of people believe mentoring is important, and yet, only 37% of those surveyed had a mentor.

What is a mentor?

A mentor is a personal or professional advisor, usually a more experienced person, who provides guidance and support based on a mentee's needs and goals.

What does it mean to be a mentor?

Making sincere efforts to ensure mentees succeed is what being a mentor is all about. It is as much their success as yours. Mentors always have their mentees' best interests at heart and will support them with their time.



Meetings can take place online or in person.

Mentors and Mentees are to agree on a time, date and location.

11 Steps for first-time Mentors to follow

1. Define goals

The most important job all mentors have is to help their mentees understand and define their goals. This is your first task as a mentor. Many mentees have difficulty mapping out their needs or arranging them according to priority. With the mentor's help, mentees can clarify their goals, ensuring a fruitful mentor-mentee relationship.

2. Set expectations at the beginning

It's important to lay down some ground rules and expectations at the beginning of the mentorship. At the first meeting, define how often you'll meet, where you'll meet, and who will lead the discussion. Having these expectations in place will pave the way for a smooth mentoring experience.

3. Take a genuine interest in the person

Although mentorship is a professional relationship, taking a genuine interest in your mentee will enhance the experience. Getting to know each other will help you work better together. A key part of working together is helping your mentee define and reach their goals — whether short-term, long-term, or both.

4. Put the responsibility in the mentee's hands

A mentor's role is to encourage, support, and advise. Your mentee will need to do the hard work of taking action. Have them break down their goals into smaller steps they can accomplish at a time so as not to feel overwhelmed.

5. Hold them accountable

You can help your mentee develop characteristics that will lead to their success by holding them accountable. They should be working towards their goals, and your job is to check in with them to see that they are doing what needs to be done. With your guidance, they can achieve most or some of their goals before the end of the relationship.



6. Give feedback to the mentee

Knowing how to provide feedback to your mentee constructively depends largely on understanding them. Some mentees can handle a direct approach, while others will need you to soften the blow before they can hear what you have to say.

7. Focus on the needs of the mentee

Based on the goals of the mentee and their strengths and weaknesses, you should be able to discern what they need to succeed. But as you do this, be sure you're not just focusing on what you think they need. Rather, sincerely consider what will help them reach their goals and attain growth.

8. Share stories, not instructions

Most growth and development come from gaining understanding and wisdom. Simply telling your mentee what they should do won't help them grow. And it will create a mentorship that is more like a manager-employee relationship. Share relatable stories from when you were in a similar position.

9. Guide your mentee to answer rather than telling them

One of your goals as a mentor is to help your mentee develop some independent thinking. When they are trying to solve a problem, guide them to the right answer rather than tell them how to go about solving the issue. Always give them the opportunity to figure things out and develop problem-solving skills.

10. Leverage your network to help your mentee

Draw upon your connections to help your mentee grow. If they need some development in an area that you may not have much expertise in, put them in touch with someone from your network who can help. In the same way, if you hear of a new opportunity that your mentee would be right for, put their name forward and advocate for them.

11. Recognise growth and celebrate successes

As the mentorship evolves and your mentee reaches their goals, celebrate them. This can be as simple as sending them a message or card to acknowledge what they've accomplished and to show how proud you are of their success.

Preparing for your first Mentor-Mentee meeting

Your first meeting is very important, as it can influence the atmosphere and outcome of subsequent meetings. It is important that you prepare and set a mentoring meeting agenda to keep things focused.

The meeting agenda for your first time as a mentor and mentee should include the following:

Building rapport

Establish common ground by discussing personal and professional histories. Mentor-mentee relationships thrive when both parties are honest and open-minded. This is a sure way to build trust. Dedicate your first meeting to getting to know each other, even if you feel like you want to move quickly to career or work-related issues. It pays off in the long run, as people tend to trust people they like and have met at least once.

Mentoring topics

Due to time constraints, you might not be able to discuss specific mentoring topics in your first meeting, but at least prepare a general topic you can discuss. The choice of topics could be based on career goals. For instance, if the mentee is keen to gain a particular skill, that could be the focus of your conversation. Mentors can have topic ideas they wish to discuss too, but the mentee should always come prepared.

Please see the section on mentoring topics.

Set initial expectations

You can set these up after your initial meeting, but discuss the terms including when you will meet up, how often, and for how long during your first meeting.



Mentoring Topics

Effective mentoring encompasses a wide range of topics that can help mentees develop personally and professionally.

Here are some good mentoring topics to consider:

- Career path
- Goal setting
- Network building
- Creating connections with your team members
- Work/life balance
- Assessing skills needed for next career advancement
- Network building around your career growth
- Improving skills and development
- Being an ally of DEI in the workplace
- Challenges of the existing workplace structure
- Building relationships with colleagues
- Handling trouble or disagreements with a colleague or teammate
- Spending your time productively
- Asking for a promotion
- How often to provide feedback
- Different ways to ask for and receive feedback at work
- Who else to receive feedback from
- Characteristics of great leaders
- Management skills
- Developing leadership skills
- Opportunities for leadership presence in the organisation
- Breaking goals down into milestones and tasks
- Measuring success
- Work/life balance

Discussing Sensitive DEI Topics in a Mentor Meeting

Some subjects are just hard to talk about. Whether with colleagues, friends or family, some subjects make us uneasy, which can lead us to avoid them altogether. But mentoring relationships are about the uncomfortable, just as much as the comfortable. Committing to mentorship means allowing yourself to be open to difficult mentor discussion topics, just as often as you dive into easy ones.

Try not to assume

If you are not sure about whether you should discuss a topic with your mentor or mentee, ask permission to ask. Just because someone is Black does not mean they will want to discuss issues of race. Just because someone is a woman does not mean they will want to discuss issues of gender.

Be considerate when opening the door for conversations that may be triggering or too difficult to discuss in the context of your relationship by offering the person the chance to opt out if they would prefer.

You could ask:

Would it be okay with you if I asked how you are doing just on a personal level?

or

I have been talking to other people who are experiencing [emotion] about [topic], and I do not know if that is something that you are wrestling with, too?



From here, you can gauge the mentee's reaction and whether or not they would like to discuss the topic further. However they are feeling, respect this and proceed accordingly. Allow your mentee to share how they are feeling or how they are not, whether it be personal or professional.

There are many levels of diversity in our world:

- Cultural
- Racial
- Religious
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Neurodiversity

As a mentor, you should be open to learning about experiences and walks of life outside of your own. It will enable you to be a more empathetic and helpful mentoring partner.

Here are some helpful discussion topics when meeting with a mentee from a protected characteristic background:

- The unique challenges faced in the workplace
- How to overcome setbacks in your career
- Employee network groups, their benefits and drawbacks
- How to build a more equitable workplace

Number of Meetings

Total number of meetings: 12

Length of each session: 1 hour per meeting minimum

Length of programme: 12 Months (January to December)

Contact Helen Choudhury, Head of DEI, CSR & Wellbeing, for any further information you require: helen.choudhury@mpagroup.com



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