

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: joining a new community organization) 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 (or he) 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 CEO of the company” is probably too big of a goal for a young professional) or too limited (for example, “get experience consulting with clients” probably does not require much work for a new professional whose job is already designed to consult regularly with clients)?

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 leadership skill set through relationship-building, professional development opportunities, and project management experience by the end of the year.* 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 leadership skill set through relationship-building, professional development opportunities, and project management experience by the end of the year.*

Action Steps

1. Identify and meet with 2-3 senior colleagues within the company to learn about leadership style and lessons learned through professional management experiences
2. Attend leadership development seminars offered by the company’s Human Resources Department
3. Manage upcoming large-scale project, including team member assignments, deadlines, and work flow, in order to gain exposure to project management and leadership experience

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.