RESOURCE

New Mentors Guidebook

Pollinate Networks Inc.



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Introduction

Taking on the role of mentor can be one of the most rewarding things that we do, and it can feel intimidating the first few times out.

A lot of people wonder if they are really experienced and wise enough to be a mentor. You are. Your mentee can benefit greatly from your experiences, insights, and encouragement. This booklet provides guidance on how to rock this role!



Adopt a Mentoring Mindset

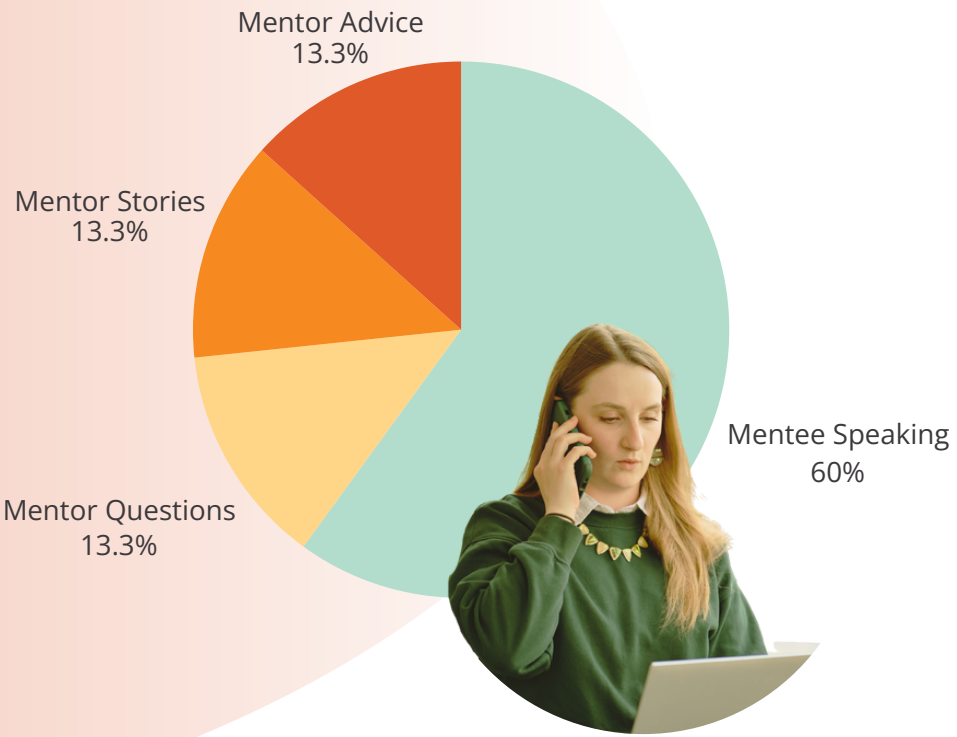
A mentor is not a manager (you are not responsible for performance) and not a coach (focused on improving one area). A mentor brings experience, insight, and helps build context, confidence, and motivation. A mentor is someone with experience that can provide insight and is concerned about helping someone gain the context to think through situations, the confidence to move forward with a plan, and the motivation to keep working on life-enriching goals.



You may choose to share a resource or a connection with your mentee once you have gotten to know them, but it is not your responsibility to "do work" for them. Almost all of the help you are providing will happen within the mentoring meeting.

Your Role in the Mentorship Process

As a general rule of thumb, the mentee is doing more of the talking in a mentoring meeting. There may be meetings where you have something important to share, but imagine that your mentee is speaking 60% of the time. For the time you are speaking, divide the time between asking questions, telling stories, and giving advice.



Help your mentee create focus for the discussions. Ask your mentee to send you a quick agenda ahead of the meeting, even just one line about what they want to talk about. Draw their attention back to their goals every so often if it feels as though the discussion has moved away from their original intent too much. We definitely want to have room for general discussion about what's happening in life right now, but the most rewarding mentorships do have some focus on goals the mentee has for themselves and for the process. It's easy to get sidetracked with current events or interesting sidebars. It's helpful when you can bring the discussion back on track.

Be yourself and encourage them to be themselves. It does take a little time to build trust, but the more we are able to show people that we accept them, and this includes sharing ourselves authentically, the less they may feel they need to "perform" to impress us. You can share wins you've had, but along with your victories, don't be afraid to share some of your hard lessons. Both will be helpful to the process.



Mentoring Skills

To make the most of your mentoring time, you'll want to pay attention and ask questions to determine your mentee's prior knowledge. What do they already know and what do they not know about the topics of interest? It's completely fair to ask a mentee to give you a rundown of their past experiences, information, and thoughts about a topic. We don't want to provide information they already have, nor do we want to leave out information that can fill a gap for them.

Case Study:

Julia and Sveta are discussing Julia's desire to contribute more to her job in the marketing department of the grower she works for.

Sveta asks:

- **Can you give me a sense of your marketing background before joining the company you're with now?**
- **What do you feel solid in your marketing knowledge and experience, and what still seems foggy?**

The questions you ask will send the discussion in different directions. Imagine your mentee wants to speak to you about a new job opportunity. Consider the different ways the conversation will move if you ask:

"Why do you think you'd enjoy that role?"
vs.
"How do you think folks at your organization might feel about you changing jobs again so soon?"

Given that we have limited time in our mentorship meetings, choose the questions that you intuitively feel will take your mentee deepest into the underlying question they have around their topic.

When you are sharing information with your mentee from your own experiences, can you think of a short, related story to share? Stories, because they include information about people, have an emotional component that raw information alone does not. The story may be about you, it may be something you heard, or it may be a "case study" you make up on the spot.

Case Study

Devina's mentee has just asked about how to deal with overwhelm. Devina pulls out the following micro story: Overwhelm seems like a way of life these days. I know for me, I have to force myself to take a strategic pause. Last year when it was planning time I was working stupid hours and the phone was ringing, emails pinging... but I just had to block off an afternoon, take myself for a walk, make a cup of tea and breathe for 30 minutes. Then I made a to-do list I could prioritize so I could shelve stuff that could wait. That strategic pause was everything."

When you do provide advice to someone, ask them before you change topics, **“How might you move forward with this idea?”** or **“Can you see yourself doing this?”** It’s important to anchor advice with the mentee imagining how they might do something, because they might not walk out the action the way you did, even though the general principle holds.

Encouraging action between meetings gives your mentee the push they may need to take a small step forward that can be discussed at your next meeting. Actions can range from taking a small amount of time to think about an issue, opportunity, or new piece of information to having a significant discussion that needs to be had. With your encouragement, these small steps will add up to some real learning over the course of your mentoring time.



Conclusion

Collaborative learning relationships can be some of the most impactful that people have in work and life. Step into this new role and be yourself. In most mentoring situations, you'll learn as much as the person you are mentoring. Be sure to enjoy the process.



About Pollinate Mentorship Programs

Pollinate Mentorship Programs strategically match mentors and mentees to achieve specific goals - from operational improvements to diversity initiatives - delivering exceptional engagement and results that you can track, measure, and report.

Questions?

Contact us at info@pollinate.net

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