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SECTION I:
Purpose and Expectations
Section I: Purpose and Expectations

GROWTH, NOT EMPLOYMENT

The purpose of ACHE’s Leadership Mentoring Network is to expand opportunities to learn and develop as healthcare leaders and professionals. ACHE believes that no matter where you are in your career, mentoring others—and being mentored—should be part of your professional growth. In fact, mentoring is one of ACHE’s highest priorities. Furthermore, seeking mentoring relationships with people who have experiences different from your own will likely enhance your learning and sharing.

Leadership mentoring should not focus on finding employment for proteges. Rather, the focus should be helping proteges prepare themselves for greater leadership opportunities and obligations. These opportunities may come in the protege’s current job or in a new one. After a mentoring partnership has matured, the matter of the protege’s career needs may become a ripe and welcome topic, but at the beginning, DON’T GO THERE. If the agenda of the protege immediately becomes focused on finding a job, the mentor will feel exploited. Thus, the foundation of trust will be undermined.

LAUNCHING THE PARTNERSHIP AND TAKING INITIATIVE

Once ACHE provides the identity and contact information of the partners, it is expected that the mentor will initiate contact with the protege. This first contact is intended to be a gracious and welcoming gesture.

To help launch a successful partnership, the protege must respond promptly and courteously. Relationships are fragile at the beginning, and courtesy is essential in laying a foundation for the mutual respect and trust essential in an effective mentoring partnership.

Subsequently, the protege is expected to take the initiative in setting up meetings and in creating agendas to guide discussions with the mentor. By meeting these expectations, the protege demonstrates basic executive professionalism, personal commitment to the partnership, and respect for the mentor.

THE STAGES OF A PARTNERSHIP

Mentoring relationships are about development. A successful relationship will produce professional and personal growth. We can identify multiple stages through which a mentoring relationship typically evolves.

• First comes a beginning stage, which is a period of building trust. Expect some anxiety and uncertainty as you learn what to expect in the relationship. Mentors will share personal experiences and lessons, and proteges will offer comprehensive explanations of situations and decisions that challenge them. Mentors often take the lead in this stage.

• Next comes a “honeymoon” stage. You have established an ongoing relationship that offers a forum for exploring issues, problems, and possibilities. Both partners provide factual information and comfortably explain personal choices and decisions. Together you explore options and alternatives. Mentors may offer views on what is realistic given their newly developed understanding of their proteges. Mentors and proteges often share the leader role during this stage.
• Third is a relationship-testing stage. Here, both the mentor and the protege are willing to address tough issues with candor. For example, proteges may state that a goal is important yet hesitate to act to reach it. Proteges should be assuming more responsibility for directing the partnership’s agenda.

• Finally, there is a concluding stage to the relationship. Certainly the time is ripe to end the relationship once you have met the protege’s developmental objectives. Periodically assessing progress tells how close you are to realizing the objectives. Relationships that lose their vitality (less frequent, less meaningful contact) are also ripe to end. The right way to end a partnership is by revisiting its course of progress and celebrating its achievements. The mentor provides affirming motivation, and the protege provides affirming appreciation.

Progressing through these stages should run according to the protege’s readiness to move on, not on an arbitrary time schedule. This requires judgment that initially will come from the mentor but ultimately will be shared.

THE DURATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP

We suggest a one-year duration for Leadership Mentoring Network (LMN) partnerships.

If the mentor and protege find they continue to derive value from their partnership, then they should continue their connection. No action through ACHE would be required; however, we ask that you notify us if you choose to continue the partnership.

In some cases it will make sense to end the partnership before the one-year mark. Sometimes mentors and proteges accomplish their agreed-upon objectives sooner. Other times, a mentor or protege may discover that the partnership is not meeting expectations. In this case it would be appropriate to discontinue the connection. Should this happen, we are prepared to attempt, without prejudice, to find new partners for the mentor and the protege.

Most LMN partnerships do succeed, but not all. If you have growing doubts about your partnership, it may be best to discuss your concern with your partner. Do so in a courteous manner that demonstrates your respect for your partner as a person and a professional. This should help sustain positive feelings between you and your partner and maintain an appreciation of the mentoring process by both of you.
SECTION II:
Methods
PROFILES: HOW WE MATCH MENTORS AND PROTEGES

Matching for ACHE’s Leadership Mentoring Network involves examining relevant attributes that are desired and available in a mentoring partner. Both mentors and proteges complete a profile to describe themselves and to identify the attributes that would make a mentoring partner more or less desirable.

ACHE has recruited more than 700 mentor volunteers into its pool of potential mentors, and we continue to recruit new volunteers. When ACHE receives a protege application, we identify the attributes desired in his or her mentor and then search for potential matches from the mentor volunteer pool.

Mentor profiles include the following types of information:

1. ACHE status
2. Position title (if applicable)
3. Organization/geographic location
4. Phone and e-mail information
5. Areas of expertise
6. Years of healthcare experience
7. Academic degrees and major
8. Principal responsibilities of highest position held
9. Preference in protege (type of experience, career goals, developmental needs, etc.)
10. Geographic preferences
11. Willingness to mentor more than one person at a time

Protege profiles include the following types of information:

1. ACHE status
2. Position title (if applicable)
3. Organization/geographic location
4. Phone and e-mail information
5. Type of organization worked in most recently/currently
6. Two types of organizations would most like to work in next
7. Academic degrees and major
8. Short-term career goals
9. Long-term career goals
10. Developmental needs to work on with mentor
11. Importance ratings for specific characteristics in a mentor on a three-tier scale: not important, desired, and essential. The characteristics are gender, career setting, possesses top executive experience, older than protege, employed (not retired), close geographically, uses e-mail, and same ethnicity.

Once ACHE has found a promising match, we send confidential profiles to each potential partner. Mentors receive protege profiles without names, organizations, or contact information. Proteges receive similarly “anonymous” mentor profiles. Both parties have the opportunity to examine the profiled information and then notify ACHE that they are accepting or declining the proposed partner. When both parties accept, we follow up by providing personal identification and contact information.
Section II: Methods

HOW TO START A MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

Introduce Yourself

Trust takes time to develop, so remove risk from your initial contact. One way is to consider limiting the information exchanged to the “professional you.” This type of predictable conversation should help ease the partners into a comfortable dialogue.

1. Be prepared to “tell me about yourself.” At this early stage, a “professional past-present-future” approach may be most comfortable and effective:
   - Past: This may start with general background such as where you born and grew up, your college and major, and how you found your way to healthcare management.
   - Present: Describe your organization, current job title, and responsibilities. If you have done a self-assessment, you might share results that describe your personality type, your career anchors, your leadership strengths and areas that you still would like to develop, and how you learn best.
   - Future: What do you expect will be your career direction over the next five years? How do you anticipate making that happen?

2. Describe experiences, if any, you have had as either a mentor or a protege.
   - How did those mentoring opportunities arise? What succeeded and what didn’t work well? What benefit did you obtain from those experiences? What could you have done differently to improve them?

3. Consider sharing a safe glimpse into your personal side.
   - Typical topics include your family situation, your favorite pastimes, and things important in your life.

Before having your initial conversation, you may benefit from reviewing “Developing the Mentor/Protege Relationship,” found in Section IV of this manual. You will find tips on how to create an environment conducive to developing trust, pointers on empathic listening, suggested approaches to learning, and advice on appreciating differences.

Set Expectations

Your first contact should not end without having answers or discussions concerning the following points (but they should not be the first items you discuss):

- How you will make contact? Phone, e-mail, fax, or even face-to-face?
- How frequently will you have scheduled contact meetings?
- How long should you plan for when scheduling contact meetings?
- What are each partner’s expectations regarding confidentiality?
- When will you meet next?
Establishing what should be the goals and roles for the mentoring relationship is fundamental to succeeding. The protege’s answers help the mentor clarify expectations, including what kind of learning or development outcomes are being sought (for example, help in brainstorming or insights to leading change, managing conflict, or networking). Mentors need to understand what they have to offer that interests the protege.

You can sharpen your understanding of the mentor’s role and pick up some important style tips by scanning “How to Get Started,” found in Section IV of this manual, especially in the concluding section “Prepare for the First Meeting.”

PLANNING TO ASSESS AND EVALUATE YOUR PARTNERSHIP

To ensure that you are getting the most out of your mentoring partnership, you should make plans immediately to regularly gauge the relationship. In your first meeting, discuss the expected gains on both sides of the partnership. Soon after, work on the criteria and a schedule for assessing the relationship’s effectiveness.

It may be helpful if both the mentor and the protege can describe how they personally benefit most when receiving feedback about their performance. Some individuals are most comfortable with printed checklists, while others benefit more from dialogue. In both modes, it may be useful to compare mentor and protege perceptions. Allowing proteges to comment first diminishes the likelihood of receiving feedback tailored to agree with what the mentor says, rather than reflecting the protege’s actual feelings.

You may use various media to communicate with your partner, including telephone, e-mail, fax, and face-to-face meetings. You should recognize that some of these modes are not appropriate for exchanging feedback. For example, you should avoid e-mail when dealing with impressions on touchy subjects or when considering issues that may be interpreted differently by the mentor and protege. For these, real-time conversations should be considered mandatory.

You may wish to keep a file that summarizes your meetings. Headings that can help organize your perspective include:

- Topics you discussed
- Items scheduled for discussion from previous meetings
- Actions-decisions-assignments to consider at next/future meeting
- Your impressions concerning the protege and your mentoring skills

Section IV contains a number of reprints of Healthcare Executive mentoring columns that address evaluating your mentoring relationship and providing feedback. Among these are “Moving from Telling to Empowering,” “Facilitating Authenticity,” and “Transitioning the Mentoring Relationship” (see the section “Assess Your Relationship”).

Section II: Methods
SECTION III:
Resources for Mentors and Proteges
This section contains and identifies resources to help mentors and proteges better understand mentoring, their respective roles, and how to perform them more effectively. There are also references to valuable books, articles, and Web sites. In the next section, you will find more than a dozen reprints of “how to” articles from the “Leadership in Mentoring” column in Healthcare Executive magazine.

TRAITS OF EFFECTIVE MENTORS AND PROTEGES

The Orlando Sentinel published the following lists developed by WOMEN Unlimited,* a New York-based firm helping women in business with their professional growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good mentors</th>
<th>Good proteges</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humor</td>
<td>Open and honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good listener</td>
<td>Introspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit mistakes, share failures</td>
<td>Admit mistakes, share failures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can discuss broad range of issues</td>
<td>Realistic in expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable getting, giving feedback</td>
<td>Accountable for own development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reprinted with permission from WOMEN Unlimited.

POTENTIAL FLASH POINTS FOR MENTORS AND PROTEGES

Norman Cohen, Ph.D., wrote The Mentee’s Guide to Mentoring as well as other books and resources on the topic of mentoring. He cites several types of serious differences of opinion that can thwart an effective mentoring partnership. Key among them are:

- Inadequate level of commitment from mentor to protege. LMN participant feedback to ACHE affirms that this can be a relationship killer, especially at the start.
- Differing and contrasting personal values.
- Interpersonal styles that are fundamentally different and affect how the parties approach issues, such as communication, timeliness, orientation toward control.
- Whether and how (with what attitude) a protege pursues mentor-supported suggestions. Dr. Cohen references mentoring partnerships that take place between partners working in the same company; the mentorships are structured by the employees’ organization. Thus, if a protege does not follow up on assignments or suggestions, the mentor is compelled to continue the relationship because it is sanctioned by the organization. However, LMN participants are strictly volunteer and rarely work within the same organization. LMN participant feedback to ACHE indicates that nonperformance by a protege undermines willingness by the mentor to continue participating in the mentoring relationship.

A NEW VIEW OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

ACHE’s LMN mixes old and new concepts in mentoring. It is a one-on-one mentoring relationship in the classic style. But it is contemporary in that it is established, initially, for a fixed time and with a specific purpose in mind. Also, it links individuals in different organizations often separated by considerable distance.
In a 2003 article from The Academy of Management Executive (Vol. 17, No. 4), we learn about the importance of “mentor networks” as a means for aspiring executives to flourish in a changing workplace (de Janasz, Sullivan, and Whitting: “Mentor Networks and Career Success: Lessons for Turbulent Times”). The authors make the point that engaging multiple mentors has the potential to help proteges continuously acquire the knowledge they need for professional and personal success. Why are multiple mentors necessary? Because “if you choose to rely on one mentor, that mentor had better know everything.”

They offer five keys to building an intelligent mentoring network:

1. Become the perfect protege by investing enough time to allow the mentoring relationship to grow and mature so that trust and respect can develop.

2. Engage in 360-degree networking by seeking mentors who are at different career stages and levels.

3. Be prepared to assess, construct, and adjust your mentoring network to reflect the competencies you as a protege wish to build through guidance from the best-qualified mentors.

4. Strive to engage a diverse team of mentors to capitalize on their distinct strengths and the synergy provided from diverse opinions, information, and knowledge.

5. Express in writing appreciation for the mentor’s influence when it is time to close the relationship, no matter whether the relationship was still going strong or even if it had begun to wear out.

HOW TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE AS A MENTOR OR A PROTEGE

The reprints contained in Section IV originally appeared in Healthcare Executive magazine in its “Leadership in Mentoring” column. Subsequently, these selected columns and a number of others not reproduced here have been posted on ACHE’s Web site, ache.org. Visit the Affiliates Log In area and select the Career Resource Center tab. Next, scroll down to the heading “Benefits of Mentoring.” While some articles address mentor performance and others the protege’s role, all have valuable content for both partners to consider. Included here are the following columns:

Columns with worthwhile content for both mentors and proteges

• Long-Distance Mentoring: Make the most of mentoring when you can’t meet in person.
• Passing on the Mentoring Torch: Former proteges can make ideal mentors.

Columns primarily for mentors

• The Benefits of Being a Mentor: Mentoring enhances your professional life as well as your protege's.
• How to Get Started: Follow these tips to establish a successful mentoring relationship.
• Developing the Mentor/Protege Relationship: An open and honest relationship is key for powerful mentoring.
Moving from Telling to Empowering: Letting your protege struggle can be the best lesson of all.

Facilitating Authenticity: Open communication about tough issues can deepen your relationship.

Transitioning the Mentoring Relationship: Learn when to renew or end your partnership.

Columns primarily for proteges

- Partnership for Success: Learn how having a mentor can help you develop personally and professionally.
- Choosing a Mentor: A little preparation goes a long way when establishing a mentoring partnership.
- Take Charge of Your Mentoring Experience: Proteges benefit when they lead the mentoring relationship.
- The Power of Feedback: Providing constructive criticism can enhance the effectiveness of your relationship.
- Empty the Cup, Open the Mind: How receptive to learning are you?
- Beyond the Mentoring Relationship: Create a learning plan to continue your professional development.

Columns on ache.org but not included here

- Creating a Mentoring Culture: Learn steps for establishing a formal mentoring system in your organization.
- Multiple Mentoring: Discover alternatives to a one-on-one learning relationship.
- Mentoring Diversity: Serving a diverse patient population calls for diverse leadership.

BOOKS, ARTICLES, AND WEB SITES ADDRESSING MENTORING

A Mentor’s Companion, by Larry Ambrose
Phone: (800) 648-0543; info@paamentoring.com

This is a book for mentors that reaches a nearly ideal balance between the conceptual and the applied. It examines the “different hats” one may wear as a mentor as situations arise and change: ally, catalyst, strategist, etc. Especially valuable is the section on high-gain questions and the examples of investigative questions, discovery questions, and empowering questions. Another valuable component is the advice on giving feedback. A related resource, “The Mentoring Field Guide,” also from Perrone-Ambrose, presents these important subjects in a workbook form.

Managers as Mentors, by Chip R. Bell
Phone: (415) 288-0260; www bkconnection.com

Chip Bell’s book is distinct in its strong emphasis on the learning that can occur in effective mentoring partnerships. It combines story-illustrating with concepts to provide practical advice. It also includes some quick assessments whose results will give mentors insights to their interaction style and their ability to pose inquiries.
Section III: Resources for Mentors and Proteges

*Effective Mentoring*, by Norman H. Cohen, Ph.D.
HRD Press, Amherst, MA: 1999
Phone: (800) 822-2801; www/hrdpress.com

Norman Cohen has produced a handbook for mentoring that features a model with six dimensions of mentoring—the relationship, informative, facilitative, confrontative, mentor model, and protege (employee) vision dimensions—and the expert mentoring behaviors associated with each. It contains a useful inventory of likely-to-arise situations and offers a right way to deal with them and the pitfalls to avoid. Although it sometimes stresses an “inside the same organization” perspective, the material easily translates into use for Leadership Mentoring Network partnerships.

*The Mentee's Guide To Mentoring*, by Norman H. Cohen, Ph.D.
HRD Press, Amherst, MA: 1999
Phone: (800) 822-2801; www/hrdpress.com

This book is the protege’s complement to *Effective Mentoring*. After covering some conceptual and mechanical aspects of getting a mentoring program or relationship going, Dr. Cohen delves into how proteges can synchronize the response to expected mentor behavior across the six dimensions of Cohen’s mentoring model.


This article examines how a new workplace environment has created new challenges that aspiring executives must meet if they are to learn, grow, and flourish. The authors introduce the concepts of an intelligent network of mentors and intelligent careers. The latter requires three career competencies: knowing why (our beliefs and identities), knowing how (skills), and knowing whom (networks and relationships). The article also discusses the steps necessary for building intelligent mentor networks. The endnotes of this scholarly piece provide a treasure trove of references on mentoring and careers.

“The Art of Mentoring: Lead, Follow, and Get out of the Way”

This recorded presentation by Shirley Peddy, Ph.D., is from ACHE’s 2001 Congress on Healthcare Management. It is posted on [ache.org](http://ache.org) in the Career Resource Center section in the Affiliates Only Area under “Benefits of Mentoring.” You’ll learn the four steps of mentoring and ways organizations can start a mentoring program, as well as tips and techniques for mentors and proteges. It is based on Dr. Peddy’s book of the same name published by Bullion Books, Houston, in 1998. Phone: (800) 705-9343; [www.bullionbooks.com](http://www.bullionbooks.com).
MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership is an advocate for the expansion of mentoring and a resource for mentors and mentoring initiatives nationwide. By visiting their Web site, you can access a plethora of information including online training programs to improve as a mentor. Should you be so motivated, the Web site also offers advice and resources on how to start mentoring programs for faith communities, schools, and workplaces. You can access their Web site at www.mentoring.org.

WOMEN Unlimited
www.women-unlimited.com

WOMEN Unlimited provides cross-industry, fully integrated leadership development programs. As part of its programming, WOMEN Unlimited offers matrix mentoring, a multi-faceted approach in which program participants—representing diverse occupations, organizations, skills, and life experiences—engage in team mentoring with equally diverse peers and senior-level male and female mentors from organizations other than their own. The developmental needs of the proteges and the expertise of the peers and external mentors shape the formation of the mentor teams. The teams benchmark best practices, broaden business perspectives, and discuss the issues and challenges of professional development.
SECTION IV:

*Healthcare Executive*

*Magazine Columns*
COLUMNS FOR
MENTORS
AND PROTEGES
Long-Distance Mentoring

Make the most of mentoring when you can’t meet in person.

Do you have to be face-to-face to have a good mentoring relationship? One might think so. But the fact is, it’s not always possible. These days, healthcare organizations are characterized by multiple locations, sometimes widely dispersed. Consequently, the right mentor for a person at a particular stage in his or her career may not necessarily be located nearby. If mentoring is to continue as a viable resource for those in healthcare management, matching mentoring pairs across locations should be an option. That being said, with a little preparation and guidance, a long-distance mentoring relationship can work, and work well.

Linking Up

Whether you are a mentor or a protege, as you begin any mentoring relationship, understand that the planning and preparation you and your mentoring partner carry out is crucial to its success. Setting up a strong distance relationship begins at your first meeting. Ideally, this “link-up meeting” should be held face-to-face, if possible. Meeting in person helps you get to know each other more quickly and accelerates trust building that will serve you well as you work in separate locations. If meeting in person is not possible, your first meeting can be conducted by telephone following some guidelines. During this link-up meeting, the protege should discuss his or her learning goals and areas for development, and both partners should talk about their expectations for the relationship and each other.

Preparing for the Meeting

In a long-distance mentoring relationship, most of your conversations will take place via telephone. To make the most of these conversations, both the mentor and the protege should be prepared. Before the first phone meeting, the mentor should review the protege’s learning goals established in the link-up meeting. Also, time expectations and the meeting agenda should be set. This information can be communicated through e-mail or fax. One of the key agenda items for the first meeting is for the mentoring partners to work together to plan the protege’s activities for the first two months. These activities should help the protege achieve his or her goals.

Running a Phone Meeting

To run a productive phone meeting, a clear structure for beginning the mentoring session and for following through on each agenda item is necessary. Following is an example of how a phone meeting might proceed.

1. To kick off a phone session, the mentor must review the protege’s last assignment or planned activity. What did the protege accomplish? Is there something new that the protege tried that was successful? What challenges did the protege overcome and what challenges are still to be met? What did the protege learn about him/herself?

2. Next, the mentor and protege together should review what the protege has learned from activities since the last meeting. What actions worked well? What changes should the protege make in the future? How can the mentor help?

3. Finally, the partners should plan activities to complete before the next meeting. The protege is responsible for identifying the next learning opportunity, and together the mentoring partners should decide on an appropriate activity or assignment. Before the meeting has ended, the partners should also decide on a date when the protege must provide an update on the assignment.

Using E-mail Effectively

While sending e-mail may be quick and easy, it shouldn’t be the main form of communication in a mentoring relationship. E-mail is best for:

- Suggesting or requesting meetings with your partner
- Scheduling meetings and verifying plans
- Posing non-time-urgent questions to the mentor
- Reviewing conclusions drawn from experience if writing is the best way to address a particular issue
• Maintaining a sense of contact when one or both partners are finding it difficult to schedule mutual time

E-mail is not appropriate for:

• Giving critical feedback

• Exchanging impressions on sensitive issues

• Communicating an issue that can be “read” in more ways than one. Feelings can be hurt without in-the-moment response and resolution.

• Giving impressions of each other’s behavior or discussing behavior of or impressions about a third party

The Communication Challenge

While the content of a distance mentoring meeting and a face-to-face meeting are the same, distance mentoring presents a special challenge, complicated by the inability of the partners to observe each other’s reactions. Nonverbal cues will be much less obvious; careful listening to tone and volume of voice is crucial. With conscious effort, mentoring partners can develop the ability to understand the subtle signs of feelings, as well as more objective data.

Gaining a sense of the protege’s underlying feelings over the phone is a unique challenge for the mentor. It is equally difficult for the protege to discern a mentor’s empathy. Therefore, both partners must take care to verbally signal their understanding of what the other is communicating. Acknowledging an understanding of the person’s message by nodding just won’t do.

Following are some communication hints for both mentors and proteges:

Listen for nonverbals. Sometimes you can tell how people feel not by what they say but by how they say it. Keep your ear tuned for a rising or lowering of voice; a change in tone; silence; a quickening or slowing of speaking pace; and sighs, pauses, and similar expressions.

Describe behavior. Tell your partner what you are “hearing” or “sensing” in that person’s expression. Check on feelings by asking your partner how he or she feels about a certain issue.

Push for specifics. Ask that your partner express thoughts and opinions clearly and with focus.

Summarize agreements. Don’t let the meeting close without summarizing what you feel has been agreed to, testing the accuracy of your perception.

Distance mentoring will succeed as mentors and proteges think through what they want from a partnership and use some commonsense guidelines to manage the relationship. Every new distance mentoring pair that is successful adds immeasurably to the organization’s ability to satisfy the mentoring needs of all. ▲


Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
Passing on the Mentoring Torch

Former proteges can make ideal mentors.

If you have been a protege, that experience has undoubtedly been invaluable to your personal and professional development. Now that your role as a protege has come to end, it’s time to pass on the mentoring torch. Those in the healthcare management field have a responsibility to mentor others entering the field as well as mid-careerists preparing to lead the healthcare system of tomorrow. As a former protege, you are an ideal person to become a mentor—or at least become an advocate for creating or sustaining a mentoring program in your organization. By sharing your wisdom, insights, and experiences, you can give back to the profession and at the same time derive the personal satisfaction that comes from helping others realize their potential.

Building on a Good Thing
Promoting mentoring is not relegated only to the human resources department nor is it the sole responsibility of past mentors. Given your learning experience as a protege, you are an ideal person to become a mentor—or at least become an advocate for creating or sustaining a mentoring program in your organization. By sharing your wisdom, insights, and experiences, you can give back to the profession and at the same time derive the personal satisfaction that comes from helping others realize their potential.

Having been a protege, not only will you be effective in encouraging others to take part in a learning relationship but you can reap many benefits by becoming a mentor yourself. Being a mentor can help enhance such skills as coaching and leadership, making you more of an asset to your organization. Your role as a mentor can also contribute to the success of your organization by helping to develop and retain talent. Furthermore, through mentoring you can help carry on your organization’s legacy by passing on its values and mission to your protege.

Transitioning from Protege to Mentor
Before committing to a mentoring relationship, consider the kind of mentor you want to be. Think about what you can personally offer a protege in terms of your knowledge and insight, and what you believe is important for that person to learn about the organization and the healthcare field. Be cautious about mirroring your former mentor’s methods. While there may have been many effective tactics and techniques your mentor used when you were a protege, everyone has a different learning style and different developmental goals; what worked for you and your former mentor may not work for you and your new protege.

No matter your mentoring style and goals, there are some essential steps to getting the relationship off to the right start. When you meet with your protege for the first time:

1. Design the relationship by getting to know each other. Both you and your protege should share your motivation for entering into a mentoring relationship, your backgrounds, your greatest learnings, your communication styles, and your expectations of each other.

2. Create focus for your protege. Have your protege create specific professional development objectives. Once the objectives are in place, you have a better chance of creating learning experiences that have purpose. Next, commit to a duration for your mentoring relationship such as 6, 8, or 12 months. Also, set up the logistics of the relationship including the frequency of meetings and intermittent communications to check on progress toward your protege’s professional development objectives.

Finally, once you become a mentor, spread the word. Letting others know about your new role is a great way to promote mentoring in your organization. It may even pique the interest of colleagues who have considered becoming a mentor. Most important, you’ll demonstrate to others your commitment to advancing learning in the healthcare management field.

Paula Moscinski is a senior consultant at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
COLUMNS FOR MENTORS
To be successful in any field, aspiring leaders require role models and guidance. This is especially true in healthcare as an increasing number of its managers opt for work outside of the traditional healthcare setting or leave to start careers in different fields. At some point during your career, you may have considered becoming a mentor but dismissed the idea, thinking it would not be worth the time and energy you put into it. It is time to rethink your decision. Being a mentor is more important than ever—and you will get more out of the relationship than you think.

What is a mentor?
A mentor affects the professional life of a protege by fostering insight, identifying needed knowledge, and expanding growth opportunities. This assistance supplements the coaching an individual already receives from his or her supervisor. Traditionally, the mentoring relationship consists of an experienced executive providing guidance and advice to an associate with less experience. The associate is looking to move up the career ladder, usually by learning from someone who is successful and well respected.

Why become a mentor?
Mentoring gives you the extraordinary opportunity to facilitate a protege’s personal and professional growth by sharing knowledge you learned through years of experience. While the primary intent of your mentoring role is to challenge the protege to think in new and different ways, the protege is not the only one who gains from the arrangement. As a mentor, there are various ways you can benefit as well.

- Enhance your skills. The experience you gain by mentoring someone can facilitate your own professional growth, making you more of an asset to your organization. Mentoring allows you to strengthen your coaching and leadership skills by working with individuals from different backgrounds and with different personality types. For example, as a mentor you can help bridge the gap between generations that have varying workplace values and styles, such as Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. Your ability to manage people different from you is a valuable skill, especially as the workplace continues to grow more diverse. Besides enhancing your skills, mentoring can improve your performance. One of your roles as a mentor is to set a good example for your protege. Knowing that you are responsible for providing appropriate and accurate guidance to him or her motivates you to work harder. Furthermore, mentoring can give you a fresh perspective on your performance.

One of my healthcare clients discovered that her mentoring experience gave her new insight into her job. “My protege always asked ‘Why?’—why do we do things a certain way and why do I think and act the way I do,” she said. “The questions helped me to take a critical look at how I was leading and what areas I needed to adjust for improvement.”

- Develop and retain talent in your organization. Your role as a mentor can contribute to the success of your entire organization. As a healthcare manager, you know the importance of developing and retaining good employees. By priming promising employees to become top-performing executives and by providing them with the challenges, support, and commitment needed to keep them in your organization, your mentoring efforts effectively address issues of succession planning and retention. For example, I worked with an organization that continually hired outside of the organization whenever management positions were available. The practice was costly for the organization as well as risky since a cultural fit between the new employee and the organization was not guaranteed. Establishing a mentoring program helped them to develop talent within the organization and gave them the confidence to promote from within. In fact, since they established the mentoring program, internal hires increased from 11 percent to 50 percent.
• Create a legacy. By becoming a mentor, you create a legacy that has a lasting impact on your protege and the healthcare field. Not only will you gain the satisfaction of helping to develop future management talent, the knowledge you foster in your protege can inspire new ideas for generations to come. Furthermore, through mentoring, you can help carry on your organization’s legacy by passing on its values and mission to your protege. As one nurse executive I worked with said, “It’s up to us as leaders to show how our organization’s cultural expectations affect our decisions in budgets, patient care, and leadership. Without mentoring, our mission could get lost.”

Although mentoring can be a truly rewarding experience, becoming a mentor is a big decision and one that should not to be taken lightly. The benefits to you, your organization, and the healthcare field, however, are well worth your effort.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, ACHE has a number of resources to help you get started. The Leadership Mentoring Network can help match you with a protege who has similar career interests. For more information, call ACHE’s Healthcare Executive Career Resource Center at (312) 424-9446 or complete the online application in the Career Resource Center in the Affiliates Only Area of ache.org. A mentoring relationship can also serve as your project for advancement to Fellow status in ACHE. For information on the Fellow project mentoring option, call the Division of Membership at (312) 424-9386.

L. Rose Hollister is a principal at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures. She can be reached at rhollister@paamentoring.com.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
How to Get Started

Follow these tips to establish a successful mentoring relationship.

Larry Ambrose

So you’ve decided to become a mentor. You are about to embark on a truly rewarding experience that benefits you, your protege, and the healthcare field. Having made the decision to seek a mentoring relationship, you are probably wondering what to do next.

Knowing the right steps to take early on can get your mentoring relationship moving in the appropriate direction. With that in mind, following are a few tips for getting started:

Understand the difference between mentoring and managing.
Understanding what’s involved in your role as a mentor—and how it differs from your role as a manager—is key to providing your protege with a meaningful mentoring experience. Your role as a manager and as a mentor may seem very similar. In both roles you serve as a combination of coach, confidant, and sounding board to someone. However, as a mentor, you have to be prepared to take on a broader, more personal relationship than the one you have established with your employees. The main difference between managing and mentoring is mostly a matter of intensity and direction. Managers are concerned with their employees’ performances, making sure they complete tasks accurately, on time, and within budget. As a mentor, your purpose is to provide your protege with perspective and questions that encourage learning and to challenge the individual to think in new and creative ways. And unlike the manager/employee relationship, the mentor/protege relationship extends beyond the typical workday or a traditional workplace role.

Know what you can offer.
Before you begin as a mentor, you’ll need to clarify what type of mentoring relationship interests you. For example, you may be interested in mentoring someone who is new to the healthcare field. Or maybe you would like to help an employee in your organization who shows great promise as a leader but could use a little guidance. Understanding what you have to offer as a mentor will help you choose the type of mentoring relationship you want. Do you have special knowledge and skills specific to your job? If so, you may want to consider mentoring someone who is on the same career track as you. Think about the things you know and how you learned them. One of your biggest roles as a mentor is to bring added value by sharing significant lessons learned from personal experience.

Select a protege.
Once you have decided what type of person you would like to mentor and what you have to offer, you can begin the selection process. The best proteges are individuals who are excited about learning and leading their own development. When choosing a protege, look for someone who catches your attention—someone who shows interest, energy, and capability. If you haven’t noticed anyone with such attributes, ask your colleagues. Your human resource or training and development department may know of people within your organization who have expressed interest in becoming a protege. You can also ask fellow managers if they have any staff members who have expressed interest in having a mentor. Your organization may even have a mentoring program that can pair you with a protege based on your skills and knowledge and your protege’s goals. Of course, you don’t have to mentor someone within your organization. Attending meetings and events hosted by your professional association is an excellent way to meet a potential protege.

You may be in a situation where an individual has approached you for mentoring guidance. If that is the case, you’ll want to have a conversation with that person about his or her accomplishments, commitment, and goals. You will also want to share what mentoring means to you and find out what the individual perceives it to mean. This approach can help you agree on what you both want to accomplish.

Make an offer.
Once you’ve found someone you are interested in mentoring, you’ll need to approach that individual with an offer. Let the potential protege know what you have noticed in him or her and that you would like to offer your mentoring assistance. Be clear that you are not suggesting a deficiency on
the part of the potential protege—but hoping to offer added value. Don’t be surprised by the reaction. The individual may feel honored and privileged that you offered; or defensive and skeptical, wondering what your ulterior motives are. Taking part in a mentoring relationship is a big decision for anyone, so give your potential protege plenty of time to think it over. Make yourself available to answer questions he or she will undoubtedly have about you and what you have to offer.

When you both have agreed to move forward with the mentoring relationship, both of you will need to talk to your protege’s manager. Let the manager know what role you wish to play in your protege’s development and ask for some guidance and support.

**Prepare for the first meeting.**
One of the objectives of your first meeting should be to establish goals for the mentoring relationship. Before your first formal meeting, ask your protege to come prepared with answers to questions such as: What do you expect from a mentor? What are your development goals for the year? Where do you see yourself in three years? As a mentor, you should be prepared to share your expectations and goals as well. A discussion about what you both hope to accomplish and gain will give your relationship direction.

Also during the first meeting, decide how often you will meet and whether you will communicate in person or via email or telephone. Make sure you emphasize that scheduled meetings need not be the only time you communicate with each other. Let your protege know that you are accessible to hear questions, thoughts, and concerns at any reason-

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Larry Ambrose is a managing partner at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures. He is author of the book A Mentor’s Companion.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
Developing the Mentor/Protege Relationship

An open and honest relationship is key for powerful mentoring.

During the course of the mentoring relationship, you and your protege can expect to go through three phases. First, if you are both new to mentoring, you will experience a period of anxiety and uncertainty, not knowing what to expect from the relationship. Next is the honeymoon phase, during which you and your protege enjoy the excitement of endless possibilities and new opportunities. The final phase is about testing the limits of the relationship. In this phase, both you and your protege will feel tempted to push the boundaries to see how candid and straightforward you can be in the mentoring relationship. As a mentor, there are some things you can do to move beyond these expected phases and into a deeper, more comfortable relationship with your protege.

Create a safe environment.
Provide an environment where your protege can feel free to be honest. The key to creating such an environment is to openly acknowledge your own struggles. By disclosing something personal about yourself—even your failures—you take the initial step toward creating trust. Your own honesty and vulnerability will help your protege open up and share. Emphasize that the information shared between you will remain in the strictest confidence.

Listen without judgment.
While sharing your own experiences is vital to the mentoring relationship, you must also learn when to set your thoughts aside and focus on what your protege has to say. Learn to listen without an agenda by resisting the temptation to make a point, teach a lesson, or offer some caution. When you abandon trying to come up with all the answers, your protege will begin to feel heard and valued.

Focus on learning.
As a mentor, you can gain knowledge from your protege and the mentoring experience by bringing a learning attitude to the relationship. Let your protege know that you may not have all the answers and that you can learn from each other. If your protege sees you as a fellow learner, there is a greater potential for a partnership. Find out what your protege can teach you that you would like to learn. Or together, investigate an area you both would like to learn more about.

Agree on objectives, not approaches.
A true mentoring mind-set focuses on the learning objective, not the process. Your role as a mentor is to open up possibilities for your protege, not to provide proven techniques for a given list of problems. It is important to adopt a style in which you offer options to your protege as a way to encourage him or her to try new approaches. Telling your protege what to do or how to do it can deprive him or her of a valuable learning opportunity.

Appreciate your differences.
You and your protege have entered the mentoring relationship with different experiences and different points of view. Recognize those differences while respecting your common needs and objectives. And remember, the more differences between you and your protege, the more learning that occurs for you both.

By establishing a deeper mentoring relationship, you expand the depth and breadth of your protege’s growth as well as your own. To sustain the energy in your relationship, continue to share experiences, remain interested in each other, and celebrate one another’s successes.

Beverly Biernat DeJovine is a principal and practice leader and Elaine Robbins Harris is a senior consultant at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543

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Moving from Telling to Empowering

Letting your protege struggle can be the best lesson of all.

As a healthcare leader, you have probably achieved success based on your accomplishments as an individual. For instance, your ability to solve problems and make decisions may have helped you to earn a promotion. However, those same competencies can work against you in your mentoring relationship. As a mentor, your role is not to solve your protege’s problems—it is to facilitate that individual’s problem-solving efforts. This requires that you resist the temptation to tell your protege what do and instead allow the individual to think through problems and come up with solutions independently. Following is an approach you can use to develop your protege’s problem-solving skills that will foster independence and provide greater growth opportunities.

Focus on the person, not the problem.
Like most mentors, you probably feel protective of your protege. Consequently, when your protege approaches you with a problem, your first instinct is to come to the rescue with a solution. However, by focusing on solving your protege’s problems, you deny the individual a valuable learning opportunity. Concentrate instead on your protege’s development. By really listening to your protege explain a problem, you’ll begin to understand the individual’s strengths, weaknesses, and fears about the situation. From this, you’ll gain insight into which areas your protege needs to develop to effectively deal with similar issues in the future.

Offer guidance, not solutions.
Encouraging your protege to think independently doesn’t mean you can’t offer any direction. But before you do, let your protege think through the problem and share the thought processes and problem-solving techniques. This method lets you know that your protege has made an effort to solve the problem independently. When you do make a suggestion, instead of using the words “you should,” share a similar experience you may have had and relay to your protege your approach to solving the problem. Then ask your protege how that approach might work in his or her situation. Another way to offer guidance without providing answers is to play the role of devil’s advocate. This approach helps your protege see the consequences of his or her decisions. The point is, the more you encourage the protege to develop solutions, the greater the growth and empowerment that will occur.

Know when to give advice.
While it’s best to have your protege come up with solutions, there will be times when that individual requires your advice on how to handle an issue. How you choose to deal with your protege in such situations will affect the pace of the individual’s development. The more you play the role of teller, the more dependent your protege will be on you for answers. At the same time, offering too little information can make your protege feel abandoned or anxious. There is no right way to behave in every situation, but what is appropriate in each mentor/protege interaction is that you make a conscious choice regarding what will be best for your protege’s development. For example, if your protege is new and has limited experience and knowledge, that individual is likely to benefit more from your recommendations. But as your protege begins to grow and develop more confidence, you’ll want to provide a range of options on how to handle a specific situation and let the individual decide the best course of action to take.

Provide follow-up.
Following up with your protege to discuss the outcome of the situation is key to helping the individual derive learning from the experience. The follow-up should go beyond whether your protege solved the problem. It’s important to find out what the individual has learned from the situation and the process. When discussing the outcome, ask your protege: What about your approach worked and what would you do differently in the same situation? What did you learn from this experience that would be useful in other situations? What did you learn about yourself in the process? Your protege’s answers will give you an opportunity to evaluate his or her progress by revealing areas in which the individual demonstrated learning.
Throughout your mentoring relationship, your protege will look to you for direction. As a mentor, your role is to offer that guidance; however, your protege shouldn't become so dependent on you that he or she cannot function alone. By allowing your protege to make decisions—and mistakes—you create an opportunity for lifelong learning.

*Jim Perrone is a founder and managing partner of Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.*

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
Facilitating Authenticity

Open communication about tough issues can deepen your relationship.

The learning your protege takes away from the mentoring experience hinges on your ability to be forthright in your communication. Avoiding conversations about difficult issues because it makes you uncomfortable will block progress in your mentoring relationship. At the same time, an approach that is too aggressive may make your protege defensive and closed off to helpful feedback. Following are appropriate ways to engage in authentic discussion with your protege that will allow your relationship to grow and more learning to occur.

Set the stage. Let your protege know that sometimes you will have to discuss some uncomfortable issues and that such frank conversations will only deepen the relationship. If your protege knows to expect these types of discussions, then that person is less likely to take your criticisms personally and will be more open to learning. Tell your protege that you are practicing to be more authentic and encourage the individual to do so as well.

Risk discomfort. Sometimes mentors spend more time speaking about superficial matters than addressing significant underlying issues in their relationships because they don’t want to hurt their protege’s feelings. Do not let concern about your protege’s reactions inhibit you from being straightforward. If your communication is not honest, integrity is lost and the relationship suffers. Look beyond the momentary discomfort to see how the truth will bring deeper meaning to your mentoring relationship.

If your communication is not honest, integrity is lost and the relationship suffers.

Be mindful of how your message comes across. Once you have worked up the courage to address a difficult matter with your protege, pay attention to how you deliver the message. Your body language and tone of voice say more to your protege than your actual words. While you may think you are being up front and helpful in your discussions, your protege may think you are being rude and want to discontinue what could be a productive conversation. Practice delivering constructive feedback by rehearsing what you will say with an outside party. You will get a better sense of how you sound and can assess whether your communication will come across as you intend it to. Also, be careful not to send mixed signals through your body language. For example, your protege might perceive you to be angry because you have a frown on your face during your conversation or your arms are folded in front of you. You may not be angry at all, but simply concentrating on what your protege is saying.

Focus on the impact. In any discussion, particularly one where you will be offering criticism, it is important to clarify that you are sharing your perspective rather than being judgmental. When communicating with your protege about a performance issue, let the individual know how his or her actions affect you. For example, if you want to confront your protege about always being late for your meetings, communicate how that consistent tardiness makes you feel. You might say, “I’m frustrated that our meetings are not starting on time. My reason for telling you this is because I value this relationship and our time together and I want us to maintain a positive working relationship.” Your protege is likely to get the message about the importance of being on time without feeling scolded.
Set a good example. Open and honest communication can go far in helping your protege learn and grow professionally and personally. However, if you don’t practice what you preach, your communication becomes less powerful. For example, expressing your concern about your protege’s tardiness will have little impact on the person if you are often late to meetings yourself. Be a model of authenticity by consistently aligning your actions with your values and intentions.

Being authentic in your mentoring relationship may not come easy at first. However, with practice you will be able to develop the communication skills that are essential to building a good relationship with and motivating peak performance from your protege. ▲

Carl Sutter is a senior associate and L. Rose Hollister is a principal at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
Leadership in Mentoring

Transitioning the Mentoring Relationship

Learn when to renew or end your partnership.

In most formal mentoring programs, the mentoring relationship is created for some minimum period of time. However, when that time has expired, the mentoring relationship doesn’t have to end. Even if your relationship was formed without the aid of a formal program, there comes a time when the partnership reaches a turning point. For some, the mentoring relationship simply fades out, while others limp along, both partners reluctant to explicitly end or reshape an ineffective relationship. Such change may mean that the relationship is ending—or should end. Or it may mean that it can continue, but in a different context. Following are tips to identify when your relationship should change direction or end as well as tips to help you handle the transition.

Recognize the signs
Part of your role as a mentor is to recognize the signs that indicate your relationship may be reaching a transitional point. For example, is your protege contacting you less often? Exhibiting less openness in communications? Expressing less appreciation for your input? Subtly indicating that he or she can get help for a growing number of issues elsewhere? If so, these signs may indicate your relationship is ready for a change.

As a mentor, not only must you be aware of the signs, you must take responsibility for confronting the transition issue. Do not approach the issue with defensiveness; understand that the needs of your protege may have changed. Let your protege know what you are noticing and indicate a nonjudgmental desire to deal with differences in the relationship.

Assess your relationship
The best way for you and your protege to end, renew, or revive your mentoring relationship is to do it consciously, intentionally, and openly to ensure that both of you experience fairness. First, you and your protege should assess your individual experiences in the relationship. Second, meet to share those assessments and give each other feedback on how the relationship has progressed and whether it has met your expectations as well as your protege’s.

Ask your protege to share current mentoring needs. For example, is your protege interested in developing technical, organizational, leadership, or managerial skills? Does he or she wish to take part in a peer mentoring or a cross-cultural mentoring relationship? You and your protege should jointly decide how to meet new needs. One option is to continue the relationship, but with a different focus. Your protege may be unaware that you have skills and knowledge that are relevant to the new direction that individual is headed. However, if your protege’s needs are no longer ones you can meet, you’ll need to refer that person to others who can help.

End the partnership
Your assessment of the relationship may result in a decision to end the partnership. Letting go is rarely comfortable, but it is necessary if your protege is to flourish and continue to grow without you. Whether your protege is moving on to a new mentor or is ready to go it alone, you need to give the relationship some closure. To do this, plan a celebration to mark the occasion. The celebration does not have to be elaborate; just meeting for coffee or lunch is appropriate. This last meeting is a good time to share stories and reflect on the relationship. Reflection allows you to examine what you both learned and accomplished during the mentoring process. The final meeting is also a chance for your protege to express appreciation for your guidance and for you to wish your protege well in his or her future endeavors.

Finally, it is appropriate to remain in touch with your protege once the relationship is over; however, resist the temptation to follow up with the individual right away. Your protege needs time to establish independence. In the meantime, document your own mentoring experience so you have a reference for your next mentoring relationship.

Larry Ambrose is a managing partner at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
COLUMNS FOR PROTEGES
Partnership for Success

Learn how having a mentor can help you develop personally and professionally.

Beverly Biernat DeJovine

As you confront today’s increasingly complex and uncertain healthcare environment, having a mentor is more important than ever before. Whether you are new to the healthcare field or a mid-career professional, the benefits of a being a protege are numerous. By having a mentor, you can:

**Broaden your opportunities.** Besides helping you develop important professional connections and expanding your network of contacts, a mentor can expose you to new opportunities. For example, if your mentor is a high-level executive, you may be placed in environments and confronted with situations that you may not have been until later in your career. Furthermore, the visibility you get from working with a high-level executive can affect how others see you and may influence future opportunities.

**Benefit from proven political insight.** A mentor can provide you with valuable information about the people, processes, and culture of your organization. By sharing knowledge about the preferences and attitudes of those you work with as well as the norms and values of your profession, your mentor can set you up for success. For example, if you are preparing a proposal for your organization’s executive team, your mentor can advise you on the concerns and priorities of the team’s key players so you can tailor your presentation to target their interests.

**Add perspective and depth to decision making.** Throughout your career you will be faced with many decisions. Limited by time and lack of pertinent information, how do you know if the decisions you make will be the best ones? A mentor is likely to have already experienced similar decision-making processes and can help by providing a different perspective—a fresh, objective, outsider’s viewpoint backed by expertise and experience. This broader perspective can help you escape “silo thinking” by bringing forth a dimension to the issue that you had not considered, thus allowing you to make more informed decisions.

**See yourself as others may see you.** We all have blind spots when it comes to our own performance and personal conduct. Being unaware of how your actions affect others can keep you from accomplishing your goals. For example, your colleagues will certainly notice your tendency to interrupt them while they are speaking, but will unlikely approach you about your bad habit. If ignored, your behavior could become a detriment to your career and your relationships. A mentor, however, has a personal interest in your development and is in a unique position to notice and help you correct your bad habits before they affect others.

Further develop and refine ideas. A mentor can serve as an excellent sounding board for your ideas. The individual can offer knowledge and experience to help you think through and shape your ideas as well as provide the encouragement you need to take action. Furthermore, a mentor may be able to connect you with the right people to help you get your ideas off the ground.

**The Misconceptions of Mentoring**

Mentors can do many things for you and your career; however, there are some things you should not expect from your mentor. The role of a mentor is:

- **Not to find you a new job.** A mentor can help you grow so that you are ready take on new roles on your own.
- **Not to tell you what to do.** Your mentor’s role is to help guide your decisions, not make them for you.
- **Not to coddle you.** The most effective mentors push you out of your comfort zone and encourage you to take risks.

While having a mentor can enhance your development, a mentor alone will not guarantee you success—you have to do your part as well. You can make the most of a mentoring relationship by being curious, honest with yourself, and open to learning.

Beverly Biernat DeJovine is a principal and practice leader at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543

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Choosing a Mentor

A little preparation goes a long way when establishing a mentoring partnership.

Do you want a mentor? Do you need a mentor? If you answered “yes” to these questions and if you have seriously thought about seeking a mentor, chances are you will benefit from the mentoring experience. But before you begin your search for the ideal mentor, there are a number of issues you need to consider. Following is advice to help you prepare for a successful mentoring relationship.

Understanding your mentoring needs
Before approaching a potential mentor, you need to identify what you hope to gain from a mentoring relationship and what type of a mentor is best for helping you meet your objectives. Start by identifying your short-term career goals. Where do you see yourself in the next year or two? What knowledge, skills, and abilities do you need to get there? What key experiences could a mentor provide that would benefit you most? Answers to these questions will help you identify the type of mentor that is right for you. For example, depending on your goals, you may want to seek a high-ranking executive whose career path you would like to learn from. Or you may want a mentor closer to your level of experience, but who you feel could help you in very specific areas of growth and knowledge.

Choosing a mentor who is right for you
Besides being able to meet your developmental needs, the best mentors are people who are excited about learning and who are continuing their own development. Also, good mentors will achieve a sense of personal satisfaction from seeing others succeed and have a desire to be active participants in others’ learning and growth. You’ll want to seek out someone who possesses such traits and who also sets high standards for his or her work and can set an example for you. If no potential mentors readily come to mind, ask your colleagues or managers if they know of anyone they think would make a good mentor for you. Your organization may have a mentoring program that can pair you with a mentor based on your goals and the mentor’s knowledge and skills. You can also find potential mentors outside your organization by attending meetings and events hosted by your professional association.

Preparing for the first meeting
One of your biggest responsibilities as a protege is to make sure you are getting what you need from your mentor. Remember, in a mentoring relationship, you must be the driver. Your first meeting is the perfect time to get your relationship moving in the right direction. To prepare for this meeting, consider the following questions:

• What should your mentor know about you in order to work most successfully with you?
• How do you learn best—by reading, observing, doing, or listening?
• What are your desired outcomes for the mentoring relationship?

• What do you expect from your mentor?

• How will you know if the relationship is working?

Likewise, ask your mentor to come prepared with answers to questions such as:

• What do you expect from me as your protege?

• What do you think will be able to help me most?

• How do you like to work with people you are teaching and developing?

• What do you want to gain from this partnership?

The answers to these questions will help you establish goals and objectives for the mentoring relationship. Finding the right mentor can greatly enhance your personal and professional development. Taking the time to think about your career goals, developmental needs, and type of mentor you want early on will help you get the most out of your relationship. ▲

Larry Ambrose is a managing partner at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures. He is author of the book A Mentor’s Companion.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
Take Charge of Your Mentoring Experience

Proteges benefit when they lead the mentoring relationship.

As a protege, you realize the value of a mentor in helping you develop your career. A mentor can offer you expertise, experience, and guidance; however, it’s up to you to create the desired outcome of your mentoring experience. Imagine yourself at the helm of a boat—you are the captain, and your mentor is holding the rudder, steering the ship in the direction you want it to go. Following are ways to help you take charge and get the most out of your mentoring experience.

**Set the Course**

To get what you need from the mentoring experience, begin by asking yourself:

- What opportunities can my mentoring experience give me?
- What do I want to take away from this experience?
- What will be different for me as a result of this experience?

Answering these questions will help you construct the big picture of what you want to gain so you can establish the focus and direction of your mentoring experience. Once you understand what it is you wish to get out of the relationship, you must create development objectives. What is it that you want to get better at, learn more of, gain experience in? To help you determine your objectives, consider the following:

- **What image** do you wish to project in the organization?
- **What intellectual capital** do you possess that you want the organization to tap into? What do you want to learn from the organization?
- **What talents** do you want to utilize during your mentoring experience that you may not be able to use in your current position?
- **What is your approach** to solving problems, tackling projects, and working with people? Where do you need to modify your approach?

Your development objectives serve as a blueprint for you and your mentor as well as a strategic approach to your professional development.

**Move the Relationship Forward**

Your responsibilities as a protege do not end with the creation of your development objectives; you need to keep the relationship moving forward. The focus should be on the successful achievement of your goals. Therefore, you must play an active role in creating an effective mentoring relationship by taking on the following responsibilities:

- Initiate periodic meetings with your mentor and prepare an agenda.
- Come to mentoring meetings ready to share positive experiences that moved you closer to achieving your goals as well as experiences that set you back.
- Solicit feedback from your mentor on what he or she is observing in you.
- With your mentor, assess your progress, identify setbacks, and determine next steps.

Much of what you get out of your mentoring experience depends on your willingness to learn, to be open and honest, and to ask for what you need. If what you’re getting from the relationship is not helping you to meet your objectives, your mentor needs to know so the appropriate adjustments can be made.

Finally, making the most of your mentoring experience means putting your accent on the relationship. Identify the distinguishing features for your mentoring relationship and work with your mentor to cultivate them. For example, do you want the relationship to encourage open and frank conversations, promote out-of-the-box thinking, or provide a climate in which to generate new perspectives? Also, share with your mentor how you best learn and what you bring to the mentoring experience in terms of your commitment to make a contribution to the organization and to your professional growth.

Paula Moscinski is a senior consultant at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
The Power of Feedback

Providing constructive criticism can enhance the effectiveness of your relationship.

As a protege, it is up to you to give your mentor feedback on how to best meet your developmental needs and objectives. But before offering feedback, you need to take inventory of your mentoring experience and your progress, and identify what you need from your mentor to help you move forward. This process will assist you in clearly defining the areas in which your mentor is doing well and where he or she can do better, and it will also help you offer feedback that is constructive.

Take Inventory
There are a number of questions you can ask yourself that will help you assess your mentor and your progress, including:

- Has my mentor devoted the necessary time, energy, and effort to our partnership?
- How would I rate the level of trust in our relationship?
- Does my mentor give me developmental feedback in a helpful manner?
- What impact has the mentoring relationship had on my job, my skills, and my overall development?

Answers to such questions will help you clarify your level of satisfaction with your mentoring experience and prepare you for giving useful feedback to your mentor.

Give Feedback
Like many proteges, you may find it difficult to give your mentor feedback, especially if you have some dissatisfaction with the mentoring experience. After all, your mentor is giving of his or her time, probably voluntarily, and may be in a higher-level position than you. You don’t want to seem ungrateful for your mentor’s efforts, but if there are difficulties, your mentor should be informed of your concerns.

Following are steps for delivering feedback to your mentor in a tactful and confident way:

- Develop a clear and concise description of the specific issues on which you wish to give feedback. For example, perhaps your mentor is not allowing enough time to meet with you. Or perhaps your mentor lectures too much and doesn’t give you an opportunity to do your own thinking.
- Ask your mentor’s permission before you give feedback, so that your mentor will be more open to your input. You can broach the subject simply by saying, “I have some feedback I’d like to offer. Would you like to hear it?”
- Before stating any criticisms, express specifics about what your mentor is doing that you appreciate. For example, you might say, “I like it that when I bring up a concern, you really take me and the issue seriously and offer ideas.” Then, tell your mentor what is getting in the way of his or her mentoring effectiveness. You might add, “It would be even more helpful if you didn’t describe your solutions and ideas quite so thoroughly and instead asked me what I might do in a situation.”
- Finally, thank your mentor for being open to the feedback, and together decide how you can flag such issues as they arise in the future.

Refresh the Partnership
While it may seem easier to say that everything is great when it is not, stating feelings clearly and asking for feedback from your mentor is key to confronting the reality of what might be happening in the relationship. One way for you and your mentor to test the condition of the relationship is to revisit the goals of the partnership to see if renewal is appropriate. Whether you decide to end, renew, or revive a mentoring relationship, it must be done consciously, intentionally, and openly. Both you and your mentor...
should continually assess your individual experiences and then meet to share assessments and give each other feedback. From there, you should jointly decide how to meet your mentoring needs, either by continuing the relationship or by finding a new mentor.

Larry Ambrose is a managing partner and Paula Moscinski is a senior consultant at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
A popular Zen story goes: “A successful man went to a Zen master and announced he had come to learn all about Zen. The master invited the man to sit down and have tea. As the master poured the tea, it overflowed. The man shouted, ‘It’s spilling, it’s spilling!’ To which the master replied, ‘Precisely—you came with a full cup. Your cup is already spilling over, so how can I give you anything?’”

Just as the full cup accepted no more tea, the closed mind accepts no more learning. Accepting and making best use of your mentoring experience isn’t always easy. Being open to input, course correction, new ways of thinking, and possibly daunting new experiences can be challenging and a bit scary. Opening yourself to mentoring may suggest that you don’t have every base covered and that you still have some growing to do. This can be hard to admit, especially in the workplace. However, you must remember that people who seek mentoring tend to grow on the job, and those who solicit feedback usually get it. If you persist in looking for learning, seeking challenge, and welcoming growth, you will have many teachers and many mentors.

To determine how open you are to learning opportunities, complete this short self-assessment for maximizing learning from your mentoring experience. Give yourself a rating from 1 to 6 on the following items for how closely each statement describes you (6 for very closely; 1 for not closely at all):

### Learning Self-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How receptive are you to new learning?</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receptive learners initiate discussions that result in assistance and feedback and are willing to risk being vulnerable in order to reach their full potential.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I value and seek feedback from my mentor, my supervisor, my peers, and others with whom I work, even when it is difficult to accept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I freely share information with my mentor about my struggles and difficulties.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you manage your own learning?</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-managers take the actions and steps necessary to get to the next level in their career rather than expecting their mentors to do it for them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I want from my career, and I have a professional development plan with objectives and actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take full responsibility for the success of my relationship with my mentor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What is your self-awareness IQ?

*Learners with high self-awareness IQs reflect on their own developmental needs and are able to listen to themselves about the people and environment around them.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the end of the day, I reflect on my performance and the events that took place in order to seek new learning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I pay conscious attention to how events and situations are affecting me and my behavior.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Where do you stand on resilience?

*Resilient people are willing to be and stay uncomfortable, and they initiate and sustain difficult relationships for the sake of growth and learning.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I respond to disappointment or setbacks by learning more about what went wrong and how I can do things differently in the future.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I push myself to do the things I fear in order to attain growth for my development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How growth-oriented are you?

*Growth-oriented people actively contribute, take ownership for improving work, and gather feedback in order to become more successful.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When opinions differ or disagreements occur, I try to understand why someone else’s view is different from mine.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I look to see how much I can learn instead of how often I can be right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How well do you learn about yourself?

*Self-learners are those who, in the solving of one problem, learn something about preventing similar problems.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I explore how my way of thinking about a problem may be getting in the way of solving it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I pay attention to my patterns of behavior and how they impact my effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you have finished rating yourself on each statement, add your total under each of the categories. Your score may indicate that you are stronger in some areas than others. Concentrate on developing those areas where you have the lowest scores. For example, if you scored a 3 under the question “Do you manage your own learning?” you may need to think more about where you want to go in your career and create a professional development plan to help you reach your goal.

The first and most important factor in deriving learning out of every opportunity is to know what you want and to have your goals clearly in mind. You will then be able to see where you have the space in your “teacup” to let in more learning.

Drink up! ▲

Larry Ambrose is a managing partner at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., an organizational development consulting firm that helps organizations create mentoring cultures.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza
Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543
Beyond the Mentoring Relationship

Create a learning plan to continue your professional development.

Your mentoring relationship has come to an end, leaving you with a choice. You can treat the experience as a onetime event in your career, or you can use it as a springboard to launch the next stage of your professional development. The challenges that lie before you may seem daunting now that you are without a mentor. But remember that even with a mentor, you were always responsible for your professional growth.

Maintaining the Momentum
When you became a protege, you made a commitment to yourself to open up to new possibilities, take risks, and learn from every experience. Without a mentor as your personal advocate, you need to find a way to maintain your passion for learning and development. Begin by asking yourself questions that will help you sustain your commitment:

• What was the one aspect of my development during my mentoring experience that I want to continue cultivating over the next six months to a year?

• How will focusing on that aspect make me more successful and influence the contribution that I want to make to the organization?

• What are my risks if I stop right now, and what will I gain if I press on?

Anchored in your commitment to continue on your professional growth path, you’re now ready to take a strategic view of your development and chart its direction.

Developing a Plan
The direction that your growth takes can be captured in a learning plan that you create and manage. The plan should be an outgrowth of an assessment that you make of your mentoring experience, so take stock of your mentoring outcomes. What are you taking away from the experience that is most valuable to you? What were your personal transformations? What did you discover your growth edge to be? In other words, what is that skill or personal characteristic you continue to resist or struggle with—the very thing that will get you closer to your vision of success and achievement?

Answering these questions will help you hone in on new avenues for developing your growth edge. Participating in pertinent training programs, 360-degree feedback, job shadowing, and a project out-

side the scope of your job are just a few learning resources to consider. Show that you are serious about your plan by talking it over with your supervisor and making your professional development goals part of your performance review.

Finding Support
One of the major benefits of your mentoring relationship was the support you received from your mentor. He or she had a personal investment in your success; however, just because your mentor is no longer around doesn’t mean that support disappears. You can continue to receive that same kind of guidance and assistance by enlisting a co-worker as your sounding board or connecting with other proteges to form your own support group. Also, depending on the direction of your learning plan, you may want to find a new mentor, one with specific experience in the areas you want to develop. If you had a positive experience and you feel there is still more you can learn, you may even want to renew your relationship with your previous mentor.

Moving beyond the mentoring relationship is more than just holding on to what you gained from the experience. It’s about how you plan to build on it as well. Paula Moscinski is an executive coach and senior consultant at Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.

Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc.
2 N. Riverside Plaza, Ste. 1433
Chicago, IL 60606
(800) 648-0543