



TOP TIPS FOR BEING A MENTOR

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) provides guidance, support, and advice to another person (the mentee). The mentor-mentee relationship is built on trust and mutual respect and should be based on the shared goal of helping the mentee reach their potential.

What are the Benefits of Being a Mentor?

Being a mentor can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your career. You get to share your wisdom and skills with someone who is looking to learn, and in doing so, you help them grow and develop. But being a mentor isn't just about helping others; it's also about helping yourself. Here are four benefits of being a mentor:

- You learn new skills and keep up with current trends.
- You build relationships with other professionals.
- You feel good about giving back to the furniture community.
- You increase your visibility and networking opportunities.

What does a Mentor do?

A mentor provides guidance, support, and advice to their mentee. They help them navigate their career, identify opportunities for growth and development, and provide advice on how to overcome challenges.

As a mentor, you may undertake the following activities:

- Advises the mentee on a certain topic.
- Facilitates the mentee's development by sharing knowledge and connections.
- Challenge mentees to exceed their limits.
- Encourage the mentee to take risks in a safe environment.
- Focuses on the mentee's overall growth.



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Here are some best practices for both mentors and mentees:

- Be open and honest with each other.
- Keep communication lines open.
- Be respectful of each other's time.
- Set clear expectations.
- Be flexible.
- Make sure there is a mutual commitment to the relationship.

What Does a Mentor NOT Do?

A mentor is not a personal coach or therapist. They are not responsible for solving all of their mentee's problems or fixing their life. A mentor is there to provide guidance and support, but ultimately it is up to the mentee to take action and make decisions.

Here are some things that a mentor should not do:

- Tell their mentee what to do.
- Make decisions for their mentee.
- Do the work for their mentee.
- Try to be a friend.
- Give unsolicited advice.

Getting Started

How often should we meet?

We recommend meeting at least once a month. Depending on your availability and commitment, you may suggest a different frequency schedule during the initial meeting.

Please provide the mentee with a Calendly or similar meeting booking link to simplify the process of scheduling. Alternatively, set a specific day of the month and create a recurring calendar entry and invite your mentee.



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What is the best way to communicate?

Phone, video call, messaging, email, in-person, ...

It's critical to agree on how you'll communicate in your first meeting and to establish ground rules to avoid misunderstandings like unexpected Saturday night calls.

Agree on one specific messaging channel to share updates and follow up.

The Initial Meeting

For Mentees: Keep it short and sweet. This is the most important part of a good introduction. What's your professional background and where are you at now? Clearly state what you want to talk about in future conversations. Give your mentor some background so he or she can understand you better. Share your professional objectives, as well as any relevant aspects of your personal life situation.

For Mentors: In the initial meeting, get to know your mentee. Try to understand their professional objectives and what they are looking for in a mentor. Talk about your career journey and how you might be able to help them. Discuss your expectations for the mentor-mentee relationship, as well as any ground rules you may have.



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Get Specific - Goal Setting

Both mentor and mentee should agree on specific goals for the relationship, they should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Here is an example: Improve presentation skills

Improve presentation skills and become a confident speaker in 3 months.

S: The objective is to enhance the leader's capacity for holding efficient meetings and delivering persuasive presentations.

M: The measurable action is getting a speaking slot at an event.

A: This goal is to be achieved by dedicating an hour a week to prepare, practice, and seek feedback.

R: Feeling more confident during regular meetups, internal events, and webinars.

T: The mentee has 3 months to complete this goal.

Additional Tips:

Have your goal-setting conversation early in the relationship. This will help to set clear expectations for both parties and provide a framework for future conversations.

How to Give Feedback

Giving feedback is one of the most important aspects of being a mentor. It can be difficult to give constructive feedback in a helpful, but not hurtful way. Here are some tips to keep in mind when giving feedback:

Be clear and specific - General comments like "you're doing a great job" or "keep up the good work" are not as helpful as specific comments about what the mentee is doing well. For example, "I really appreciate the way you presented your ideas in the last meeting" or "I noticed that you've been working hard to improve your presentation skills, and it's really paying off."



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Focus on the behaviour, not the person - it's important to give feedback about the mentee's behaviour, rather than making comments about the person.

Pro-Tip: Goals should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure they are still relevant and achievable.

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Regular Meetings

It's important to have regular check-ins with your mentee to ensure they are on track to achieving their goals.

In these meetings, the mentor can provide guidance, feedback, and support as the mentee works towards their goals. The mentee can share any challenges or successes they have experienced since the last meeting.

Topics for Mentors and Questions to ask Mentees

The following questions will help you encourage a productive mentoring conversation.

1. Desired Career Path and Professional Goals

- What do you want out of your job?
- How does your current role fit into your long-term professional objective?
- What's lacking (if anything) from your current position or career path?
- What is your ideal job, or do you believe you've already achieved it?

2. Identifying Mentee's Weaknesses & Strengths

- What are your greatest talents/strengths?
- Is your current position best suited to take advantage of your strengths?
- What weaknesses do you have that prevent you from performing your job duties fully?
- What methods do you use to compensate for your shortcomings?



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3. Leadership advice (If you have a mentee who has recently been promoted to a leadership position)

- How would you describe your leadership style?
- What techniques are you using to communicate effectively with your team?
- What is your main challenge as a leader?

4. Mentee's long and short-term goals to help the mentor assist in developing an action plan.

- What specific goals do you want to accomplish within the next 1 to 3 months?
- How do you envision my role in helping you accomplish your goals?
- What are your metrics for career success?

5. Other

- What prompted you to seek out a mentor?
- What skills do you want to improve?
- What challenges are you currently facing at work?

Ending Mentoring

It's a good idea to discuss with your mentee the terms for concluding the mentoring and agree on a "no blame, no explanation" exit on mutually acceptable terms at any time if either party asks it. You'll reduce the chance of stress levels exploding when you set clear expectations. Some mentoring relationships extend over months or years, whereas others last for shorter periods of time.

Both parties should only continue the mentoring relationship if they can commit equally to it and if it is achieving the goals spoken about. The end of the mentor-mentee relationship should be seen as an opportunity to learn from what did and didn't work, and to focus on all that was accomplished. Both partners should celebrate their successes, acknowledge any failures, and conclude the journey positively.



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Reflection on the Mentoring Relationship

- What went well?
- What didn't go well?
- What would you do differently next time?
- If you could change one thing about the mentoring relationship, what would it be?

Final Thoughts

The mentor-mentee relationship can be a rewarding experience for both parties. By openly and honestly communicating with each other, you can set and achieve goals, learn new skills, and build lasting relationships. As the mentor, you can pass on your knowledge and expertise to someone eager to learn. And as the mentee, you can gain invaluable insights into your career, industry, and life in general.

Now that you've read our guide on how to build an effective mentor-mentee relationship, it's time to put your new skills into practice. Remember to celebrate your successes, be open and honest with each other, and stay positive throughout the mentoring relationship.

Congratulations on joining the WIFN platform and we're looking forward to hearing about your success stories!



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