

Relationship Tips for Mentors and Mentees

Mentor

Guide, advisor, partner, diplomat, pupil

- Listen. Your first task is to determine: (a) what are the strengths and weaknesses of this venture, and do you and the venture agree about the strengths and weaknesses? and (b) what primary challenges does your venture want to focus on in their work with you, and do you agree that this should be the focus of your work together?

From this and ongoing consideration of the above, you can (c) decide together what is the best road map for moving forward in building your relationship and growing this venture.

Your venture should be able to articulate at the outset what they expect from this relationship. If not, then you can work with them to establish this.

- Be respectful, but direct & thorough in your feedback. 'Do not' is at least as important as 'do.'
- Push back. Be assertive in your advice if you feel strongly about it.
- Be sensitive to your role: as a senior business leader, your venture looks to you for advice and guidance, as a role model. Your advice may be taken more literally than you intend.
- Be clear about your core competencies, and how much weight the venture should give to advice within and outside these competencies.
- Establish clear expectations and commitments: express your expectations and commitments to your venture, and ask for the same.
- Establish preferred feedback style (written, verbal, direct, highly critical, etc.).
- Establish clear communication channels and timeline for interaction.
- Let your venture know if your schedule changes. They will depend on the time that you commit.
- Give homework. Your mentee will love you for it.

Mentee

Pupil, collaborator, doer, partner, diplomat, teacher

- Listen. Your first task is to determine: (a) how do your needs fit with the core competencies of your mentor, and what specific challenges do you want them to help you address? and (b) do you and your mentor agree about your own strengths and weaknesses, and how you should work together, and if not, why not?

From the above, you should work with your mentor to (c) decide together what is the best road map for moving forward in building a relationship and growing your venture.

You should be able to articulate at the outset what you expect from your mentor. If not, you can work with your mentor to establish this, but do so quickly.

- Be respectful and responsive to feedback, whether or not you implement the advice. Be clear about your use of feedback.
- Push back. Express respectful reservations if you feel advice is inappropriate, or not feasible.
- Take your mentor's advice seriously, even (and especially!) if it is difficult. You must also put this advice in your own context to determine its role for you.
- Be clear about your core competencies, and weigh this in how you utilize the advice that your mentor is giving you.
- Establish clear expectations and commitments: express your expectations and commitments to your mentor, and ask for the same.
- Establish preferred feedback style (written, verbal, direct, highly critical, etc.).
- Establish clear communication channels and timeline for interaction. ASK for what you need.
- Use your mentor's time well. Be prepared, focused and concise in each meeting. Let them know in advance if your schedule changes.
- Do your homework. It's good for you.