Long-Distance Mentoring

7 Keys to Successfully Engage in Mentoring Remotely, Virtually, and Long-Distance

Reality Check #1: Great mentoring relationships are not limited by distance, time zones, states, or even continents. A great Mentor for you may be in a remote location. Why should that stop a great mentoring engagement?

Reality Check #2: Even if you are able to meet with your mentoring partner in person, there will be interactions that will require mobility. Don’t do it haphazardly.

Reality Check #3: No one is stagnant. We travel, we commute, we attend conferences, we change positions, we relocate, we meet with customers, we visit other offices, and we work from home. Everyone is on the move! Don’t leave your mentoring engagement behind!

7 Keys to Success

1) Master Technology
   Learn to use a variety of tools to stay connected and engaged:
   - Cell phones
   - Email
   - Skype
   - WebEx / Go to Meeting
   - Video Conferencing
   - Text
   - Google Hangout
   - Facetime

2) Start with the 5 Questions
   At the beginning of every mentoring engagement, a Mentor should ask:
   - What is it that you really want to be and do?
   - What are you doing really well that is helping you get there?
   - What are you not doing well that is preventing you from getting there?
   - What will you do differently tomorrow to meet those challenges?
   - How can I help, and where do you need the most help?

3) Agree on Structure, Expectations, and a Stretch Assignment
   Establish a regular and consistent schedule for your mentoring engagements:
   - Based on the “5 Questions,” (see above), decide how long to work together and how often to meet
• Understand each other’s expectations – what does success in this mentoring engagement look like?
• Select a goal, a stretch assignment, a project around which you can focus your mentoring engagement and conversations.
  
  Examples:
  ❖ Make a presentation to senior management on a proposed solution
  ❖ Lead a project team
  ❖ Complete an IDP and a 5-year career plan
  ❖ Finish a degree or land an internship

4) Tenaciously Prepare

Before every virtual meeting, Mentee/Protégé should:

• Confirm with the Mentor (email/outlook/text/assistant/phone)
• Email a Snapshot to Mentor prior to the meeting:
  ❖ Summary of actions taken + outcomes achieved since last meeting
  ❖ List of topics to address in the next meeting

Before every meeting, Mentor should:

• Review notes taken from last meeting
• Read the Snapshot
• Think of 3 questions to ask Mentee/Protégé to challenge their thinking

5) Relentlessly Communicate

Your entire experience will hinge on your ability to communicate.

• Never assume a communication made it or was understood
• Assume 100% responsibility for communications
  ❖ Ask: “I wonder if I gave my Mentor as all the information needed”
  ❖ Ask: “I wonder what my Mentee/Protégé’s perspective is”
• Create redundancy: phone + email follow up
• Check-in constantly:
  ❖ What did you hear?
  ❖ What is your experience?
  ❖ Do you have all the information you need to be successful?
6) Be Purposefully Flexible
Flexibility is the key to success when traveling. That same flexibility is required for success in mobile mentoring.

- Expect: bad phone connections, lost emails, technology that doesn’t work, time zone challenges
- Create redundancy plans – if Skype is down, move to Facetime or Google Hangout or just pick up the phone
- Always be ready to move a meeting, a conversation, or an agenda item.
- Stay focused on creating a connection, no matter how it happens

7) Be Intentionally Focused
When you’re not face-to-face, you battle 2x as many distractions.

- Eliminate distractions
- Carve out the time in your calendar
- Find space in your environment to focus
- Avoid multi-tasking – don’t read email while your Mentor is talking
- Be present – and share what’s consuming your energy/focus if you’re not
- Keep checking in with your mentoring partner
  - Working on the relationship is just as critical as working in it