



Top 10 Best Practices for Mentors

by admin | Apr 28, 2015 | Growth and Development, Making Mentoring Work For You, Mentoring Relationships | 0 comments

Our recent annual Mentoring Matters Reader Survey revealed dozens of best practice topics. This blog is the first in our series of mentoring best practice posts soon to follow. Based on our survey results, here are the top ten:

1. Start by getting to know your mentee

- Make sure you take time to get to know your mentee before you jump into the work of mentoring. Nothing of substance will happen until you establish a trusting relationship.

2. Establish working agreements

- Agreements lay the foundation of a mentoring relationship. Build in basic structures about how you will work together moving forward. Make sure you and your mentee agree on ground rules.

3. Focus on developing robust learning goals

- The purpose of mentoring is to learn. Learning is also the payoff. Make sure the mentee's learning goals are worthy of your time and effort. Developing robust learning goals takes time and good conversation.

4. Balance talking and listening

- It's easy and natural to want to give advice, especially because you've "been there and done that." But mentees want more than good advice. They want you to listen to their ideas as much as they want to hear what you have to say.

5. Ask questions rather than give answers

- Take the time to draw out a mentee's thinking and get them to reflect on their own experience. Ask probing questions that encourage them to come up with their own insights.

6. Engage in meaningful and authentic conversation

- Strive to go deeper than surface conversation. Share your own successes and failures as well as what you are learning from your current mentoring relationship.

7. Check out assumptions and hunches

- If you sense something is missing or not going well, you are probably right. Address issues as soon as possible. Simply stating, "I want to check out my assumption which is ... " will prevent you from assuming your mentee is on track.

8. Support and challenge your mentee

- Work on creating a comfortable relationship first before you launch into the uncomfortable stretch needed for deep learning. Mentees need to feel supported (comfortable) and yet be challenged (a little uncomfortable) in order to grow and develop.

9. Set the expectation of two-way feedback

- Candid feedback is a powerful trigger for growth and change. Set the expectation early on. Be prepared to offer candid feedback, balanced with compassion. Model how to ask for and receive good feedback by asking your mentee for specific feedback on your own mentoring contribution.

10. Check in regularly to stay on track

- Keep connected and develop a pattern of regular engagement. Both partners need to be accountable for following through with agreements. By holding an open, honest conversation about how you're doing and what you need to do to improve, you encourage mutual accountability and deepen the relationship.

What do you think? Did we miss any best practices? Let us know!

Keep a lookout for our next blog later this month, [Top Ten Best Practices for Mentees](#).