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Keep on doing the nitty-gritty work it takes to develop a successful mentorship ...

Amy Vetter • Apr. 09, 2020



At this point, “mentorship” has become a business buzzword akin to “disruption” or “deliverable.” People love to discuss the importance of mentorship, but they’re less keen on doing the nitty-gritty work it takes to develop a successful mentorship program in their own workplace. Mentorship shouldn’t be haphazard; it should be systematized, and it should be valuable for team members and firms alike. In order to achieve those goals, both mentors and mentees need to approach the relationship with good faith and earnest effort to make a meaningful professional connection.

There are all sorts of [reasons](http://www.cpapracticeadvisor.com/12176118) ([www.cpapracticeadvisor.com/12176118](http://www.cpapracticeadvisor.com/12176118)) why you should consider adding a mentorship program to your workplace, but this article is more interested in the how, specifically how mentors and mentee should view the

nature of their role. If you are part of an informal, outside-of-work mentorship

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## For mentors:

Being a mentor in an official capacity is not a role to be taken lightly. The first requirement of a good mentorship program is to find mentors who are willing and eager to be involved and engaged. If you or another leader at the firm doesn't want to be a part of it, they shouldn't, because being a half-hearted mentor is often worse than not being one at all. As a mentor, you have to take an active role in providing [professional development](#) to your mentees. You have to be there to answer questions, share your story, and provide guidance in times of need.

You also have to be willing to listen. One of the aspects that separates mentorship from simple training or management is that it actively invests in its recipients. You can't successfully mentor somebody if you don't take their needs into account. If you don't solicit feedback from your mentees, you don't know if you're providing them any value. While a mentor-mentee relationship is obviously a hierarchical one, it should include plenty of open and honest exchange between parties.

## For mentees:

On the surface, being a mentee is a pretty simple gig. You show up, you get some wisdom, and you advance in your career. What could be simpler than that? Showing up may be all that it takes to be a mentee, but it won't make you a good one. If you aren't dedicated to receiving mentorship, you won't get much from the relationship except something to bring up during your yearly review.

The people who get the most out of mentorship programs are those who participate as actively as possible. Don't be afraid to discuss any number of issues with your mentor, from questions directly related to your job to broader big-picture concerns. You should also be open and vulnerable, even when it's difficult. Your mentor is somebody who's there to provide an experienced set of eyes and a steady hand, so

you shouldn't ever be afraid to engage them. Talking about your fears, hopes, and

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