



TenStep Supplemental Paper

11 March 2005

An Effective Mentor

A mentor should take pride in the organization, relish new challenges, and understand and support the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

A mentor should be:

- Supportive
- Patient
- Respected
- People-oriented
- A good motivator
- Respectful of others
- An effective teacher
- Self-confident

A mentor can expect his or her mentee to be competent, credible, ambitious, eager to learn, loyal, and candid, to have a positive attitude, and to be able to listen, work as a partner, keep confidences, and accept responsibilities.

As a mentor, you should be aware of the stages of mentoring:

Phase I: The foundation is established. As the two partners get to know each other, boundaries are set as to what each expects of the connection. As they begin to know more about each other and become comfortable, trust is established. They reach a point where they can discuss things openly and honestly.

Phase II: In this phase, the mentor helps the mentee look at realistic possibilities and options. Together they develop a plan to help the mentee reach his or her goals and aspirations. The mentor's role in this phase is primarily as coach, motivator, and teacher. He devotes more time to this phase than any other, focusing on providing detailed information on many workplace issues and procedures, and sharing the benefits and insights of his or her experiences. It helps to give examples of good and bad experiences, share what did and did not work along the career path, and suggest pitfalls to avoid. During this time, the mentor gives a lot of praise and builds the mentee's self-confidence.

Phase III: The mentor serves most as a counselor, guide, and door opener. The mentor persuades the mentee to find answers on his or her own. The mentor also prods the mentee to take risks, try new strategies, ask questions, and make discoveries. Some of the activities a mentor might recommend to his mentee during this period are:

- Formal training that could help the mentee become well-rounded and aid in advancement
- Reading books, articles, journals, and other publications to enhance knowledge



TenStep Supplemental Paper

- Trying new projects or special assignments
- Volunteering to cover for someone who is on vacation or official travel
- Giving presentations
- Involvement in CG projects, working groups, or special events
- Temporary details in other positions
- Assuming lead person responsibilities
- Switching jobs with a co-worker for a short period of time
- Joining a professional society and subscribing to a professional journal
- Attending conferences and symposia
- Writing an article for a newsletter, magazine, or professional publication
- Teaching a course
- Mentoring a junior employee
- Shadowing a senior person for a day
- Participating on selection panels or boards
- Involvement in community service

The mentoring connection may last for only a short time if the mentee's need is to reach a specific goal. Examples include:

- A member who has failed the service-wide exam twice and wants a mentor to give him or her advice before trying again
- A member who is thinking of making a transition to another career field and wants to learn all about that field before making a decision

There are also many examples of connections that lasted into retirement based on the friendships that developed. However, an initial commitment of six months to one year is recommended. At that time, the mentor and mentee should discuss what they have accomplished, whether it would be beneficial to continue, and what to work on in the future.

If you are interested in being a mentor, look around for someone who could use your help and guidance. The relationships that cause us to grow the most are those that challenge us. Often this is due to our differences as individuals. Therefore, if you wish to learn and understand more about yourself and others, form a mentoring partnership with someone different than yourself.

Organizations adopting mentoring as a tool to executive development should keep in mind the above suggestions to reap the benefits of mentoring.