

The Mentoring Process

The following steps have been effective in promoting clear, well-defined communication:

1. Prepare- Do some research ahead of time. Find out as much as you can about the environment your mentee works in prior to your first meeting.

2. Build rapport - Get acquainted with your mentee. The foundation for any partnership is a strong relationship between the members of the partnering affiliate groups. This is accomplished through getting to know each other as people, visiting each others homes and businesses, understanding each others life circumstances, and through praying together. Without a strong relationship, the partnership can't grow.

3. Share expectations - Share each other's expectations as you see them at this point in the relationship. Clarify why you are both interested in this mentoring relationship. Together develop a clear vision of the future. This is a picture of what will be achieved by the partnership and how it will be achieved. This vision will be based on the need to be addressed as well as the resources each party brings to the relationship.

Establish Guidelines for Working Together

- a. Roles and Responsibilities of each Partner (who will do what).
- b. Communicating results and financial information (what, how, with what frequency).
- c. Dealing with conflict;
 - Address conflict immediately.
 - Value relationships above accomplishments.
 - Seek to understand before seeking to be understood.
 - Postpone judgment, practice genuine respect, and assume posture of learning.
- d. Exit strategy (duration of partnership, under what conditions might it end).

4. Observe and listen - It is tempting to focus only on results, but it is critical that you observe behaviors and get an understanding why things are done a certain way. Just as football coaches don't just look at the scoreboard, you will be a more effective mentor if your mentoring is based on observations. Ask background questions to find out how your mentee arrived at where he/she is at today, his/her motives for getting into business, and the capabilities of mentee and the business. Identify the long-term goals of the mentee. Record your observations - don't rely on your memory.

5. Needs identification - Ask probing questions. What needs to be addressed to reach the long-term goals? Break the long-term goals into manageable pieces. Identify possible options that are reasonable for the mentee, and identify how the mentor fits into these options.

6. Make an action plan – (See example) Be sure this is done together. An action plan is generally six to twelve months in length. Make sure that the tasks and the person responsible are clearly defined, and that a date is set for when the tasks will be completed. Have both the mentor and mentee sign the plan as a gesture that both parties 'own' the plan and are committed to implementing it.

Annual Work Plan

a. Co-create Annual Work Plans for the Coming Year—(Clarify Expectations)

1. What do we want to accomplish together? (results)
2. How do we want to accomplish this? (by what method)
3. Who will do each of the activities? (responsibilities)

4. How much will it cost and where will the money come from? (budget)
5. When will the various activities take place? (time line)

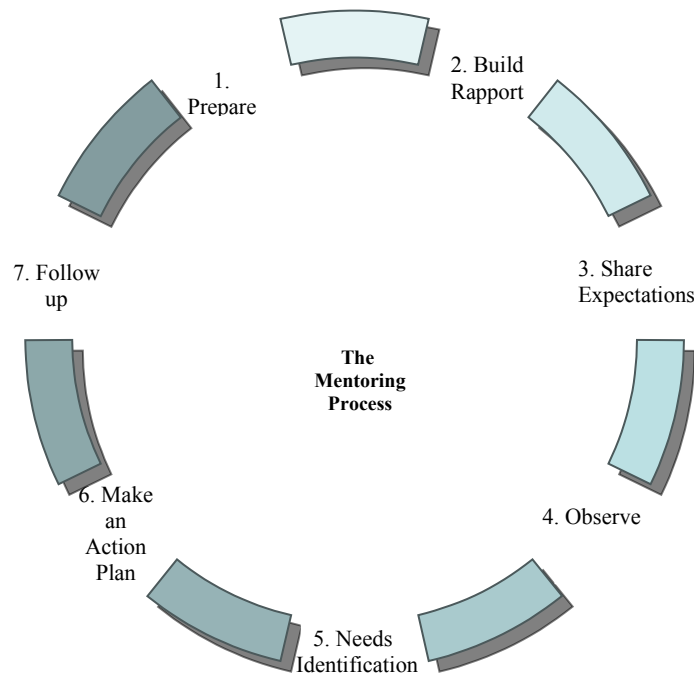
b. Review Past and Current Work Plans Together—(Evaluation)

1. How well did we accomplish last years plans? Are we on track this year?
2. What did we learn from last years experience?
3. What is working well? What can we improve?

7. Follow up – There should be at least one midpoint in the action plan to touch base and monitor how the plan is progressing. When the action plan matures, both parties should evaluate it together and determine the next phase of the mentorship.

Annually Evaluate the Partnership

- a. What commitments did we make to each other last year?
- b. How well did we keep those commitments?
- c. What is working well in our partnerships?
- d. What in our partnership could we improve?



A hypothetical example...

Juan and Elsie Carlos

The Carlos family lives in Nicaragua where they own La Flavorida, a small dairy where they make ice cream for the local market in a town of 25,000 people. They employ 12 people in the plant. In addition, approximately 50 vendors make a living selling the ice cream from portable carts. Juan and Elsie took over the business three years ago from Elsie's uncle. It's been a tough go. The technical aspect of making consistent ice cream was much harder than they had anticipated. On top of that, a large multinational had just expanded from the capital to the little town and was offering more variety at a lower price than Juan and Elsie. With monthly payments, something her uncle had not had to deal with, Juan and Elsie wondered how long they could stay afloat. If La Flavorida went under, 64 people would lose their livelihoods, including Juan and Elise.

Jim and Alice Kramer

Jim has been in the dairy processing business for 22 years; in fact, he took it over from his father who founded it in the early fifties. At the request of *Partners*, Jim and Alice decided to use a week of their vacation time to meet with Juan and Elsie. This visit was a first for them in many ways; this was the first time they had ever contemplated traveling to Central America and also the first time they considered themselves 'mentor material'. Although they researched Nicaragua at their local library, they traveled with mixed emotions - a sense of adventure coupled with a sense of disbelief that they actually committed themselves to do this. With some anxiety, they were met at the airport by Elise, who was able to greet them in rudimentary but comprehensible English that she had learned during an 18 month stay in Anglophone, Belize during Nicaragua's civil war a decade earlier.

The week together

The Kramers spent a total of seven days in Nicaragua, the last two days at a beautiful resort on the Pacific Ocean that Juan and Elsie had arranged. The initial meetings were somewhat awkward; everything was new for Jim and Alice. The noise and congestion were things they had not been exposed to in Iowa. La Flavorida was also a much smaller ice cream plant than Jim had expected. The equipment that Juan and Elsie were working with would have been obsolete by Iowa standards years ago. In fact, it reminded Jim of the same equipment his father started out with 40 years ago. The first two days they simply observed and asked questions. Communication became easier as the week went on. The Kramers were exposed to sights and circumstances that made them reflect on the values of their own culture. By the Friday they were ready to draw up an action plan.