

---

# CMAA Construction Manager in Training Program (CMIT)

---

Mentoring Guide

---

January, 2010

---

<b>The Construction Manager in Training Program (CMIT)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is Mentoring?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Using this Reference Guide</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Benefits of a Mentoring Program</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Mentoring Relationship Phases</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Protégé Role and Responsibilities</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Preparing for the Mentoring Relationship</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Step 1 - Establish Mentoring Goals</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Protégé Development Worksheet</i>	<b>10</b>
<i>Appreciating Differences</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>Step 2 - Plan for your Initial Meeting</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Operating Guidelines</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>Working Virtually</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Mentor Work Plan</i>	<b>16</b>
<b>Step 3 - Manage the Relationship</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Communication Skills: Generating Discussion</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Keeping a Journal</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Mentor Role and Responsibilities</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Role of the Mentor</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Responsibilities of Mentors</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Mentoring Qualities</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Key Elements of the Mentor Role</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Planning the Mentoring Relationship</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Providing Support and Encouragement</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Coaching</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Recognition and Reward Techniques</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Setting and Managing Expectations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Guidelines for Giving Constructive Feedback</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Feedback Tips</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>How to Receive Feedback</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Listening Skills</b>	<b>29</b>

## The Construction Manager in Training Program (CMIT)

The growth and continuing value of professional construction management rests on the ability to ensure that individuals entering our profession have every opportunity for a full and meaningful career and membership in the professional community of practicing construction managers. With that strategic thought in mind, CMAA instituted the Construction Manager in Training Program (CMIT). Upon application and acceptance into the CMIT program participants are required to select a mentor to carry on the valuable process outlined in this Guide. You may use CCM of your choosing that you currently work with or utilize our list of qualified volunteer mentors to find one in your geographic area. The most current directory is available on the CMAA Website at the following location:

[http://cmaanet.org/files/shared/Qualified\\_Volunteer\\_Mentors\\_12\\_18\\_09\\_2\\_.pdf](http://cmaanet.org/files/shared/Qualified_Volunteer_Mentors_12_18_09_2_.pdf)

The mentor-protégé relationship is critical to the success of CMIT; so it is particularly important that roles and responsibilities be clearly defined. This Guide should be carefully reviewed by all participants including the individual protégé's supervisor, wherever possible. This ingredient is highly recommended to ensure that this valuable experience is viewed as integral to the professional development of the protégé.

The guide is geared directly to a protégé entering the profession or in transition from another discipline or career path in the architecture, construction, and engineering industry. Specific questions regarding the contents of this Guide can be answered by CMAA's Professional Development staff.

Successful mentoring programs within organizations contribute to the overall productivity and profitability of sponsoring organizations through:

**Planning** - Successful mentoring programs plan and deliver processes and procedures for recruiting, training, matching, supporting, evaluating and ending mentor relationships.

**Meeting participants' needs** - Successful mentoring relationships provide meaningful benefits to both the mentor and the protégé. Both become "incentivized," in that meaningful work, sense of belonging and recognition are all heightened. New ideas are introduced; networking relationships are expended.

### What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a human development process that facilitates personal and professional growth. A relationship is formed in which one or more experienced individuals share their wisdom and experience, and provide the support, advice and counsel necessary for others, less experienced to grow, develop and assume positions of greater authority and responsibility.

Most successful employees have benefited from at least one mentor in their careers.

Mentors: Provide a safe, trusting and non-judgmental relationship. Use their experience, organizational knowledge, intuition, common sense and credibility to help their protégés achieve their goals, and to discover and enhance individual gifts and talents. Guide the personal and professional development of the protégé.

## Using this Reference Guide

This guide is a reference for mentor, protégé and supervisor. It is geared directly to a protégé entering the profession or in transition from another discipline or career path in the architecture, construction, and engineering industry.

It will help the protégé:

- Define his/her professional goals
- Improve overall competence as a CM
- Prepare for the CCM Certification Process
- Sustain a nurturing relationship

This guide will help the mentor:

- Understand what is expected of him/her.
- Improve overall competence as a CM
- Expand knowledge of the industry
- Fulfill mentoring responsibilities

And, the guide will help the supervisor:

- Develop direct reports
- Increase effectiveness as a coach and leader
- Expand knowledge of the construction industry
- Become a mentor for others

## **Benefits of a Mentoring Program**

### **Protégé**

- Provides an opportunity to learn about the profession.
- Fosters skill development and self-confidence.
- Gives insights into the organization's culture.

### **Mentor**

- Provides opportunities for professional and personal growth.
- Helps develop a network.
- Improves/strengthens interpersonal skills

### **Supervisor**

- Provides specific feedback on protégés performance
- Establishes a "team approach" to protégé and supervisor development
- Develops additional knowledge of the CM industry

### **Organization**

- Transfers skills in a low cost way.
- Facilitates CCM preparation
- Identifies candidates for advancement.
- Balances senior and junior resources on a project.

## **Mentoring Relationship Phases**

The mentoring relationship has three distinct phases:

### **Phase 1: Initiation**

This first important phase provides the foundation for building a relationship of trust and respect. The mentor and protégé meet and get to know each other. Mentors gain satisfaction from the fact that someone with less experience is seeking their advice, and the protégé gains a sense of importance from the senior's attention.

### **Phase 2: Development**

This is the fundamental reason for the experience. The protégé learns new skills and competencies, and might even adopt the characteristics and values of his or her mentor. Clear goals and objectives for the both mentor and the protégé are established. Feedback, support and encouragement are exchanged.

### **Phase 3: Separation**

This is evident in a reduction in the number of mentoring contacts. At this point, the protégé has outgrown the need for the mentor's guidance and direction, and the protégé achieves an independent identity. The relationship may be severed, or redefined to create a new relationship as friends, peers or colleagues. The protégé becomes a mentor.

## **Protégé Role and Responsibilities**

The primary role of the protégé is to learn new knowledge and skills from the mentor; however, the protégé should challenge the mentor and provide him/her with new ideas on professional, personal and leadership practices.

The protégé also has responsibilities that should be communicated at the beginning of the Mentoring relationship:

- Master the skills and competencies needed to succeed in his or her current job;
- Take responsibility for one's own development.
- Cooperatively (with the mentor and supervisor) set specific, measurable, aligned, realistic, time-driven objectives.
- Actively listen to the mentor and determine how to best-apply the guidance provided.
- Acquire and develop new skills and competencies needed for the future.
- Build trust and respect, and expect the best in the relationship.
- Take the initiative in managing the relationship.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Be receptive to new ideas and approaches, coaching and feedback.
- Objectively and continuously assess progress.
- Recognize and respect individual differences
- Prepare for CCM Certification

## Preparing for the Mentoring Relationship

A successful mentoring relationship which relies on deliberate planning will be efficient and not require a large amount of time and energy

Three steps ensure success.

Step 1: Establish Mentoring Goals upfront

Step 2: Plan for the initial interview discussions

Step 3: Manage the relationship

### Step 1 - Establish Mentoring Goals

Goals are simply end results. They describe what you are going to do in order to accomplish “something”. The goals you establish for this program should be among the performance-based objectives you set with your supervisor. Setting goals helps you to:

- ✓ Establish a clear picture of jobs and assignments
- ✓ Identify action steps to achieve goals
- ✓ Prioritize action steps to achieve goals

Each goal and action steps should contain an action verb to indicate the desired behavior to be achieved, and how success will be measured. Words like “know” and “understand” communicate nothing about what the protégé is expected to be able to do. Express goals in terms of “behavior,” since it is only individual behavior which can be controlled. Words like design, develop, or implement are examples of acceptable verbs.

Additionally, make sure that goals pass the “SMART goals test.”

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**chievable

**R**ealistic

**T**ime-based

Be realistic in deciding what you hope to accomplish over the next one-to-three years. Understand that these goals may change during the course of your mentoring experience. Remember this is a mutual commitment! Use behavior-based words like those in the following table to complete the “Protégé Development Worksheet” on page 10.

Goal	Associated Behaviors
Research	collect, assimilate, consult, review, locate, differentiate, extract, categorize
Diagnose	describe, investigate, demonstrate, evaluate, interpret, appraise, derive, synthesize, specify
Determine	select, itemize, ascertain, analyze, estimate, extrapolate, interpolate
Establish	set, limit, compare, deduce, evaluate, correct, change, generate
Develop	program, interpret, perform, translate, alter, solve, adapt
Design	illustrate, render, draw, create, structure, diagram, graph, pattern
Obtain	get, seek, consult, review, apply, substitute, permit, define
Budget	calculate, delineate, limit, elaborate, cost, price, estimate, dedicate, forecast, allocate, assign, compute, formulate, compile, reduce, limit, count, establish, review
Regulate	chart, enumerate, refine, plot, program
Improve	refine, fix, amend, design, correct, change, generate, evaluate, correct
Store	file, document, alter, group, systematize, divide, tabulate, straighten, insert, stock, save, distribute, catalog, reject
Assign	select, allocate, designate, consult, review, interpret, locate, decide, choose
Initiate	invite, dictate, write, draft, compose (policy, directive, procedures, rules)
Orient	negotiate, direct, familiarize
Evaluate	match, apply, interpret, restate, compare, conclude, deduce, assess, review, verify, prove, connect
Lead	designate, communicate, order, direct, initiate, command, negotiate, orchestrate, form with, interpret, institute, consult, regulate, volunteer, advocate
Train	show, tell, sell, assist, relate, demonstrate, present, explain, praise, question
Develop	educate, teach, show, present, praise, critique
Motivate	listen (actively), praise, communicate, empathize, relate, model
Facilitate	orchestrate, demonstrate, participate
Appraise	assess, review, collect, time, verify, prove, connect, question, weigh
Implement	participate in/with, decide, solve (problem), schedule, operate, activate

### **Protégé Development Worksheet**

1. Identify your four most important personal and professional developmental needs. Include input from supervisors, clients, peers, appraisals and your own assessment
2. Identify the significant key factors you feel will contribute to the accomplishment of each of the needs and your success.
3. Identify any possible barriers that may block your success. Barriers may be people or policies that prevent you from taking action, limit the amount of action you can take or may not be real, but you perceive them to be real.
4. Define how a mentor can help you achieve success and overcome the barriers.
5. Identify the goals you would like to accomplish with your mentor.

My personal & professional developmental needs	Significant key factors to success	Barriers to success	How a Mentor can help me
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
<b>Mentoring Goal(s):</b>			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Once your goals are clearly established, it is time to prepare to interview your Mentor candidates. If you are with a firm, your Mentor candidates include any currently certified CCM. If there is not a CCM with the organization with which you work, you can visit the listing of qualified mentors available on the CMAA website. It is your responsibility, armed with the objectives identified above, to determine the candidate who will best meet your needs. Be prepared to ask the right kind of questions of the candidates, specific to your objectives, specific to your style and specific to your own time lines. Most mentor-protégé relationships fail because “the chemistry” doesn’t work; so it is particularly important that you both “feel” good about the prospect of working together.

Contact your prospective mentor and ask him/her for a one-hour appointment to discuss expectations for the relationships - yours and his/hers.

Conversation should be informal, addressing some background and professional accomplishments: getting to know each other. It should be approached much like a job interview. Find out all you can about the individual’s education, work, special interests and skills. This sets the tone for the potential relationship.

Then the protégé should prompt discussion around the “needs” and “goals” listed above. At the conclusion of the discussion, nothing more than an exchange of greetings and a “Thank you” are needed to conclude the interaction.

### **Appreciating Differences**

Diversity “embraces” the fact that we are all different. A successful mentor-protégé relationship includes an appreciation of the distinct differences each person brings to it.

Use the table on the page that follows to discuss the differences and qualities each of you bring to the mentoring experience.

	<b>Protégé</b>	<b>Mentor</b>
Areas of Expertise		
Accomplishments		
Personal Information		
Work Experience		
Company Position		
Personal Goals		
Professional Goals		
Expectations of the Relationship		
Other		

## **Step 2 - Plan for your Initial Meeting**

Contact your mentor to schedule a meeting. Plan the agenda for the meeting and send a copy to your mentor prior to the meeting. Be sure to ask your mentor for input as well. Although you take the lead in this step, the mentor is equally responsible for the success of this initial meeting. Both you and the mentor should articulate, up-front, personal and professional goals and your specific expectations of the relationship.

**Get to know each other.** Begin building a strong relationship by sharing information about yourself. It is important to connect on a personal level as well as on a work level. If you have not completed the Appreciating Differences table on page 12, you may want to do this at the first meeting.

**Share your mentoring goals.** Begin the discussion by sharing your mentoring needs and goals again, and identifying any concerns you may have about the process. Discuss the mentor's goals as well as your own, and how you will both benefit from the relationship.

**Agree on the operating guidelines for your relationship.** The mentoring relationship will be set up for an initial 60-day trial period. Sometimes expectations cannot be met and the "chemistry" doesn't work. To ensure the relationship has the potential to grow and develop, first agree to "simply try it."

After the 60-day period, you and your mentor can agree to pursue the relationship or try someone else to work with. At this 60-day point, however, CMAA Professional Development should be notified about the decision. Answering the questions that follow will help you and the mentor determine the guidelines for your mentoring relationship.

## Operating Guidelines

Question	Operating Guideline
When does the 60-day trial begin?	
How will we communicate?	
How often?	
When/where will we meet?	
How often?	
Who will initiate the meetings?	
To what extent will managers be involved?	
How will advocacy/exposure be accomplished?	
How will feedback be accomplished?	
How will both parties benefit from the relationship?	
How will confidentiality be ensured?	

Once you have made the initial contact and agreed to the 60-day trial relationship, a formal Work Plan must be established. **The CCM Application Process should be an important component of the Work Plan.**

A suggested format for the Work Plan appears on pages 16 through 19 below.

### **Working Virtually**

The demands of your job and travel, or not being co-located with your mentor or protégé, may require you to work virtually with each other. This means that you must take special care to keep each other informed by using the telephone, e-mail or voice mail. When establishing your operating guidelines, be sure to consider how you will stay in touch while balancing the demands of your jobs.

## Work Plan

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Protégé Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

*Work with your mentor to establish this Work Plan. It is important that each section of the Work Plan be completed in detail. This Work Plan will be used to evaluate and monitor your performance over the next year and to provide additional support as needed.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Protégé Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Submit a copy to:  
Professional Development

---

## Work Plan

**Instructions to the protégé:**

*Complete this worksheet with your mentor.*

**Goal(s):**

*Use the space below to record your goal(s).*

**Objectives:**

*Use the spaces below to identify objectives to accomplish your goal(s). Then assign a priority to each action step and record the number in the box .*

## Work Plan

**Instructions to the protégé:** *Complete this worksheet with your mentor.*

Objectives	Resource(s)	Cost	Completion Date

### Work Plan

**Instructions to the protégé:** Use the space below to identify actions to overcome barriers that may prevent you from completing your objectives.

Possible Barriers	Actions to Overcome Barriers

### **Step 3 - Manage the Relationship**

This step is indispensable to the mentoring process. Establishing and maintaining the relationship determines the success or failure of your aspirations. Continuous and open communication must be the routine.

It is important to identify emerging difficulties or conflicts early on. Try to pick up on the subtle concerns or cues of the other person. Be sure to read verbal and nonverbal signals. These suggestions will help you to strengthen the relationship:

- Always focus on achieving your goals.
- Communicate honestly, in both “a thinking and a feeling” manner
- Prepare for meetings
- Find ways to overcome challenges
- Be “free” to give and receive feedback
- Expect the “best” in the relationship.

### **Communication Skills: Generating Discussion**

An effective mentor needs to have strong communication skills. It is his/her responsibility to maintain a dialog with the protégé. Many people think that the secret to a productive meeting is to ask the protégé questions. However, it is more effective for the mentor to begin the meeting with a statement that tells the protégé the direction in which the discussion will focus. The mentor then can follow the statement with a provocative question.

For example: You did a good job presenting our new marketing plan to the team. You’ll need to refine your presentation before you present it to the board. What areas do you think you should focus on improving?

Avoid asking “why” questions because they tend to put people on the defensive. To encourage an open discussion, ask questions that begin with “how” or “what.”

### **Keeping a Journal**

You will find it very helpful to keep a journal. This can provide a record of events and a source of ideas for future use. It also becomes a source for learning that can help provide you and the mentor with solutions to any problems you encounter. By writing down what is happening and reflecting on it, you can gain new insights and information. To use a journal:

- Select a regular time to write in journal
- Write the date and time of each entry
- Use full sentences, short notes or pictures and diagrams to express thoughts or ideas
- Jot down observations and thoughts about observations
- Note people’s reactions to different events in the project.

## **Mentor Role and Responsibilities**

### **Role of the Mentor**

The key to becoming an effective mentor understands that you are a coach or teacher to a less experienced student. Being an effective mentor may take on one, or a combination of roles:

**Teaching** — helping the protégé learn particular skills by increasing the learning pace and giving him/her the opportunity to display technical competence

**Guiding**—facilitating the protégé’s growth in technical and organizational knowledge. This enhances career potential and develops self-confidence by reducing the potential for failure and increasing the level of risk-taking. The key is to facilitate; not direct development.

**Counseling**—Helping the protégé accurately describe problems, suggesting insights and then working through a process that is productive, positive and supportive of job performance.

**Challenging**—addressing the protégé’s level of performance. This may involve informing the protégé of performance issues and developing strategies to address them.

**Confronting**—discussing the impact of not meeting expectations, and providing timely, objective, constructive feedback.

### **Responsibilities of Mentors**

A successful mentor accepts the responsibilities of mentoring, and attempts to:

- ✓ Create and build trust and respect.
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality.
- ✓ Share time and energy.
- ✓ Dialogue with the protégé’s supervisor
- ✓ Listen carefully to your protégés, act as a sounding board and help to identify and achieve reasonable goals.
- ✓ Understand without judging.
- ✓ Share experiences, skills, knowledge, networking strategies and lessons learned.
- ✓ Develop your interpersonal and motivational skills.
- ✓ Confront negative behaviors and attitudes when appropriate.
- ✓ Understand the professional culture and how to effectively work within it.
- ✓ Be a positive role model: coach, teach and set the best example of behavior.
- ✓ Ask for advice or help from the protégé.
- ✓ Offer encouragement and counsel when appropriate.
- ✓ Respect individual differences.
- ✓ Bring out the best in the protégé.

## **Mentoring Qualities**

If the mentor is to be effective in relating to the protégé, he/she must have:

**Self-understanding**—The goal is not to encourage the protégé “to become like the mentor!” Assessing the needs of others and then finding the best means to meet those needs is no easy task. Mentors can “get in the way” unless they understand their own strengths and weaknesses.

**Self-esteem**—Unless the mentor has very positive self-esteem, the relationship with the protégé can soon deteriorate into one of resentment or self-pity. One cannot nurture in someone else that which is not possessed.

**Patience**—Responsibility for personal and professional development lies with the individual. The mentor may become frustrated with the progress being made and abandon the mentor role, only to become a “manager” and disempowering the protégé. This is a developmental process, with as many setbacks as advances. Patience rather than frustration must be the rule; consider counseling, motivating or teaching. The critical line separating mentor from manager/supervisor should never be crossed.

**Openness to learn from you**—This is a relationship and the mentor should also expect to learn from the protégé. Differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, education, experience, business unit or even personal perspectives are valuable to the mentor. Discussions focusing on these differences should be pursued at every opportunity. Mentors are encouraged to ask “What do you think about this/that?” and to be attentive to the responses of the protégé.

## Key Elements of the Mentor Role

The mentor's role cannot be overstated. As indicated below, there is considerable investment on your part, with each of your protégés.

Mentor Role	Benefits to the Protégé	Most Significant Mentor Investment
<b>Listening Counseling</b>	1. Establish rapport 2. Enhance self-esteem 3. Provide "pep talks" regularly 4. Agree on purposes and ground rules for the relationship	Time
<b>Teaching</b>	1. Instruct in organizational skills, management and leadership practices 2. Emphasize standards of conduct 3. Cultivate corporate social graces 4. Teach "tricks-of-the-trade" 5. Sensitize to corporate politics 6. Share "inside information" 7. Co-author development plan	Self Energy Time
<b>Intervening</b>	1. Seek exposure and advancement opportunities for protégé 2. Intercede on protégé's behalf in corporate settings	Organizational Relationships Reputation
<b>Sponsoring</b>	1. Transfer mentor role to the protégé 2. Recommend protégé for promotion, succession program 3. Carefully coordinate activities with protégés supervisor	Reputation

## Planning the Mentoring Relationship

For the mentoring relationship to be successful, it requires careful planning. Successful planning helps you and the protégé to:

- Clarify what needs to be accomplished, when the step must be completed and what resources are required.
- Identify and coordinate activities.
- Accomplish a step or task by a specified time.
- Identify difficulties that may arise.
- Determine actions to overcome those difficulties.
- Agree on how and when to involve the supervisor in the process.

## Providing Support and Encouragement

It is extremely important to support and encourage the protégé as he/she learns new knowledge and skills. Supporting and encouraging the protégé means that you use the appropriate **coaching** and **motivational** techniques. Successfully providing support and encouragement can help the protégé:

- Improve performance.
- Increase the amount of effort put forth to reach a goal(s).
- Build confidence in his/her ability to successfully perform or accomplish a task.

### Coaching

“To coach” is to move a person from where he or she is to where he or she wants or needs to be. Coaching is the process used by the mentor to empower the protégé to put forth his/her best effort(s) to reach the limits of his/her abilities. Coaching offers an opportunity for you to help the protégé learn new skills or master existing ones. Studies have shown over and over again that people learn and use more of the things they discover and experience themselves, which is why coaching is such an essential skill for a mentor to master. Use coaching to:

- Nurture and develop the protégé.
- Follow up a feedback session.
- Encourage the protégé to improve performance and productivity.
- Help the protégé manage difficult situations.

Good coaches support their protégé’s needs, create choices, focus on improving performance, seek commitment and provide opportunities for new experiences. Tips for coaching include:

- Plan and prepare for the coaching session
- State the problem
- Be clear about what you are trying to help improve
- Describe the current behavior and the effect you see
- Use your experience and the experience of the protégé to develop new actions.

Coaching “Do’s”	Coaching “Don’ts”
Suggest	Reprimand
Listen and consider	Belittle or exclude
Admit when you don’t know something	Cut off and ignore
Evaluate actions	Assume the process steps were followed
Be clear and specific	Make assumptions

### **Recognition and Reward Techniques**

One way in which to increase protégé motivation is to reward or recognize them when they do things right. To reinforce good performance and encourage repeat performances, it is important to let the protégé know when they have done a good job, why you appreciate it and the impact of their action(s). Sometimes a simple “Thank you” is all the reward a protégé needs. You can reward and recognize the protégé:

***Directly*** - Verbally praising him/her.

***Indirectly*** - Telling a superior about the protégé’s performance and letting the protégé know you told someone.

***Formally*** - Writing a letter of praise and/or recommendation or a positive performance review.

To make sure your reward and recognition has the maximum impact on the protégé, it should:

- Match the reward to the person’s style
- Match the reward to the achievement
- Be sincere

### **Setting and Managing Expectations**

Mentors and protégés alike have expectations for the relationship. Interpersonal communication skills and a shared sense of optimism play significant roles in how the relationship develops and progresses.

Remember, this is a relationship in which both mentor and protégé have invested. An important skill in making it work is the ability to give truthful, constructive feedback. This raises your awareness of specific behaviors and their impact on each other and provides for the opportunity to modify those behaviors if necessary.

## **Guidelines for Giving Constructive Feedback**

When the performance of the mentor or protégé is not going as planned, either party may have to provide feedback. Feedback is not criticism. Rather, feedback provides the concrete data needed to take corrective action(s) and improve performance. Constructive feedback occurs only when you are a good listener and genuinely care about the other person. Consider these “Guidelines for Constructive Feedback” and make them a routine part of your mentor relationship.

**Specific action(s)**—Before providing feedback, carefully review the actions and decisions that led up to it. Phrase the issue as a statement rather than a question. Contrast, “When are you going to stop being late for meetings?” with “I feel annoyed when you are late for meetings.” The question format is controlling/ because it implies that “you” the respondent are expected to adjust your behavior to accommodate “me” the questioner. We tend to become defensive or angry when spoken to in this way; whereas the “I” statement allows the respondent to perceive what effect his/her behavior had on you.

**Context of the action(s)**—Context is the most important characteristic of feedback. Never simply walk up to a person, “drop” your feedback and then leave. Always identify “where,” “when,” “why” and specifically “what” led up to the event.

**Impact of the person’s action(s)**—Restrict feedback to only those things which you know for certain. Hearsay has no place within the context of “constructive feedback.” State the exact impact of the person’s actions on themselves, you, others or the organization.

**Suggestion for a remedy or coaching**—Talk first about you. Use “I” as the lead word, e.g., “I would appreciate it if you would come to the meetings on time” or “I feel annoyed when you are late for our meetings.”

## **Feedback Tips**

To make sure that your feedback is accepted and favorably received, use the following feedback tips:

**Be descriptive**—Focus on behavior. Identify what you saw the other person do, or what you heard the other person say. Give specific examples. Don't use language that is judgmental. Rather, describe the situation as it actually is and avoid "preaching" about it.

**Stay focused**—Be clear, specific and unambiguous. Don't use labels like: "unprofessional," "messed-up" and "irresponsible." "I was angry that you missed the Friday deadline that we had agreed to." is more effective than "You've been irresponsible again, and I want to know what you're going to do about it!" Stick to the point at hand and resist the temptation to generalize or judge.

**Cite examples**—Avoid being vague by citing specific, clear examples when giving feedback.

**Be brief**—Be sure to keep your feedback short. Once you are sure the protégé understands the point—stop. Don't exaggerate. Be exact. Exaggerating only invites the recipient to argue with the exaggeration rather than respond to the real issue.

**Keep it simple**—Try to concentrate on only one issue.

**Be aware of timing**—Know when to offer feedback. Give feedback immediately or as soon as possible after an event is observed. Determine whether the moment is "right."

**Consider the protégé's needs**—Match the feedback to the person and the severity of their actions. Even if your position/rank is higher than that of the recipient, strive for an adult-peer context. Using "power over" or "talking down" to anyone undermines the feedback attempt; it is just poor leadership!

**Check for understanding**—Check to be sure your feedback is clearly understood.

**Speak only for yourself**—Don't refer to absent or anonymous people. Encourage others to speak for themselves.

### **Don't give feedback when:**

- ✓ You don't care about the circumstances of the behavior.
- ✓ You don't care about the person.
- ✓ You will not be around long enough to follow up on the aftermath of your feedback.
- ✓ The feedback is about something the person has no power to change.
- ✓ You or the recipient is low in self-esteem.
- ✓ Your motive is not really improvement but rather to put someone on the spot, or to demonstrate how much smarter you are.
- ✓ The time, place or circumstances are inappropriate.

## **How to Receive Feedback**

**Breathe.** We are conditioned to react to stress as though it is a physical assault. Muscles tense, pulse rate increases and we tend to breathe rapidly and shallowly. Breathe deeply and then consciously allow the body to “relax.”

**Listen actively and carefully.** Don't interrupt. Do nothing which might discourage the person from providing you the feedback; it often takes a Herculean effort to approach someone!

**Ask questions for clarity.** You have the need/right to receive clear/understandable feedback. Ask for specific examples: “Can you please describe what it is that I did or said that makes me appear aggressive to you?”

**Acknowledge the feedback.** Paraphrase the message in your own words (feedback-on-the-feedback) to let the other person know that you have heard and understood what was said: “What I hear you saying is that...”

**Acknowledge the valid points.** Agree with what is true. Agree with what is possible. Acknowledge the other person's point of view: “I understand how you might get that impression.” Try to understand their reaction as well.

**Take time to process and sort out what you have heard.** You may need time for processing or “checking things out” with others before responding to the feedback. It is reasonable to ask the individual for time to think carefully about what he/she said and how you feel about it (e.g., “Thank you for your comments; I'd like some time to think about them and then discuss them with you.”). Make a specific appointment for getting back...to “close the loop.”

## **Listening Skills**

Effective communicators are also the best listeners, not the best talkers. Listening is more than just hearing what has been said. Listening shows genuine interest in the other person, lets them know you are concerned for them and makes them feel comfortable in sharing their ideas and feelings.

Simply hearing words is not sufficient to achieve an understanding of what another person is saying. Active listening is an important skill used to obtain information about what the other person is thinking and feeling. The components of good listening skills include:

**Silence**—Use silence effectively. Listening quietly to what others are saying.

**Attentiveness**—Acknowledge the speaker. Maintaining eye contact, using body language such as gestures, movements and facial expressions to promote or discourage participation, or acknowledging with a brief, one-word phrase or expression your understanding or approval of what the other person is saying.

**Paraphrasing**—Restating in your own words what you thought the speaker said without adding any judgment or interpretation.

**Reflection**—Clarifying the feelings you think the protégé feels to show empathy.

**Open-ended questions**—Using questions that require extended responses or encourages others to talk provides you with more information and assists you in clarifying issues. Open-ended questions begin with words such as what, how, could.

**Keep an open mind**

**Try not to interrupt**