

Common Expectations for Mentees

Checklist of Functional Expectations for Mentees:

1. **Know yourself.** Understand your own personality and temperament and realize that what might make your colleagues happy may not make you happy. Reflect on what drives you, what gets you up in the morning, and then take your cue from that. Spend some time being honest about your strengths and weaknesses, and consider ways to leverage your strengths as you develop new skills. IDPs are a good way to add structure to this thinking process. Be sure to share your thinking and questions around your goals, needs and wants with your mentor/potential mentor.
2. **Come prepared.** When you meet with your mentor, remember that her/his time is limited, as is yours, so make sure that the time together is well spent. Many mentees suggest that developing an agenda for each mentor meeting helps to structure the sessions around your short- and long-term needs.
3. **Ask productive questions.** Prepare questions ahead of time that produce the information and learning you wish to get in a mentoring exchange. Questions that are open ended versus closed (answers by yes/no or a simple one- or two-word response) are most conducive to facilitate higher-level responses and in-depth conversations.
4. **Develop key listening skills.** Listen for the central message and feelings in a response to a question. The following four steps will improve listening:
 - A. Listen for central ideas.
 - B. Determine what is of personal value to you in your mentor's conversation.
 - C. Identify and eliminate as many of your "trigger" words as possible. These are words that affect your mood, distract you from the conversation, and, in general, interfere with hearing the central message.
 - D. Use the advantage of thought speed over speech speed productively. Do not let your mind wander or mentally argue with the speaker. Stay focused.
5. **Be flexible and innovative.** Know that plans change and roadmaps sometimes take a detour. Be adaptable and don't be afraid to change and take new opportunities.
6. **Be open to criticism.** Don't fold in the face of disapproval. Take criticism as a gentle nudge to keep you on the right track. Ask for feedback from your mentor to improve yourself.
7. **Use trust-building behaviors.** Behaviors such as following through on commitments, listening, sharing, and cooperating are trust building, in contrast to behaviors such as putting people down, ignoring, hiding or withholding, and competing.
8. **Follow through on commitments.** Develop your capacity to manage your time effectively and follow through on negotiated meeting schedules, deadlines, roles and responsibilities.
9. **Keep confidences.** Keep the content of your discussions within the relationship confidential. All exchanges, both personal and professional, are subject to the expectations of professional confidentiality.

10. **Overcome the awe factor.** A mentor is a respected and important person. To overcome being intimidated, prepare for the meeting and talk with others who have a relationship with the mentor.
11. **Take responsibility for your own career.** Your mentor can only point the way. You will need to make the final decisions, and the final actions are your responsibility. Although a mentor can help you to define your goals, ultimately only you can define success for yourself.
12. **Resolve differences.** Use "soft" responses, such as, "That is a good suggestion, but it doesn't fit me." Use "I" versus "You" messages, such as "I understood that we were meeting today" rather than "You missed our meeting".
13. **Capture the essence of your mentor's help.** After each meeting, ask yourself, "What did I learn today?" and "How can I apply what I learned?" Summarize for your mentor what you learned, listen carefully to feedback, and ask questions to clarify.
14. **Internalize your mentor's input.** Sort out the learning and find where patterns appear. Review these in your mind shortly after they occur—substantial loss occurs in a few hours. Record the outcome of each mentoring session to reinforce your learning. Discuss the learning with others.

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