

Defining Mentoring Goals

Once you have come to an agreement on roles and expectations, it is time for a mentee to set some goals and to develop an action plan for achieving them. Goals should be both a stretch, something inspiring to work towards that may require new skills or the use of different “intellectual muscles”, but also focused enough that the mentee can achieve them.

Goals may be personal (for example: developing personal independence), community (for example: beginning a volunteer assignment with a local nonprofit), or professional (for example: developing leadership experience) in nature. Goals may also change over time. For some, setting goals will help to set the tone for the relationship. For others, time spent relationship-building will help to facilitate the process of setting goals.

When writing goals, use the SMART goal model. Goal statements should be:

Specific – the goal statement should be concrete and action-oriented. What, specifically, is the mentee trying to accomplish? Ask: what do you mean by that? Are there ways to restate the goal to remove any misunderstanding? Does the goal start with an action verb (for example: develop, improve, create)?

Measurable – how will the mentee know when she has achieved the goal? How will she track and measure progress? How does she define success?

Achievable – the goal should require work but be attainable. Is the goal too big (for example, “become a senior vice president in 3 years” is probably too big of a goal for a new employee) or too limited (for example, “begin work on time each day” probably does not require much work)?

Realistic – does the mentee have the ability and commitment to reach the goal? What additional resources, of time, money, or capability, will be needed for her to reach the goal? Does the goal set her up for failure from the outset?

Timely – there should be a specific time-frame for achieving the goal which will keep your mentee accountable.

Let’s look at an example: *Develop a personal support network of mentors, accountability partners, and sponsors by the end of my first year in my new job role.* Now a mentee can write out an action plan to achieve that goal, including action steps. A sample action plan is included below.

Mentoring Action Plan

Goal: Develop a personal support network of mentors, accountability partners, and sponsors by the end of the first year in my new job role.

Action Steps

1. Identify and meet with 2-3 employees within my team and/or organization to discuss and receive feedback on my work projects and career goals
2. Identify and meet with 2-3 people at other organizations to engage in curiosity conversations, to learn more about their career paths and personal interests
3. Identify and volunteer with or join at least 1 nonprofit or community organization

Mentoring Action Plan Worksheet

Goal 1:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Goal 2:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Goal 3:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Goal 4:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.