

# BUSINESS MENTORING MATTERS: HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING WITH YOUR MENTOR

In a one-on-one mentoring relationship, many mentorees may make the mistake of assuming that the onus is on the mentor to prepare the schedule and the agenda for meetings with their mentorees. Not so! The primary purpose of the mentoring relationship is to help to develop the mentoree. Therefore, the mentoree should be pro-active and help to create an agenda and a relationship that reflects the types of goals he/she would like to achieve. Mentors are offering their valuable time to their mentorees. It is the mentoree's responsibility to make the most of that time (think "you get what you pay for").

Fast Company published an article titled 6 Ways To Make The Most Of Your Mentorship, Dear Grasshopper. In this article, an executive who has mentored many individuals for over 30 years, Alice Korngold, is interviewed. Korngold details one experience that stands out in her mind--unfortunately it is not a positive one. She says that her mentoree arrived at their first meeting completely unprepared. She felt that her time had been undervalued by the mentoree. "I felt an imposition that she hadn't prepared. I think its the mentee's responsibility to do their homework to understand the background, expertise, and value of the mentor, and ask for what they need."

So how do you prepare for your meeting with your mentor? Here are 6 tips to help you get your mentoring relationship off on the right foot:

## 1. Be prepared

Prepare yourself for your meeting with anything agreed upon and with an issue to discuss that's important to you. There is always something to discuss since events have occurred between the current meeting and the last one. The issue need not be monumental--sometimes simple things can lead to great discussions and insights.

## 2. Think commitment, not lip service.

Regular, ongoing contact is one of the most important building blocks for successful mentoring. Agree with your mentor to meet on a regular and ongoing basis and avoid canceling appointments.

## 3. Give back and get more.

Mentors don't usually ask how the mentoree has benefitted from the relationship. Take the time to share examples and to say "thank you" on occasion, and you'll often find that the mentor will give more without your having to ask. Sharing how a mentor has been helpful in the past gives the mentor guidance on how to be helpful in the future.

#### **4. Keep expectations realistic.**

Unstated assumptions or expectations can easily derail a relationship. To avoid this, you and your mentor should both discuss your expectations of each other and the relationship. For example, discuss how often you'll meet or what areas you will work on. When there's a change in expectations, discuss this as well. Relationships grow and change and so do expectations, so those agreed upon early on may not be the same later. Have periodic conversations to discuss your mutual expectations.

#### **5. It's risky, but it's healthy.**

A mentoring relationship is not meant to make you comfortable with where you are. It should challenge you both professionally and personally. This can't happen unless you're willing to take risks. What kind of risks? Whatever makes sense, but things like discussing your lack of confidence, challenging a mentor on an issue, trying something completely outside your comfort zone are all examples. Taking risks is an integral part of growth and well-being. So by taking risks, you're actually getting healthier!

#### **6. Don't be afraid of your mentor's silence.**

You're in a mentoring session and you seem to run out of things to say, and your mentor isn't helping because all she or he is doing is keeping quiet. This is a good thing! Your mentor's silence is inviting you to probe more deeply into what is on your mind, and it's an opportunity to share more deeply in the relationship. In this situation, pause and look inside yourself to try and get at what is of immediate concern or on your mind and share that with your mentor. The possibilities of what may happen are endless.

Homework, logistics, emotions. These are all important aspects of preparing for your meetings and your relationship with your mentor. Now, if you would really like to "WOW" your mentor, download our free resource *Creating A Successful Mentoring Relationship* and bring it to your first mentoring session. You and your mentor can map out a mentoring plan together and no one can accuse you of coming to your next mentoring meeting unprepared!

*Source: <http://www.management-mentors.com/about/corporate-mentoring-matters-blog/bid/88274/6-tips-for-mentorees-to-prepare-for-meetings-with-a-mentor>*