



# Share. Learn. **Grow. Mentor.**

*A How-to Guide* From the  
AICPA Women's Initiatives  
Executive Committee



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# Introduction

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.

## Mentor vs. Coach vs. Sponsor

**Mentor:** “Talks with you”

- A mentoring relationship can exist between two people or within a group for the purpose of career development or navigating the workplace, or a particular issue
- Often, the relationship is mutually beneficial and non-evaluative, with all parties learning in a purposeful way through sharing knowledge and experiences
- Mentors can be inside or outside of the mentee’s organization

**Coach:** “Talks to you”

- A coaching relationship often is instructional, and sometimes evaluative, with a particular focus, such as developing skills or training someone on a discreet task or series of tasks
- A coach is most likely a part of the same organization as the person or group being coached

**Sponsor:** “Talks about you”

- In a sponsoring relationship, the sponsor has positively evaluated the protégé and intentionally helps him/her gain visibility for particular assignments, promotions or positions, usually in a career or opportunity-related situation
- A sponsor is almost always a part of the protégé’s organization, because by definition, the sponsor uses his/her organizational influence for the protégé’s benefit

Mentoring is best defined by comparing and contrasting it with coaching and sponsorship; all three arrangements can be incredibly helpful contributors to career development.

## Why Start a Mentoring Program?

Mentors are a powerful force for developing employees and the organization. A mentor's role can vary from helping new hires feel welcome to building staff loyalty and increasing employee 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 can empower its staff via the learning and growth opportunities mentoring provides.

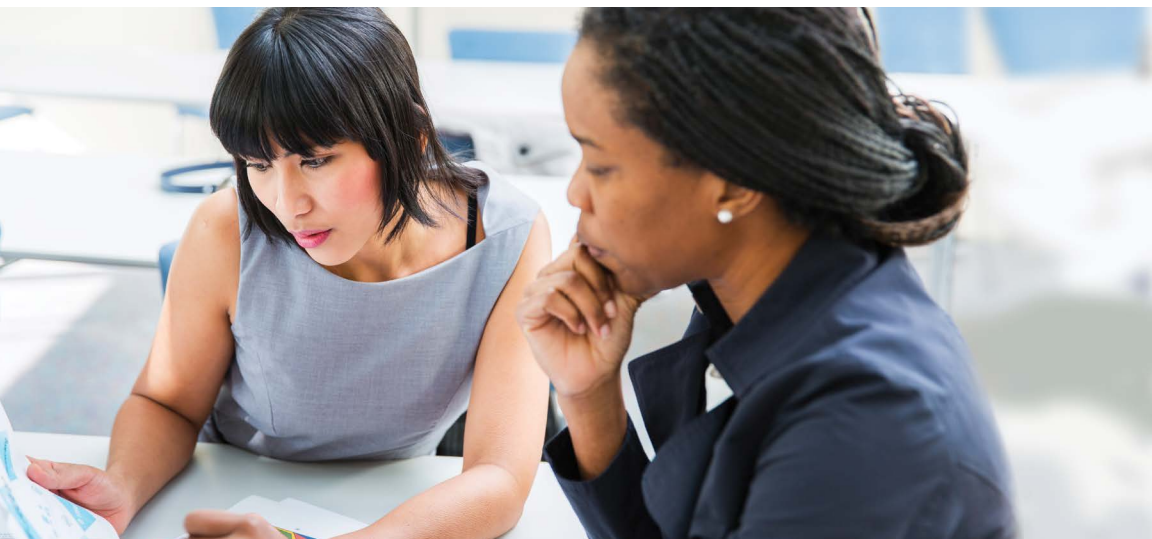
Mentoring is also important to career achievement. A mentor can help establish a career plan, offer insight and advice about potential challenges, and serve as a sounding board for ideas and career-related decisions. In fact, Catalyst, a not-for-profit organization helping women succeed in business, 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
- Short-term and issue-focused or more long-term in nature

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



# Key First Steps

## Timing, Preparation and Accountability

When should employees be introduced to your mentoring program? 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:

- Be clear about objectives and expected outcomes
- Get buy-in from management
- Explain and market the benefits of the mentoring program
- Determine how mentors and mentees will be matched: One-on-one? Group?
- Establish a timeframe for periodic review (suggested: at six months and one year)

Depending on your objectives, accountability for meeting them could be really critical to the program's success. 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 launch your mentoring program (there are ready-to-use forms and checklists, too).

# Roles and Responsibilities

## Mentor

A mentor motivates his or her mentee to do their best work and make decisions that will bring career and personal happiness. A mentor asks thought-provoking questions, identifies political relationships, assimilates the mentee into the corporate culture and assists them 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 gains new perspective and insight from the mentee's viewpoints and experiences.

### A mentor should have ...

- Contextual experience related to the mentee
- More experience than the mentee
- A desire to help the mentee as well as the organization
- Ability to help the mentee set and attain goals

### A mentor should provide ...

- Vision, insight and encouragement
- A safe environment for taking risks
- Agreed-upon commitment of time

## Mentee

A mentee seeks constructive feedback as well as encouragement, 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 mentee is willing to take the initiative to ask questions, seek learning opportunities and listen to constructive feedback.

The mentee 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 mentee should have ...

- Desire to learn, grow and succeed
- Awareness of personal responsibility and goals
- Ability to listen and follow through with directions

### A mentee should be willing to ...

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

# Establishing the Relationship

## Mentor

Before the mentor's first one-on-one meeting with the mentee, 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 mentee
- Consider the logistics of monthly meetings

### Then, a mentor should interview his or her mentee. 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?
- How often would you like to connect?
- 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?



## Mentee

Often, mentees 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 and frequency of 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?

## Tips for Finding a Mentor

- *Choose someone you respect and admire*
- *Do not let geographical boundaries limit your choice; video conference or 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*

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?

## Tips for Successful Mentoring

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

## Conclusion

### Let the Mentoring Begin!

By its very nature, mentoring is rewarding and valuable for the mentor and mentee as well as their employers. The sharing of knowledge, expertise and insight helps to create more motivated and accomplished businesspeople.

We hope you'll find the information in this how-to guide helpful in setting up and launching a mentoring program. And remember, while creating a mentoring program does require planning and some initial effort, your organization will reap the rewards for years to come.

# Appendix A

## Mentoring Agreement Form

**Mentor** name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentee** name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring partnership, which we expect to benefit the mentor, mentee 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 mentee. \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Mentor** signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentee** signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

# Appendix B

## Six-Month Review Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentor** name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentee** 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	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Meetings have been held regularly and on schedule	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriate amount of time has been devoted to program	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Personal and professional development issues have been established	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Clear goals and objectives have been set	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Trust and confidentiality have been established	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Mentor/mentee listens well and is responsive	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Progress has been observed in areas chosen for development	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Barriers encountered during mentoring process have been resolved	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Topics to be discussed over the next six months have been defined	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Program is meeting expectations	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring relationship should continue	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments:

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# Appendix C

## 12-Month Review Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentor** name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentee** 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	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Developmental goals and objectives were accomplished	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Meetings were held regularly throughout the year	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Topics defined for discussion were covered during the program	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Allowed to devote the time necessary to the program	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Learned a great deal from mentor/protégé	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring will continue on an informal basis at official end of program	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Program should be utilized by colleagues	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Program was worthwhile	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments:

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*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 [aicpa.org/PCPS/WI](http://aicpa.org/PCPS/WI)*

*Have questions or suggestions? Email us at [womensinitiatives@aicpa.org](mailto:womensinitiatives@aicpa.org).*

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