



MentorsPLUS

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LEADERS' UPDATE

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Take Charge of Your Mentoring Experience

Protégés benefit when they lead the mentoring relationship.

By Paula Moscinski

As a protégé, you realize the value of a mentor in helping you develop your career. A mentor can offer you expertise, experience, and guidance; however, it's up to you to create the desired outcome of your mentoring experience. Imagine yourself at the helm of a boat - you are the captain, and your mentor is holding the rudder, steering the ship in the direction you want it to go. Following are ways to help you take charge and get the most out of your mentoring experience.

SET THE COURSE

To get what you need from the mentoring partnership, begin by asking yourself:

- What opportunities can my mentoring experience give me?
- What do I want to take away from this effort?

- What will be different for me as a result of this experience?

Answering these questions will help you construct the big picture of what you want to gain so you can establish the focus and direction of your mentoring partnership. Once you understand what it is you wish to get out of the relationship, you must create development objectives. What is it that you want to get better at, learn more of, and gain experience in? To help you determine your objectives, consider the following:

- What **image** do you wish to project in the organization?
- What **intellectual capital** do you possess that you want the organization to tap into? What do you want to learn from the organization?
- What **talents** do you want to utilize during your mentoring time that you may not be able to use in your current position?
- What is your **approach** to solving problems, tackling projects, and working with people? Where do you need to modify your approach?

Your development objectives serve as a blueprint for you and your mentor as well as a strategic approach to your professional development.

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MOVE THE RELATIONSHIP FORWARD

Your responsibilities as a protégé do not end with the creation of your development objectives; you need to keep the relationship moving forward. The focus should be on the successful achievement of your goals. Therefore, you must play an active role in creating an effective mentoring relationship by taking on the following responsibilities:

- Initiate periodic meetings with your mentor and prepare an agenda.
- Come to mentoring meetings ready to share positive experiences that have moved you closer to achieving your goals as well as experiences that set you back.
- Solicit feedback from your mentor on what he or she is observing in you.
- With your mentor, assess your progress, identify setbacks, and determine next steps.

Much of what you get out of your mentoring experience depends on your willingness to learn, to be open and

honest, and to ask for what you need. If what you're getting from the relationship is not helping you to meet your objectives, your mentor needs to know so that the appropriate adjustments can be made.

Finally, making the most of your mentoring experience means putting your accent on the relationship. Identify the distinguishing features for your mentoring relationship and work with your mentor to cultivate them. For example, do you want the partnership to encourage open and frank conversations, promote out-of-the-box thinking, or provide a climate in which to generate new perspectives? Also, share with your mentor how you best learn and what you bring to the mentoring experience in terms of your commitment to make a contribution to the organization and to your professional growth.

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