Mentoring Activity List

Not sure how to engage your mentee in professional development effectively, or are you just looking for ideas to improve the quality of your interactions? Below you will find a list of recommended activities or topics to engage in with your mentee.

Starting Out

- Discuss your expectations of one another. Do you expect your mentee to initiate most communication, or do you prefer that it be more balanced? Be careful not to make assumptions. If you expect something, such as that your mentee responds to an email from you within 48 hours, be specific in stating so. It is likely that your mentee has not had many, if any, professional relationships such as this one.
- Establish ground rules. Are you open to discussing all topics or are certain topics off limits? How formal or informal do you want the relationship to be? Agree upon how frequently you would like to meet or communicate and the methods by which you will do so.
- Share your current resume with your mentee and ask her to share hers with you. Talk about what you look for in a resume or in an individual’s experience when you are hiring.
- Share a life experience that had a significant impact on your career trajectory.
- Ask your mentee about his current career goals. Talk about your own career goals and how they have evolved over time.

Developing

- Identify an article or book that you feel would be beneficial for your mentee to read. Plan a time to discuss the reading at an upcoming meeting.
- Help your mentee develop an “elevator pitch.” What information should he convey to potential employers in a brief conversation?
- Ask your mentee about the professional development activities he has participated in as a student at Kansas State (e.g., student organizations, career fair, etc.) thus far. Encourage him to get involved in Professional Advantage (cba.k-state.edu/ProfessionalAdvantage), student organizations and Career Services (k-state.edu/ces), if he isn’t already.
- Invite your mentee to come shadow you or others in your workplace for a partial or full day. Talk about what a typical day is like for you and what tasks/responsibilities within your current position you enjoy most and those you find most challenging.
- Give your mentee clear, objective feedback regarding her attitude, presence and other skills, such as hand-shaking and smiling, then offer suggestions on how she can improve on them.
- Coach your mentee on professional correspondence. When should he send email versus a typed note versus a handwritten note? What elements/information should be included? What are some common mistakes to avoid?
- Discuss generational differences you have noticed in the workplace.
- Ask your mentee to create a vision for where she wants to be in five, ten and/or fifteen years – even if she does not know which career path she would like to be on, ask her to describe the setting and elements she pictures as being part of her future.
- Ask your mentee to share a workplace (or similar) situation with you that he feels he handled poorly and how he might have handled it differently in retrospect. Offer your feedback. Similarly, discuss a time when he handled a situation well. Talk about how what he has learned in these situations can be applied to his career. Share similar examples from your own experience.
- Ask your mentee to identify risks, difficulties or stress she is facing in the coming months (e.g., job search, challenging academic load, upcoming exam, balancing work and school, etc.). Discuss strategies for minimizing stress and preparing in positive ways to handle these challenges.
- Encourage your mentee to get involved in an appropriate professional organization – many organizations allow for student members or have student chapters (such as Rotaract).
- Take your mentee to a networking event.
- Give your mentee short “homework” assignments that will enhance his understanding of the industry he is about to enter.
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- Talk to your mentee about appropriate clothing for interviews and office. Make sure she is clear on the differences between casual, business casual and professional dress.
- Review typical interview questions that your mentee may encounter on a phone or in-person interview. Discuss the qualities of a good response versus poor response.
- Discuss the importance of intercultural communication skills in the workplace – how to develop them (e.g., study abroad, meeting international students) and examples of when you have used these skills.
- Have your mentee identify three goals he has for the semester or year. Assist your mentee in determining if these goals are SMART\(^1\) - specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. If not, help your mentee to adapt his goals. Work together to develop an action plan for achieving these goals.
- Share tips or strategies you use for building your network and for remembering and maintaining contact with business associates.
- Discuss the appropriate use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.) and how employers might use this information when making a hire.
- Encourage your mentee to establish a LinkedIn account and discuss ways LinkedIn can be used to grow her professional network.
- Invite your mentee to have a business lunch or dinner with you and a couple of your colleagues. Afterward, discuss the ways in which your mentee handled himself well and ways in which he can improve (e.g., dining etiquette, appropriateness of conversation topics and responses, body language, etc.).
- Ask a colleague to conduct a mock interview with your mentee and give the mentee feedback on her performance. Talk to your colleague and hold a debriefing session with your mentee later.
- Discuss personal branding/marketing. Challenge your mentee to think about what makes him unique and the ways in which he can differentiate himself from other applicants. How should he utilize this information in his application materials and interviews?

Concluding Your Formal Relationship

- Share with your mentee the things that you learned from your interactions with her and the positive ways in which she has impacted your life.
- Plan a way to celebrate your work together and the success of your mentee.

References and Further Information:


