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FOR WOMEN**

Building your relationship: a guide for new pairs

Introduction

Phase 1 of the mentoring cycle is essential for establishing a solid foundation in your mentoring relationship. Investing time in this phase to truly understand each other will have a lasting impact on the relationship's growth and success.

Follow the Mentoring programme's guidelines

Adhering to the Mentoring Women in Business Participation Guidelines is essential. These guidelines offer a structured pathway for relationship development and help ensure that your mentoring journey is productive. Regular monthly meetings of at least two hours provide the necessary space to discuss goals, review progress, and address any concerns. Allowing the mentee to take the lead helps the relationship progress at a pace that suits her needs. Promptly responding to communications from the Mentoring Team will ensure you receive the support you need.

Beyond the basics: strengthening your relationship

While following the guidelines is crucial, there are additional behaviours that can further solidify your mentoring relationship from the outset. This resource will guide you in fostering a productive and supportive partnership.

Understanding programme phases

The Mentoring programme is structured into four phases, each offering specific focus areas to guide your interactions. Familiarising yourself with these phases will help you maintain direction and build confidence as your relationship evolves. The Mentoring Team will provide phase-specific guidance, so be sure to integrate these insights as you progress.

Invest time in getting to know each other

While it's tempting to dive straight into business matters, the initial phase should prioritise relationship-building. Demonstrate your commitment by taking time to learn about your mentoring partner's passions, hobbies, interests, and motivations. Understanding who they are as a person will enhance your ability to work with them effectively and enrich the mentoring experience.

Establish clear ground rules

Setting clear expectations and ground rules is essential for a structured and mutually respectful relationship. Begin by discussing what each of you hopes to gain from the programme and how you see your relationship working. This shared understanding will lay the groundwork for effective communication and collaboration, and meet expectations.

Consider including the following in your ground rules:

- Primary method of communication: Determine how you will communicate (e.g., email, phone, video calls).
- Meeting availability: Agree on a regular schedule for meetings.
- Communication standards: Set expectations for response times and availability.
- Agenda formats: Outline how meeting agendas will be prepared and followed.
- Participation: Clarify roles and expectations during meetings.

These rules should be mutually agreed upon and adaptable as your relationship evolves.

Cultivate mutual respect

Respect is the cornerstone of any successful mentoring relationship. Mutual respect fosters openness, reinforces responsibilities, and builds trust. Show respect by valuing your mentoring partner's time and contributions. Be punctual, well-prepared, and communicative. If you need to reschedule or miss a deadline, inform your partner promptly and arrange an alternative. Likewise, respond with understanding if your partner faces similar challenges.

Practice active listening

Effective communication is essential, and active listening is key to understanding your mentoring partner's perspectives. Engage fully by asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing their statements to ensure understanding, and allowing them to speak without interruption. Demonstrating that you are truly listening will encourage open and productive dialogue.



Maintain enthusiasm, compassion, and empathy

Throughout your mentoring relationship, you'll discuss a variety of topics. It's important to approach each conversation with enthusiasm, compassion, and empathy. You're likely coming from very different cultures, and it's important to leave any assumptions and preconceptions behind, so you can really get to know each other. By consistently demonstrating these qualities, you create a safe space where both parties feel comfortable sharing openly. This mutual support will foster a deeper, more meaningful connection.

Conclusion

Phase 1 is about laying the groundwork for a successful mentoring relationship. By following the programme guidelines, establishing clear expectations, and fostering mutual respect and understanding, you will set the stage for a productive and fulfilling mentoring relationship where both mentee and mentor can flourish.

