

The True Definition of Mentoring

Mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship which a mentor and mentee agree to a partnership, where they work collaboratively toward the achievement of mutually-defined goals that will develop a mentee's skills, abilities, knowledge, and/or thinking.

There are several critical concepts within this definition. So, let's take a moment to talk about each one of them in more detail.

First, reciprocity. The presence of reciprocity and mutuality in mentoring relationship frequently surprises first-time Mentors. What this means is that each partner, the mentor and the mentee has specific responsibilities, contributes to the relationship and learns from the other. In fact, the mentor can often learn a lot from the mentee during the life of the relationship.

Second, learning. Without the presence of learning, mentoring really doesn't exist. It is the purpose, the process, and the product of a mentoring relationship, and that's why it's essential that you view your mentees as learners and see yourself as a learning facilitator.

Third, relationship. Strong mentoring relationships motivate, inspire, and support learning and development. From the beginning, both mentor and mentee must be open and trusting and honor each other's uniqueness. Both partners need to work at establishing, maintaining, and strengthening the relationship through time.

Next, partnership. A good relationship forms the basis for a strong mentoring partnership. With a strong partnership, you and your mentee both feel secure to work at building and strengthening your relationship and holding each other accountable for results.

Also, collaboration. Partnership is by definition collaborative. Together you and your mentee build a relationship, share knowledge, and come to consensus about the focus of the mentees desired learning.

Then, you actively work together to achieve it and mutually define goals. It's vital to clarify and articulate learning goals at the beginning and to review them throughout the mentoring relationship.

This means as a mentor, you will be asking questions, listening to answers, and engaging an ongoing conversation to ensure that you select meaningful goals that will guide the work of the relationship.

Finally, development. Mentoring needs to promote the mentees development and growth. When development is future directed, it creates its own momentum. In the end, a significant motivator for the mentee is to grow and develop in their job or career, and for the mentor, it is to have the satisfaction that they've played an important role to help make that happen.

Make Mentoring Count