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**Mentor.**

*A how-to guide from the  
AICPA Women's Initiatives  
Executive Committee*

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## Introduction

**Why start a mentoring program?** Mentors are a powerful force for developing employees and the organization, from helping new hires feel welcomed to building staff loyalty and retention. Sharing knowledge and expertise is vital to building a connected, communicative workplace — and mentoring can help accounting firms of all sizes do just that. In essence, an organization empowers its staff via the learning and growth opportunities mentoring provides.

Mentoring also is important to career achievement: a mentor can help establish a career plan, offer insight and advice about potential challenges, and serve as a sounding board for ideas and career-related decisions. In fact, Catalyst, a nonprofit organization helping women succeed in business, reports that lack of mentoring is a barrier to advancement.

You'll find that establishing a mentoring program can be relatively easy — and more than worth the time spent in terms of employee satisfaction and retention, and your organization's success.

### Forms of mentoring:

- One-on-one in a peer-to-peer or senior-to-junior relationship
- Network or group
- Radical, which is short-term and skill-focused

*This guide focuses on one-on-one mentoring, but you should select the form that suits your needs.*

## Key First Steps

**Timing and preparation** When should your mentoring program be introduced to employees? Some organizations immediately provide mentors to new staff members, while others use a mentoring program to encourage select high-potential individuals at various career milestones.

Whatever the timing, mentoring programs tell your staff that their careers are important to the organization — and their success helps your firm succeed.

When you're ready to start a mentoring program, it's important to:

- Get buy-in from management
- Market the mentoring program company-wide, including a special launch event
- Determine how mentors and protégés will be matched: One-on-one? Group?
- Establish a timeframe for periodic review (suggested: at six months and one year)

Of course, each of these tasks involves research and preparation, as well as support from colleagues and management. This how-to guide will assist you as you prepare to launch your mentoring program (there are ready-to-use forms and checklists, too).



## Roles and Responsibilities

**Mentor** A mentor motivates his or her protégé to do his or her best work and make decisions that will bring career and personal happiness. In this coach-like role, a mentor asks thought-provoking questions, identifies political relationships, assimilates the protégé into the corporate culture and assists him or her in developing short- and long-term goals.

The mentor benefits from this relationship in the form of personal satisfaction thanks to being able to give back to the organization; a legacy of knowledge, insight and experience; and enhanced visibility and prestige. The mentor also will gain new perspective and insight from the protégé's viewpoints and experiences.

### A mentor should have...

- Ability to influence and persuade others in positions of power
- Credibility with and respect from colleagues
- Seniority in relation to the protégé
- A desire to help the protégé as well as the organization
- Ability to help the protégé set and attain goals

### A mentor should provide...

- Vision, insight and encouragement
- A safer environment for taking risks
- Insight into corporate culture
- Constructive feedback and critical analysis
- Crisis- or failure-control plans
- Regular meetings

## Roles and Responsibilities

**Protégé** A protégé seeks constructive feedback as well as encouragement, and has a strong commitment to professional growth and the ambition to succeed. In recognition of the time and effort a mentor must put into establishing a relationship and providing support, a protégé is willing to take the initiative to ask questions, seek out learning opportunities and listen to constructive feedback.

The protégé benefits from this relationship via personalized education, training and counsel; increased visibility and opportunities for advancement in the organization; and a greater awareness of career and personal capabilities and possibilities.

### A protégé should have...

- Desire to learn, grow and succeed
- Ability to accept risk
- Commitment and loyalty to the organization
- Awareness of personal responsibility and goals
- Ability to listen and follow through with directions

### A protégé should be willing to...

- Assess his or her individual needs
- Take initiative in skill and career development
- Participate in the mentoring relationship
- Take advantage of the training and assistance offered
- Develop and utilize the skills of professionalism



## Tips for a Successful Mentoring Partnership

- Establish boundaries and maintain professional behavior
- Don't stereotype, generalize, or assume your mentor or protégé will not understand your perspective
- Maintain records of activities and career growth
- Keep supervisors informed
- Meet regularly, but be flexible

## Establishing the Relationship



### Tips for Finding a Mentor

- Choose someone you respect and admire
- Do not let geographical boundaries limit your choice; phone mentoring can be just as effective
- Conduct an exploratory interview before making a commitment
- Clarify expectations regarding roles, goals, time, confidentiality, etc.
- Choose someone other than the boss to whom you directly report

**Mentor** Before the mentor's first one-on-one meeting with the protégé, it's important to consider intentions and expectations for the relationship.

To prepare for the first meeting, a mentor should...

- Summarize goals and expectations for the mentoring partnership
- List two to three topics to discuss with the protégé
- Consider the logistics of monthly meetings

Then, a mentor should interview his or her protégé. Questions might include...

- Tell me about your background and experience
- What gives you the most satisfaction? Frustration?
- How do you like to spend your free time?
- Who do you admire the most or find the most interesting? Why?
- How do you use your skills on the job?
- Which skills do you want to develop? How can I help?

- What attracted you to this program?
- Six months from now, how would you like to have grown as a result of this mentoring relationship?
- What one thing can I do to ensure a positive experience for you?
- What should I expect from you?

**Protégé** Often, protégés must take the initiative in seeking out a mentor by signing up for a formal program at work or identifying a mentor through networking efforts.

#### Looking for a mentor

When networking, a potential protégé should...

- Consider goals and expectations for the mentoring partnership
- Be specific and reciprocal when making connections, asking for or offering assistance, etc.
- Consider the logistics of monthly meetings
- Reach out to people inside and outside the organization
- Prepare talking points for introductory phone calls

#### The first meeting – and beyond

Questions for the first meeting with a potential mentor might include:

- Have you had past successes in mentoring individuals?
- I'm seeking [specify] skills for my professional development. Can you help me attain them?
- What expectations do you generally have of the people you mentor?
- How much time can you offer?
- How can I plan for our first meeting?

The informational interview should result in the following outcomes:

- **A decision.** Do you want to enter into a mentoring partnership with this person?
- **An answer.** Does this person have the knowledge to help you define your goals and turn them into reality?

Conclusion

**Let the mentoring begin!** By its very nature, mentoring is rewarding and valuable for the mentor and protégé as well as their employers – the sharing of knowledge, expertise and insight helps to create more motivated and accomplished businesspeople.

The information in this how-to guide will help in setting up and launching a mentoring program. It is also useful for the individual who wishes to identify and establish a relationship with a mentor.

And remember, while a mentoring program does require planning and some initial effort, your organization will reap the rewards for years to come.

*The AICPA, through its Women’s Initiatives Executive Committee, is dedicated to maximizing the talent of its members by providing resources like this guide. For more information on career development initiatives and resources, visit [www.aicpa.org/worklife](http://www.aicpa.org/worklife).*



Appendix A

**Mentoring Agreement Form**

Mentor name (print) .....

Protégé name (print) .....

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring partnership, which we expect to benefit the mentor, protégé and (name of organization) .....

We want this to be a productive and rewarding experience, with most of our time spent in collaborative development activities. To minimize the possibility of confusion, we have agreed to the following:

Confidentiality .....

Duration of the mentoring partnership .....

Frequency of the meetings .....

Approximate amount of time to be invested by the mentor .....

Specific role of the mentor .....

Estimated ending date of partnership .....

Objectives and additional points .....

We have discussed the mentoring experience as a further developmental opportunity and its relationship to the policies of (name of organization) .....

We have created a detailed individual development plan, to be maintained by the protégé.

We agree to a no-fault conclusion of this partnership if, for any reason, it seems appropriate.

Mentor signature ..... Date .....

Protégé signature ..... Date .....

*This form is an agreement between the mentor and the protégé. It may be added to your performance appraisal.*

Appendix B

Six-month Review Form

Date: .....

Mentor name (print) .....

Protégé name (print) .....

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating “strongly agree” and 1 indicating “strongly disagree,” please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following aspects of your mentoring relationship.

Description	: Rating 1 – 5
Mentoring partnership is working well	:
Meetings are held regularly and on schedule	:
Appropriate amount of time has been devoted to program	:
Personal and professional development issues have been established	:
Clear goals and objectives have been set	:
Trust and confidentiality have been established	:
Mentor/protégé listens well and is responsive	:
Progress has been observed in areas chosen for development	:
Barriers encountered during mentoring process have been resolved	:
Topics to be discussed over the next six months have been defined	:
Program is meeting expectations	:
Mentoring relationship should continue	:

Additional comments:

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Appendix C

Twelve-month Review Form

Date: .....

Mentor name (print) .....

Protégé name (print) .....

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating “strongly agree” and 1 indicating “strongly disagree,” please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following aspects of your mentoring relationship.

Description	: Rating 1 – 5
Program met my expectations	:
Developmental goals and objectives were accomplished	:
Mentoring will continue on an informal basis at official end of program	:
Meetings were held regularly throughout the year	:
Topics defined for discussion were covered during the program	:
Allowed to devote the time necessary to the program	:
Learned a great deal from mentor/protégé	:
Program should be utilized by colleagues	:
Program was worthwhile	:

Additional comments:

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## Appendix D

### Job Expectations Checklist

A protégé's experience level determines what type of mentoring is needed. The job expectations listed below are considered typical for public accounting, industry and academia (at various stages of a person's career) and should be useful in adapting the mentoring process to the protégé's level of experience.

#### Public Accounting (medium to large firm)

##### ■ Staff – 1 to 3 years

- Put forth a diligent effort to pass the CPA exam
- Prepare work-papers following firm policies and procedures
- Become familiar with firm's policies, procedures, manuals and forms
- Perform work under the supervision of a superior

##### ■ Senior – 3 to 6 years

- Complete the CPA exam
- Develop relationships with client's accounting personnel/understand their systems
- Develop relationships with engagement partner or managing director
- Supervise, review and evaluate assistants
- Plan engagements under the direction of the engagement executive
- Recognize potential tax and audit problems
- Suggest to supervisor ideas regarding audit, management services and tax planning

##### ■ Manager/Senior Manager – 6 to 10 years

- Coordinate various planning phases of the engagement and ensure work is on schedule
- Generate budgets
- Review and evaluate all work papers and determine compliance with professional standards and firm policy, as well as tax compliance
- Review reports, financial statements and tax returns
- Review with the engagement partner significant findings that raise questions involving accounting principles, auditing standards, tax regulations and firm policy
- Prepare and discuss staff performance evaluations on all staff under supervision
- Be involved in practice development and supervision of multiple engagements
- Be responsible for billing and collections from client
- Delegate duties to subordinates and provide training
- Develop and maintain good working relationships with client management
- Sign tax returns on behalf of the firm

##### ■ Director/Non-Equity Partner – 10+ years

- Be an ambassador for the firm
- Manage client relationships
- Participate in trade associations and professional organizations
- Publish articles and speak as firm's expert in specific area
- Develop a professional network
- Resolve questions regarding accounting principles, auditing standards, tax regulation and firm policy
- Supervise staff training/development and mentor professional staff

##### ■ Partner/Managing Director – 10+ years

- Manage practice and be an ambassador for the firm
- Plan for strategic growth – set firm yearly goals and tasks
- Manage client relationships and develop new business for the firm
- Oversee firm policies and ensure compliance with auditing standards and tax compliance
- Participate in trade associations and professional associations
- Resolve questions regarding accounting principles, auditing standards, tax regulations and firm policy
- Provide plan for succession

#### Industry

##### ■ Staff – Corporate Accounting

- Work under the direction of a Senior or Manager in areas such as receivables, payables, payroll, property, general ledger and financial statements

##### ■ Staff – Taxation

- Work under the direction of a Senior or Manager in preparing returns or various schedules for review

##### ■ Staff – Finance, Budget and Planning/Analysis

- Work under the direction of a Senior or Manager in assignments involving profit planning, capital expenditures, investments, cash flow budgeting and acquisitions

##### ■ Senior – Corporate Accounting

- Supervise general accounting areas such as receivables, payables, or financial reporting
- May also be responsible for special reports and analyses involving financial data



## Appendix D – cont'd.

■ **Senior – Taxation**

- Responsible for one or more of the following areas: federal, state, and local income taxes; sales tax; property tax; or payroll tax

■ **Senior – Finance, Budget and Planning/Analysis**

- Supervise staff in performing financial and economic analyses of new projects and analyses of merger and corporate growth policies

■ **Manager – Corporate Accounting**

- Assist the Controller
- Often charged with responsibility for a functional area such as financial accounting or budgetary planning and control
- Coordinate work of personnel involved in detailed accounting entries, internal financial reporting and financial statements

■ **Manager – Taxation**

- Report to Controller
- Direct staff responsible for determining the organization's liability to various taxing authorities for income tax, sales tax, property tax and payroll tax
- Analyze the effect of tax accounting alternatives
- Study laws and regulations to ensure correct application of new tax measures

■ **Manager – Internal Audit**

- Direct staff responsible for sampling the adequacy and reliability of the internal control systems
- Make recommendations and changes as needed
- Ensure that company policies are followed
- Establish the proper techniques to discover and prevent fraud
- Select areas of concern for operational audits

■ **Controller**

- Organize, direct and control the work of accounting personnel in collecting, summarizing and interpreting financial data for management use, creditors, investors and taxing authorities
- Help develop forecasts for proposed projects
- Measure actual performance against operating standards
- Interpret the results of operations for all levels of management

■ **Treasurer**

- Direct functions dealing with receipt, disbursement and protection of cash, preservation of company assets and investment of surplus funds or pension and trust funds
- Determine the optimal cash position for the organization and set short-term investment policies
- Determine proper balance of debt/equity financing
- Govern overall credit policy, negotiate loans, arrange insurance coverage and maintain banking relationships

■ **Chief Financial Officer**

- Advise the CEO on financial reporting, financial status and liquidity, and financial growth
- Direct the work of the Controller, Treasurer and sometimes the Internal Auditor
- Maintain relationships with stockholders, financial institutions and the investment community
- Usually a member of the Board of Directors and/or the Executive Committee
- Contribute to overall organization planning, policy development and implementation

■ **Academia**■ **Assistant Professor – 1 to 6 years**

- Understand research expectations of university
- Develop appropriate research and publish it
- Understand and meet teaching expectations

■ **Associate Professor – 5 to 10 years**

- Attain tenure
- Assume a leadership role by mentoring assistant professors
- Be a liaison with potential employers
- Maintain a research stream
- Assume department chair responsibilities

■ **Full Professor**

- Provide university-wide leadership
- Enhance the visibility of the university





## Sources and Further Reading

These guidelines have been developed using the following sources:

- *Accounting and Finance Salary Survey and Career Planning Guide*
- American Express Tax and Business Services
- *Being an Effective Mentor: 101 Practical Strategies for Success* by Ida O. Abbot, Esq., published by NALP
- Colgate-Palmolive Company
- KPMG – *The Mentoring Toolkit*
- *Mentorship Magic: The Fastest Track* by Jay Abraham and Gary Leavitt
- *Working with a Mentor: 50 Practical Suggestions for Success* by Ida O. Abbot, Esq., published by NALP

Recent newspaper and magazine articles that offer insight and information about mentoring:

- “How to Establish a Mentoring Program.” *Business Week*, Feb. 2008. [http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/feb2008/sb2008026\\_636479.htm?chan=search](http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/feb2008/sb2008026_636479.htm?chan=search)
- “Set Goals and Meet Objectives, the Mentoring Way.” *Information Week*, June 2002. <http://www.informationweek.com/storyIWK20020531S0005>
- “The Smart Way to Train New Hires.” *Journal of Accountancy*, Sept. 2004. <http://www.aicpa.org/pubs/jofa/sep2004/gbi.htm>
- “Why You Need a Mentor.” *BusinessWeek*, Feb. 2007. [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/07\\_09/b4023456.htm?chan=search](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/07_09/b4023456.htm?chan=search)
- “Your Mentor is Out There – In Cyberspace.” *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 2008. <http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB120078462838903275.html>

Have questions or suggestions? Please visit the AICPA Women’s Initiatives Executive Committee at [www.aicpa.org/worklife](http://www.aicpa.org/worklife) or e-mail [womensinitiatives@aicpa.org](mailto:womensinitiatives@aicpa.org).

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