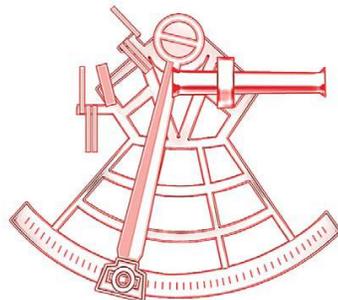




Creating A Successful Mentoring Partnership

Office of Leadership and Professional Development (CG-133)
U. S. Coast Guard

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FOREWARD

This Guide, *Creating a Successful Mentoring Partnership*, provides information to employees who are interested in establishing a mentoring relationship, either as a mentor or a mentee.

Mentoring partnerships are a means to keep people in an organization in a continual state of learning. The process can unlock underutilized talents, encourage responsibility for one's own career growth, and nurture flexibility and adaptability in the midst of a chaotic environment. By taking a time-tested resource and applying it to the challenges of today's workplace, employees will be better positioned to deal with changes in their work and personal lives.

This Guide is designed to provide practical information for starting or continuing a mentoring partnership. The advice is based on experiences with formally structured mentoring programs that were established in offices across the organization. Those who would like to learn more about mentoring partnerships can use the bibliography at the end of this Guide to find additional information.

We hope you find this information useful as you consider entering into a mentoring partnership or renewing an existing one. Successful leaders can often enhance their own capabilities when helping others to be successful leaders, following the experience, *Docemur Docendo*, or "he who teaches, learns."

Office of Leadership and Professional Development (CG-133)
U.S. Coast Guard

Creating A Successful Mentoring Partnership can be found at the CG-133 website:
<http://www.uscg.mil/leadership/programs/mentoring.asp>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
What is mentoring?	4
Purpose of this guide	5
Benefits of mentoring	5
Characteristics of successful Mentoring partnerships	7
Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities	9
The mentee's and mentor's roles	9
The supervisor's role	12
Finding a Mentor or Mentee	13
What makes a good match	13
How to find a mentor	13
How to find a mentee	16
How to Proceed with Mentoring	19
Planning for success	19
Components of a sound plan	19
Tips for "virtual" mentoring	21
Staying on Track	22
Benefits of periodic assessment	22
How to self-assess	23
Trouble-Shooting	24
Signs of a partnership in trouble	24
Issues facing mentees	24
Issues facing mentors	25
Issues facing both partners	26
Closing Out the Mentoring Relationship	28
Appendices	29
Appendix A: Leadership Development Framework	29
Appendix B: Learning Activities	33
Appendix C: Sample Mentoring Development Plan	35
Appendix D: Sample Mentoring Agreement	36
Appendix E: Bibliography	37

INTRODUCTION

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a powerful form of human development. Some organizations believe mentoring improves the talent for management and technical jobs as well as helps to shape future leaders. Mentoring is not a new concept. It has been part of formal development programs for some time. Mentoring is an effective vehicle for developing others.

Mentoring offers an opportunity for mentors and mentees to expand their leadership, interpersonal, and technical skills. The process can be simple and natural or very sophisticated.

This handbook provides information on the mentoring process to potential mentors and participants. It describes the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees so both parties will know what is expected of each other in a mentor/mentee relationship.

There are many definitions of mentoring. But in its simplest form, mentoring is the process of one person helping another to grow and develop. Mentoring occurs in several forms. However, all mentoring relationships fall into one of two categories: formal or informal.

Formal mentoring

A formal mentoring relationship is characterized by three traits:

- An explicit agreement between mentor and mentee to engage in the mentoring process;
- A specific set of developmental goals; and
- A structured process for the mentoring to take place (e.g., a formalized meeting schedule; an explicit agreement on roles and expectations, etc.).

Informal mentoring

This type of mentoring relationship is characterized by a looser structure and less explicit agreement. Informal

mentoring is almost always initiated by the individual mentor or mentee. An employee sees a quality in another person that they admire and would like to develop. Or a mentor sees something in another person that reminds them of themselves.

If you have ever been “taken under someone’s wing,” that has most likely been an informal mentoring relationship. In these cases, the relationship may have happened without the two partners ever negotiating specific agreements on how they would work together or what they would work on. Nevertheless, the mentor was there to provide the mentee with advice, insight, and supportive challenge.

Purpose of this guide

This guide is designed to help managers and employees who want to establish productive **formal, self-initiated mentoring relationships**. Over the past several years, many federal agencies have instituted office-sponsored formal programs. Each office’s participants have learned that mentoring offers tremendous benefits to mentors and mentees alike. The intent of this guide is to share the many lessons learned in office-sponsored programs, so that any individual can reap the benefits of mentoring, without participating in an office-sponsored program.

Whether you are a mentee in search of a mentor, or a mentor who would like to pass on what you have learned to a mentee, this guide will help you:

- ✓ Understand what mentoring is
 - ✓ Decide whether mentoring is for you
 - ✓ Find a mentor or mentee
 - ✓ Set up the mentoring relationship
 - ✓ Keep the mentoring relationship on track
 - ✓ Evaluate progress
 - ✓ Close the mentoring relationship
-

Benefits of mentoring

During the office-sponsored formal mentoring programs, employees gained a first-hand understanding of how mentoring benefits those involved. If you set up your own

mentoring relationship in the ways we suggest, you can expect many of the same benefits.

Benefits to mentees

The relationship between mentor and mentee creates an effective, safe context for learning because the mentor is outside of the mentee's chain of command. The mentee can ask questions, get advice, receive feedback, and "learn the ropes" from someone who is not part of the mentee's performance appraisal process.

Here are some typical comments from mentees in office-sponsored, formal programs, about their mentors.

He/she...

- "Taught me how to pursue my goals more effectively."
- "Helped me create plans to reduce the gap between the level of skills I had and the level of skills I needed."
- "Probed my learning to identify blind spots and gaps."
- "Kept in touch with the progress I was making and how that affected our development plan."
- "Helped me understand the mission of our program area and why our work mattered."

This kind of support is unique to mentoring – difficult, if not impossible, to get from reading books or taking classes. If you feel you would benefit from ongoing support, advice and feedback as you prepare for a supervisory or management position, then mentoring may be for you.

Benefits to mentors

One common misconception is that mentees are the only people who benefit from the mentoring relationship. This assumption can make mentees hesitate to ask for a mentor's help – they don't want to "impose" on a mentor's busy schedule.

Yet, mentoring is truly a partnership where both partners learn and grow. In structured mentoring programs we often hear how much the mentors have benefited from the mentoring role. Here are some comments from past mentors:

- “The mentoring experience renewed my own enthusiasm for the job because I found the younger employees’ dedication and competence exciting.”
- “I learned that mentoring is an ongoing process, one that is often part of the leader’s daily tool kit.”
- “I learned that our employees really yearn for knowledge and ability to improve themselves.”
- “As a mentor, I learned how bright and receptive new minds can be... and how transformed the mentees became while growing into managerial mindsets.”

These comments reveal some of the growth and satisfaction that mentors can experience from this unique role.

Benefits to the organization

Every time mentoring is successful, the organization also benefits. The offices that have sponsored mentoring programs have found that mentoring:

- Increases "vertical" communication (i.e., communication between people at different levels in the hierarchy);
- Increases cross-functional communication; and
- Makes participants more knowledgeable about other functional areas and the organization as a whole.

In other words, mentoring is an excellent antidote to the isolation and "stovepiping" that can hamper any organization's effectiveness.

Characteristics of successful mentoring partnerships

While each mentoring relationship is different, and each produces unique outcomes, the most fruitful mentoring partnerships share at least five common elements (Drahosz, 1999):

1. Clarity of Purpose. Mentoring partners must clearly understand what they are trying to accomplish together. What are the mentee's long-term career goals? What are his or her short-term development goals? How will you recognize when the development goals have been achieved?

2. Explicit Expectations. To ensure productive partnerships, it is critical that the partners define their roles and responsibilities up front. What does each partner need from the other for the mentoring to succeed? How often will the partners meet? Who will initiate?

3. Commitment. Because mentoring success depends on how much the partners put into it, both partners will need to make mentoring a priority. Mentees need to follow through, take action on mentoring commitments, and actively seek out their mentor's help. Mentors, too, need to commit by keeping appointments and being available to their mentees.

Mentoring partnerships are vulnerable—especially at the beginning. Mentors may need to take the lead if they sense shyness or apprehension on the mentees' part.

4. Respect and Appreciation for Differences. Mentors and mentees will bring unique experiences and personalities into a mentoring partnership. The success of the partnership will depend on the ability to respect and value differences.

5. Confidentiality and Trust. A mentoring relationship is a leap of faith. It is vital for the mentor and mentee to trust each other so that meaningful information can be shared. Both partners need to agree ahead of time what constitutes a confidentiality agreement and what steps will be taken to honor it. It is also important to discuss how sensitive issues will be addressed.

The following pages will give you what you need in order to establish a successful mentoring partnership.

MENTORING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles of mentee and mentor

While the mentor-mentee relationship can be very beneficial for both partners, success depends on how well the people involved carry out their mentoring-related roles. Below are the roles each person should play for mentoring to work optimally.

The mentee's role

Mentees find that if they apply themselves diligently to the process, they gain a tremendous amount. Those who put little effort or enthusiasm into the process usually feel they got little out of it.

There are four key roles of a successful mentee (Drahosz & Rhodes, 1998):

- **Learner** – In the role of Learner, the mentee consciously takes advantage of the opportunity to grow. This often involves stretching, taking in new information, and trying on new behaviors that may be uncomfortable at first.

Key behaviors:

- Actively solicits feedback, ideas and advice
- Remains open to mentor's ideas
- Tries mentor's suggestions, even if they feel a bit uncomfortable at first
- Keeps an ongoing record of lessons learned

- **Planner** – As Planner, the mentee maintains a clear sense of where he or she is going, how to get there, and how to track progress along the way.

Key behaviors:

- Sets realistic goals for development
- Identifies interim activities and milestones
- Comes to mentoring meetings with a clear idea of what topics/issues he or she would like to address

- **Communicator** – As Communicator, the mentee openly shares thoughts, goals, challenges and concerns with the mentor.

Key behaviors:

- Openly discusses learning goals and barriers to learning
- Lets the mentor know what he or she can do to be most helpful
- Gives feedback to the mentor on what is working and not working inside the mentoring relationship

- **Driver** – In the Driver role, the mentee maintains momentum in the learning process.

Key behaviors:

- Attends scheduled mentoring meetings
- Follows through on developmental activities and time commitments
- Asks for help

The mentor's role

The best mentors are flexible in approaching their mentees, shifting roles as the situation requires. There are four primary roles associated with being a mentor (Drahoz & Rhodes, 1998).

- **Teacher** – In the Teacher role, the mentor helps the mentee assess his/her career goals and outlines plans to achieve them. Mentors take time to understand where mentees are coming from, what they value, and what they want to become.

Key behaviors:

- Helps mentee clarify goals
- Learns about the mentee - hopes, aspirations, learning style, etc.
- Helps mentee assess current strengths and weaknesses
- Shares own experience, knowledge and insight

- **Guide** – As a Guide, the mentor helps the mentee navigate the political inner workings of the organization. The mentor points out where the organization is going and who the key players are.

Key behaviors:

- Share insights into unwritten rules, norms of successful behavior
- Helps mentee develop new contacts and expand his or her professional network
- Shares the “big picture” of the organization

- **Counselor** – In the Counselor role, the mentor provides a safe environment for mentees to explore solutions to problems and challenges. A mentor in this role serves as a sounding board and confidante.

Key behaviors:

- Listens actively
- Demonstrates patience
- Resists giving answers
- Keeps confidences
- Shares own lessons learned, especially from mistakes

- **Challenger** – As a Challenger, the mentor helps the mentee uncover blind spots in his/her behavior and performance. Mentors provide developmental feedback and point out mentees’ strengths and weaknesses.

Key behaviors:

- Asks "what if" questions to help the mentee think through possible consequences to his or her actions
 - Gives honest feedback
-

The role of the supervisor

Unless a mentee is being mentored by his or her supervisor, the supervisor is usually “outside” of the mentoring relationship. In some cases, the mentee may choose not to disclose the mentoring relationship to his or her supervisor.

In most cases, however, supervisors can be real assets in the mentoring process, even from the sidelines. As a mentee, you should not overlook your supervisor as a potential source of support for your mentoring activities.

Here are a few key ways the supervisor might support a mentee:

- **Provides input** – The mentee's supervisor can be an excellent source of input into the mentoring goal-setting process. He or she has observed the mentee on the job, and will therefore know where the mentee's strengths and weaknesses lie.
 - **Sets parameters** – The mentee may feel more comfortable to spend time in mentoring activities if he or she has negotiated clear agreements with the supervisor about the time to be spent on mentoring activities. The supervisor can help the mentee to prioritize work assignments to accommodate the mentoring activities.
 - **Provides support and feedback** – The supervisor can support the mentoring relationship simply by asking how it is going, offering support, and providing feedback. He or she might also help the employee find developmental opportunities in day-to-day activities.
-

FINDING A MENTOR OR MENTEE

What makes a good mentoring match?

People often believe that mentors and mentees who are very similar make the best matches. Mentor-mentee similarity, while it might create an easy relationship, may not result in the most learning. The best matches are often the ones in which there are key differences between the partners. Often, differences in areas such as professional background, age, gender, race, personality style, etc. are the ones which offer the greatest potential for learning on both partners' parts.

How to find a mentor

A good rule of thumb is to consider a mentor who is one to two pay grades above that of the mentee. Do not feel that you have to limit yourself to a mentor who is in your same community or service component (e.g., a Military Member using a Civilian Mentor or vice versa can provide a different perspective in contrast to those of your peers). See Appendix A for help in determining how Military and Civilian pay grades align within our organization.

However, if you are initiating your own informal mentoring relationship, here is a 7-step process for finding a mentor (Drahosz, 1999).

1. Set mentoring goals. One of the first steps in identifying a mentor is to clearly understand your developmental goals. Where do you want to be five years from today? What are your career aspirations? What are you interested in learning to help you get there?

2. Describe your ideal mentor. Think for a moment...how would you describe your ideal mentor? What capabilities and characteristics would they possess? Are you looking for someone with your same functional background or would you like someone to help you bridge into a new career field? Are you interested in a mentor who has a certain niche or someone who brings a broad background rich with organizational experience? Are you interested in someone who has a similar

behavioral style or would you prefer someone who brings a contrasting style?

In terms of personal characteristics, you might want to look for someone who is:

- Willing to commit time to the mentoring process
- Experienced
- Resourceful--knowledgeable about the organization's vision, mission and organizational relationships
- A strong contributor to the growth of the organization
- Contrasting in behavioral style
- A good listener
- Trustworthy, keeps confidences

3. Create a list of potential mentors. Once you have clarified your mentoring goals and identified the characteristics of an ideal mentor, it is time to create a list of potential candidates. Look for people who possess the traits you wish to develop. For example, if you are looking to develop technical expertise, look for technical experts as potential mentors. However, if you are looking for political skills, think about the people in the organization who seem to be very politically astute and competent.

Do not limit your consideration to people within your own technical function. In fact, one of the best ways to increase your learning is to pick someone who comes from a different background or perspective than your own.

Also, do not limit your consideration to people who are higher in the management chain. A peer may possess the characteristics you are seeking.

4. Select five potential candidates from your list.

Research the candidates' backgrounds and interests. Consider getting information and advice from outside sources (e.g., your supervisor or people in your professional network). Gain as much information as you can about the candidates' accomplishments and character. Prioritize your top five mentoring choices and clarify why you would like to be matched with them.

5. Arrange meetings with your top five choices.

Arrange face-to-face or telephone meetings to explore the possibility of establishing a mentoring partnership. As you arrange each meeting, let the person know that you are looking for a mentor, and that he or she is someone you are considering. Ask the candidate whether he or she might be open to an exploratory conversation.

During the meeting, ask to hear the mentor's "story"—how he or she got where they are and what "factors" made a difference (e.g., skills, challenging projects, or being at the right place at the right time). Be willing to share your background, accomplishments and areas needing development.

6. Prepare for "the close." Think about how you will ask for a mentor's commitment. You will need to prepare for three different outcomes to your meetings.

- You select a mentor, ask him or her to mentor you, and he or she accepts. First, how will you communicate your interest in being mentored by the person you choose? Be forthright by asking, "Would you consider being my mentor?" Be sure to communicate your expectations, time commitment and, most importantly, how his or her talents match your developmental needs. Set up a next meeting.
- You select a mentor, ask him or her to mentor you, and he or she denies the request. It is important to remember that the candidates have the right to

say yes or no to you. Prepare your approach so that it is as comfortable as possible for the mentor to say no.

- You decide not to ask a candidate to mentor you. How will you communicate this? You'll need to balance directness with respect.

7. Send a thank you note. Thank each candidate for taking the time to meet with you. In the note to your mentor, review next steps. For example, "I look forward to our next meeting on June 14."

If you are at the point in your career where you want to "give back" and pass on what you have learned, it is a great time to become a mentor. If you are seeking to initiate your own formal mentoring relationship, then your task is to find a mentee who will be a good match. (If you are part of an office-sponsored mentoring program, then your match is made for you, based on your input and the mentoring board's sense of who would be the best fit for you.)

How to find a mentee

Below is a step-by-step process for finding someone to mentor.

1. Clarify your mentoring goals. One of the first steps in finding and selecting a mentee is to think in advance what skills or knowledge you would like to "pass along." Highlight any particular qualities you plan to bring to a mentoring partnership:

- Leadership/supervisory experience
- Confidante/sounding board
- Optimistic, positive attitude
- Political, organizational savvy
- Commitment to helping people grow and develop
- Writing skills
- Networker
- Team builder, player
- Listening skills

- Interpersonal skills
- Communication skills
- Public speaking skills
- A successful career path
- Highly regarded technically
- Other

2. Explore time commitment. Realistically, how much time do you have to dedicate to the mentoring process? What type of obstacles could potentially get in the way? Are you willing to dedicate personal time to the mentoring process (e.g., lunch with your mentee)?

3. Describe your ideal mentee. Once you have clarified your mentoring goals and identified the characteristics you bring to the table, the next step is to explore the traits to look for in an ideal mentee. Think for a moment...how would you describe the qualities, capabilities, and character of your ideal mentee? Are you looking for someone who wants to hone their technical expertise in a certain area or would you prefer someone who wants to broaden their leadership and organizational experience? Are you looking for someone who is new to the organization or would you prefer a seasoned employee who has hit a plateau? Are you looking for someone who has a similar behavioral style or would you prefer someone with a contrasting style and outlook?

Based on experience, we have learned that the mentees who benefit most from the mentoring experience tend to share some common traits:

- Passion for learning
- Lives up to his/her own potential
- Good communicator
- Follows through on commitments
- Receptive to feedback
- Trustworthy, keeps confidences

These are good things to keep in mind when you are envisioning your ideal mentee.

4. Advertise your willingness to mentor. Talk to your supervisor, human resources and training offices, and people in your professional network. Let them know you are interested in mentoring. Once you get the word out about your availability, people will start coming to you for mentoring.

5. Explore the candidate's background. When someone expresses interest in being mentored, consider finding out more about him or her from outside sources (e.g., people in your professional network). Gain as much information as you can about the potential mentee to see if he or she is someone you might want to work with.

6. Arrange a meeting. Arrange face-to-face or telephone meetings with the potential mentee to explore the possibility of a mentoring partnership. Ask to hear the mentee's "story." Explore career aspirations and areas needing development. This will help you determine if you have the experience or knowledge to help him or her.

7. Prepare for "the close." If you and the mentee feel you would like to go forward with a formal mentoring relationship, decide upon the next steps.

It may also help to plan in advance what you will say if you choose not to be this person's mentor. Preparing for this possibility can greatly ease a potentially uncomfortable moment for both of you.

How to proceed with the mentoring relationship

Plan for success

Once you have selected a mentor or mentee, we suggest that you dedicate some time to planning. The reason for a plan is simple: it helps you stay focused and on track. It functions just as a project plan does - it clarifies expectations, defines roles, and establishes milestones by which you can measure progress. Even if your mentoring partner is in another location, try to do your planning in a face-to-face meeting.

Some people find plans constraining. They would rather just keep things open-ended. While this approach has its benefits, the pitfall is that it is almost impossible to assess your accomplishments when outcomes and actions are not defined.

Good planning is the best tool you have for avoiding problems down the road. So even if it feels uncomfortable or unnecessary to discuss these issues up front, do it anyway. It will pay off in the long run.

The most effective plans have two major components: a Mentoring Development Plan and a Mentoring Agreement. Each is described below.

Components of a sound plan

Part I: The Mentoring Development Plan

To begin, the mentee should have a Mentoring Development Plan (MDP) that outlines his or her job-related learning goals and activities. A Mentoring Development Plan is a great way to document the goals of the mentoring relationship. We suggest that mentees review their MDP with their mentors and decide whether the mentoring process will address the goals identified in the MDP. Although this handbook suggests the template shown in Appendix C, the Coast Guard Individual Development Plan (IDP) is also a great tool that can be used between the mentee and the mentor to discuss and set mentoring goals. The main difference between the MDP mentioned in the handbook and the Coast

Guard IDP is that the MDP is normally used for a more focused look at a specific mentoring relationship or goal; whereas, the Coast Guard IDP can be used as a short-term or long-term plan that may cover many different areas of a member's plan, including but limited to: Education, Wellness, Financial, Professional Development, Personal Development, Family, Transition Planning, etc.

Typical topics for employee-level mentoring include:

- Time management
- Relationship management
- Public speaking
- Managing multiple priorities
- Technical competencies
- Political savvy

Some typical topics for managers being mentored include:

- Political savvy
- Relationship management
- Negotiation and conflict management
- Managing in a turbulent environment
- Interfacing with other agencies and Congress
- Motivating employees and teams

For other ideas, please refer to Appendix A for information on the Coast Guard Leadership Competencies.

Once the mentor and mentee agree upon the areas they will focus on, they should make a specific plan for learning activities and timeframes. A common mistake is to assume that a training class is the best option for learning. Classroom training is only one of the learning experiences available to a mentee, and is not always the most appropriate way to learn. For a list and explanation of learning activities, please refer to Appendix B.

Once you have selected the learning goals and activities, this map will serve as the "Mentoring Development Plan." For a sample Mentoring Plan, please refer to Appendix C.

Part II: The Mentoring Agreement

The Mentoring Agreement outlines how the mentee and mentor will work together. In other words, it is a plan for the mentoring relationship. It should spell out:

- When you will meet or talk (we suggest at least four hours per month)
- Roles and responsibilities
- Back up plans for missed meetings
- Mentor's availability between scheduled meetings
- How to keep the supervisor informed and involved
- Confidentiality - what, if anything, of the mentoring conversations can be shared with others

For a sample Mentoring Agreement, see Appendix D.

Planning tips for “virtual” or distance mentoring

Some mentees find mentors who are located far from their current duty station. This can be a challenge, but does not need to be a major barrier to an effective mentoring relationship. The steps that you can take to strengthen your “virtual partnership” include:

Try to coordinate your travel schedules to meet in person whenever possible.

If you are going to be in the same city on business, arrange to spend time together. It is a great opportunity for the mentee to shadow the mentor, and for the mentor to observe the mentee in action. If shadowing your mentor will keep you out of the office longer than your normal work duties require, get your supervisor’s approval for the extra time.

Utilize technology: Videoconferencing and e-mail.

Make and be diligent about keeping a regularly scheduled phone appointment.

Prepare thoroughly for phone conversations. Consider generating an agenda for the conversation and e-mailing your agenda items to each other in advance.

Build in frequent “check-ins.” Periodically, review with each other how the mentoring conversations are working and what might make them work even better.

STAYING ON TRACK

Benefits of periodic assessment

Successful mentoring partnerships continually evaluate the mentoring process to see if the effort is working and make quick adjustments when necessary. When mentoring partners regularly discuss their mentoring relationship, the conversation helps to maintain the momentum of the relationship and contributes value to the learning of each mentoring partner. (Zachary, 2000)

Assessment does not need to be an overwhelming process. Most healthy mentoring partnerships evaluate their effectiveness on a quarterly basis. A mentoring partnership will want to evaluate effectiveness in three vital areas (Drahosz 1999):

1. Time commitment

Time is one of the greatest challenges to the mentoring partnership and yet it is the “glue” that holds the relationship together.

How often are you meeting?

- Are you satisfied with that amount of time you are investing?
- What changes could be made to increase the amount of time dedicated to the mentoring partnership?

2. Mentoring Relationship

Although it can be a bit uncomfortable, it is vital to check in periodically on how the partnership is going. Refer to the Mentoring Agreement you crafted at the beginning of the relationship. Questions you may want to ask each other include:

- Are you getting what you need?
- Does the mentor have the experience and resources?
- Is the mentor/mentee committed to the process?
- What is the mentor/mentee doing well?

- What would you like your mentor/mentee do more of?
- Less of?

3. Accomplishments

It is also important to make sure that you are on track with the learning goals and activities you set out in the Mentoring Development Plan.

- What are the three most important accomplishments?
 - What developmental activities have made the biggest impact?
 - What barriers, if any, have stood in the way of our goals?
 - Do we need to adjust the goals, or remove the barriers?
-

How to self-assess

While the factors above help you evaluate the mentoring relationship and its outcomes, it is also a good idea for each partner to look at his or her own contributions to the mentoring process.

Don't be afraid to adjust your plans along the way. Frequently, as the mentoring progresses, the goals for the mentoring change or the partners find they need to update or adjust their agreements with each other.

TROUBLE-SHOOTING

Signs of a partnership in trouble

If a partnership is going awry, there are usually warning signs along the way. These signs include:

- Conflicting goals or values
- Confidentiality agreement violated
- Lack of interest
- Lack of trust
- Infrequent interaction
- No longer learning/growing

If these symptoms crop up, addressing them early can get the partnership back on track and revitalize the relationship.

Trouble-shooting: Issues the mentee might face

Mentors and mentees face some common and some distinct challenges within their partnerships. This section outlines some of the more typical issues that mentees face, with suggested solutions.

Q: What if my mentor isn't returning my calls?

A: Try not to jump to conclusions or take it personally. Try to contact your mentor three times. If he or she still doesn't respond, try an alternate form of communication, such as e-mail. If you can, address the lack of response directly with your mentor. Try to find out why he or she isn't contacting you – often mentors are simply very busy or are dealing with a temporary crisis. If you're wondering if your mentor still has the time and interest to mentor you, ask.

Q: Sometimes I feel like I might be imposing on my mentor. How do I know if I'm asking too much?

A: Your first reference point is your Mentoring Agreement. How much time did your mentor offer you? What did he or she say about contacting him or her between meetings?

Try not being shy to ask for what you'd like. In return, however, be respectful of your mentor's response. If your mentor says no to your requests, honor that, and don't take it personally.

Q: What if my mentor is suggesting things that are opposite of what my supervisor tells me?

A: Use your judgment. Ultimately, you are responsible to your supervisor, and you should be sensitive to his/her values and style. Not everything a mentor suggests will work in your particular situation, so weigh the suggestions in the context of your environment. However, just hearing the mentor's point of view can be useful in expanding your own thinking. Follow the guidance, "Take what you like and leave the rest."

Q: What if I feel my mentor is not helping me? What do I do if I feel he or she is being too directive or telling me too many stories?

A: The mentoring relationship is a great place to practice effective, respectful directness. Bring up your concerns; your mentor can't improve if he or she doesn't know there is a problem. Communicate what works best for you. Perhaps you can initiate a mentoring "process check," where each of you lays out what the other can stop, start, or continue to make the mentoring work optimally for both of you.

Trouble-Shooting: Issues the mentor might face

Mentors can face their own difficulties in navigating the mentoring process. Below is some of the typical issues mentors' encounter, with some suggestions on how to handle them.

Q: What if my mentee is not progressing toward completion of his/her goals?

A: Avoid assuming responsibility for your mentee's accomplishments. Rather, play the "Challenger" role. You

may mention that you've noticed the mentee's lack of progress. Inquire as to what has been getting in the way, and encourage mentee to develop strategies to get back on track.

Q: What if my mentee is having conflicts with his/her supervisor?

A: Stay out of the middle. Resist any urge to speak to the supervisor yourself or mediate the conflict. Instead, you can be a sounding board for the mentee to sort out the problem (Counselor role). You can share your own experiences, and offer insight (Guide role). You can help your mentee more by teaching him/her to solve a problem than by solving it yourself.

**Trouble-
shooting: Issues
you both might
face**

There are a few stumbling blocks that can trip up either or both partners in mentoring. The following Q and A's address some of those issues:

Q: What if there's no "chemistry" between us?

A: One way to define "chemistry" is trust plus respect (Drahoz, 1999). As long as both of those elements are present, you have the ingredients for effective mentoring. A common misconception about mentoring is that the partners have to "hit it off" or feel a kinship. In fact, our experience in office-sponsored programs shows that some of the most effective mentoring partnerships have been those in which significant differences (in age, experience, function, style, etc.) existed. While these may not be the easiest relationships, they are often the ones that provide the greatest learning for both mentor and mentee.

Our advice: stay open to what your mentee or mentor has to offer you, even if you have to leave your comfort zone to take advantage of it.

Q: How do I know if I can trust my mentor or mentee?

A: Trust is an essential ingredient to mentoring success, yet many people are wary of being too honest in organizations. As you are forming your mentoring agreement at the beginning, talk as openly as you can about what each of you needs from the other in order to trust him or her. Confidentiality is an important component to discuss when building trust.

CLOSING OUT

How to close

It is important to end your mentoring relationship as consciously as you started it. The end marks a passage, a completion. We have found that mentors and mentees gain a great deal from taking stock of their learning and accomplishments together.

If possible, set up a meeting face-to-face. If you want an informal setting, meet over coffee or lunch. You can explore questions such as:

- How have we benefited personally and professionally from the mentoring process?
 - What were our accomplishments? What did we each learn?
 - What did we like best about our mentoring partnership? What did we most appreciate about each other?
 - How might we use what we learned about mentoring in the future?
 - Do we plan to stay in contact? If so, how? If not, what final thoughts do we have for each other?
-

APPENDIX A: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (COMDTINST M5351.3 Series)

Overview. Initially approved 7 June 2004, the Coast Guard Leadership Development Framework consists of three components: The Coast Guard's twenty-eight leadership competencies, responsibility levels and required levels of expertise, and methods for gaining and demonstrating competency.

Component 1 – Twenty-Eight Leadership Competencies. Leadership competencies are the knowledge, skills, and expertise the Coast Guard expects of its leaders. While there is some overlap in these competencies, they generally fall within four broad categories: Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Performance and Change, and Leading the Coast Guard. Together, these four leadership categories and their elements are instrumental to career success. Developing them in all Coast Guard people will result in the continuous improvement necessary for us to remain always ready—Semper Paratus.

1. **Leading Self.** Fundamental to successful development as a leader is an understanding of self and one's own abilities. This includes understanding one's personality, values, and preferences, while simultaneously recognizing one's potential as a Coast Guard member. Personal conduct, health and well-being, character, technical proficiency, lifelong learning, followership, and organizational commitment are elements to consider when setting short and long-term goals focused upon the leadership development of "self."

2. **Leading Others.** Leadership involves working with and influencing others to achieve common goals and to foster a positive workplace climate. Coast Guard members interact with others in many ways, whether as supervisor, mentor, manager, team member, team leader, peer or worker. Positive professional relationships provide a foundation for the success of our Service. Showing respect for others, using effective communications, influencing others, working in teams, and taking care of one's people are elements to consider when evaluating one's capacity for leading others. Developing these qualities will increase capacity to serve.

3. **Leading Performance and Change.** The Coast Guard and its members constantly face challenges in mission operations. To meet these challenges, leaders must apply performance competencies to their daily duties. Performance competencies include developing a vision, managing conflict, quality and daily management of projects, appraising

performance, problem solving, creativity, innovation, decision making, and customer focus. Having these competencies enables each leader—and the Service—to perform to the utmost in any situation.

4. **Leading the Coast Guard**. As leaders gain experience in the Coast Guard they must understand how it fits into a broader structure of department, branch, government, and the nation as a whole. At a local level, leaders often develop partnerships with public and private sector organizations in order to accomplish the mission. The Coast Guard "plugs in" via its key systems: money, people, and technology. A leader must thoroughly understand these systems and how they interact with similar systems outside the Coast Guard. An awareness of the Coast Guard's value to the nation, and promoting that using a deep understanding of the political system in which we operate becomes more important as one gets more senior. Leaders must develop coalitions and partnerships with allies inside and outside the Coast Guard.

Twenty-Eight Leadership Competencies

Leading Self	Leading Others	Leading Performance & Change	Leading The Coast Guard
Accountability & Responsibility	Effective Communications	Conflict Management	Financial Management
Aligning Values	Team Building	Customer Focus	Technology Management
Followership	Influencing Others	Decision Making & Problem Solving	Human Resource Management
Health & Well Being	Mentoring	Management & Process Improvement	External Awareness
Self Awareness & Learning	Respect for Others & Diversity Management	Vision Development & Implementation	Political Savvy
Personal Conduct	Taking Care of People	Creativity & Innovation	Partnering
Technical Proficiency			Entrepreneurship
			Stewardship
			Strategic Thinking

Component 2 - Responsibility Levels and Required Levels of Expertise.

Responsibility levels are most generally defined by grade or rank, however, many times rank alone is not an accurate indication of the responsibilities or expertise an individual requires, or has achieved, within a competency. As examples, a PO3 at one work-place may have seven direct reports while a PO3 at another work-place might not have any. A captain may command a cutter or ISC while others might supervise staff sections of six to eight subject matter experts. Notwithstanding current and past assignments and experiences, there is a level of expertise in each leadership competency that can be expected of all individuals within a given grade or rank. As your level of responsibility in the Coast Guard increases, your level of expertise in each of the twenty-eight leadership competencies deepens. The Leadership and Development Framework is a continuum. As you advance, you maintain the expertise you achieved at the lower levels of responsibility and build upon those knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Responsibility Levels

Performance Level	Attendant Responsibilities	Enlisted	Officers	Civilian Employees	Auxiliary
Executive	The highest-level policy and decision makers in the Coast Guard.	E10, CMCs	Flags	SES	COMO
Senior Manager	Officials with programmatic or command responsibilities including overall supervision of an organization or unit.	E9	O6/O5 W4	GS15/14	DC, VCO, RCO, DSO
Mid-Level Manager	Managers of first-line supervisors, such as department heads, executive officers, executive petty officers and division chiefs.	E8/E7	O4/O3 W3/W2	GS13/12 WS (all)	DVC, DCP, VCP, SO
First-line Supervisor	Supervisors of others with responsibility for the accomplishment of specific tasks or processes.	E6-E4	O2/O1	GS11/9 WL (all)	FC, VFC, FSO
Worker	No significant supervisory duties.	E3-E1		GS1/8 WG (all)	MEMBER

Component 3 – Gaining and Demonstrating Competency. Regardless of whether you are an active duty member, reservist, civilian employee, or Auxiliarist, Coast Guard personnel are interested in knowing how to become competitive for increasingly responsible and rewarding positions. Supervisors and managers want to know how to improve their own performance, how to manage change in their organizations, how to improve organizational performance, and how to assist subordinates with their own professional development.

1. Coast Guard members have access to a variety of means to gain the required levels of expertise in each of the twenty-eight leadership competencies. These include the Unit Leadership Development Program (ULDP), resident and non-resident Coast Guard training programs, voluntary education at local schools and universities, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Services (DANTES), SkillSoft courses, the USDA Graduate School, senior service schools, noncommissioned officer academies, and the other Armed Forces' resident and non-resident training programs. Finally, don't overlook informal learning opportunities available through unit activities, local experts, mentoring, job aids, desk guides, job assignments (rotational and job shadowing), SkillSoft's "Books 24 x 7" and Coast Guard reading lists.

2. Simply learning new skills and abilities is not enough. Education or training alone is never a guarantee of advancement. To complete the professional development cycle you need to practice those skills and to demonstrate your abilities as a leader. If you wait to be presented that "big" leadership challenge, you'll continue to wait. It is important that you incorporate newly acquired skills into current performance. Look for the numerous, small opportunities that present themselves daily and practice your newly acquired leadership abilities. (Repeated demonstration of competency is the easiest way to maximize your contributions to Coast Guard missions.)

APPENDIX B: LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Classroom course

Definition: The mentee attends a class, either at a training site or via the Web.

Best uses: Developing mentees who learn best by a combination of theory and practice Developing mentees who learn best by interaction with others. Exposing mentees to the views and perspectives of a wide range of people.

Shadow assignments

Definition: The mentee watches someone else perform a task or a series of tasks. The shadowing can be very short-term, e.g., observing a meeting. Or, it can be of longer duration, e.g., observing a mentor over an entire day or multiple days.

Best uses: Developing mentees who learn best by watching; providing the mentee with exposure to a task or environment.

Observation and feedback

Definition: The mentee performs a task and is observed while doing it. The observation can be accomplished by someone watching and taking notes or through videotape and replay. The observer provides feedback and engages the mentee in analysis, learning, and strategy-formulation for future situations.

Best uses: Developing mentees who learn best by doing a task and getting another person's feedback and/or by watching themselves in action.

Detail assignments

Definition: The mentee leaves his or her present position for a short term and either assumes another position or participates in a task force.

Best uses: Developing mentees who learn best by doing Allowing mentees to test out first-hand a different job or area Providing mentees with direct exposure to new people, ideas, or problems.

Self-Study & research

Definition: The mentee undertakes an individual course of study. This could include reading books and articles, conducting interviews, or conducting an extensive Internet search.

Best uses: Developing mentees who learn best by reading Increasing knowledge that does not require hands-on application to assimilate.

Note: For a great resource, check out the free e-learning courses that are available through **SkillSoft**. You will find courses that include leadership, management, personal development, communication, and many other topics. To access the site from the CG Portal main welcome page, click on “Training and Education,” then “SkillSoft,” then “Catalog.”

Also available on SkillSoft; **Books 24 x 7**, one of the largest online book resources offering unobstructed access to the complete unabridged contents of thousands of the latest and best business and technology books. To access the site from the CG Portal main welcome page, click on “Training and Education,” then “SkillSoft,” then “Books24x7.”

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MENTORING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Learning goals and objectives. What leadership competencies or skills do I want to strengthen?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Measures of success. How will I know I have developed each competency and/or skill? What will tell me I have succeeded or made adequate progress in my development?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Developmental activities. What learning activities will allow me to develop these competencies and/or skills and reach my measures of success?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE MENTORING AGREEMENT

Our meetings/contact

- When: Where: How long: What will be the frequency or our meetings or calls (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly):
- What happens if a partner cannot meet?
- Who is responsible for rescheduling?

Roles and responsibilities

- As the mentor, I am responsible for:
- As the mentee, I am responsible for:

Our relationship

- We will honor the following confidentiality agreement. (Note: Be sure to clarify assumptions. For example, “What we discuss stays between the two of us.” “What we discuss stays between the two of us unless you give me permission to share it with others.”)
- If either of us feels that the other is not living up to our agreements, we will address this by:
- We understand this is a volunteer partnership. If at any point in the relationship it is not working we will terminate the partnership by:

Mentor signature

Mentee signature

Date: _____

Date: _____

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