



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

**GUIDELINES
FOR
MENTORING PROGRAMS**

Copies available from:

Society for Technical Communication

901 N. Stuart St., Suite 904

Arlington, VA 22203-1822

(703) 522-4114 / (703) 522-2075 (fax)

stc@stc.org

www.stc.org

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Guidelines for Mentoring Programs

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a way for more experienced technical communicators to share their experiences with new or less experienced “protégés.” A mentor acts as a trusted counselor, or guide, who assists the mentored protégé in setting and achieving goals for developing career direction and skills. By participating in a mentor/protégé relationship, mentors develop valuable skills that can further their personal and professional development as well. The relationship between mentor and protégé requires honesty, openness, commitment, and effort by both individuals.

In a mentoring relationship, mentor and protégé:

- Identify objectives, goals, and developmental needs.
- Define and establish a plan to accomplish protégé goals.
- Meet regularly in person or via phone or e-mail to review and evaluate progress.

A successful mentoring relationship benefits those involved through increased confidence and a sense of direction. The relationship provides a risk-free learning environment in which to offer career guidance.

Mentoring relationships can develop between individuals within an organization, between individuals in two different organizations, or between students and STC professionals.

Mentoring is NOT

- casual advice
- necessarily for everyone
- on-the-job training
- a guarantee of a successful career

What principles does mentoring include?

Many mentoring programs adhere to a common set of mentoring principles:

- Mentoring is all-inclusive; no one is excluded who wants to participate.

- Mentoring is an enabling process that facilitates career development and skills exchange.
- The mentor and protégé are mutually committed to a beneficial mentoring relationship.
- Mentoring is based on an absolute commitment to trust and confidentiality between participants.

What are the roles in a mentoring program?

To get the most out of the relationship, mentors and protégés need to understand their roles in the mentor program.

Mentor's role

A mentor serves as a role model, offering penalty-free advice and counsel, and providing candid feedback to the protégé.

In a mentoring relationship within an organization, the mentor

- Introduces the protégé to people in the organization
- Helps the protégé get oriented
- Familiarizes the protégé with organizational processes and procedures.

In a mentoring relationship between organizations, the mentor

- Listens and offers feedback
- Recommends developmental activities
- Suggest and provides resources
- Communicates experiences and challenges.

In a mentoring relationship between an STC professional and a student, the mentor

- Assists the student in professional networking
- Provides job shadowing opportunities
- Serves as a counselor and a guide.

In all mentoring relationships, mentors can

- Suggest methods for advancing protégés' growth and offer résumé assistance and long-term career guidance
- Provide lists of relevant books and Web resources and introduce their protégés to some of the jargon of the trade
- Point out STC Society-level and chapter-level benefits
- Discuss training and educational opportunities

- Explore career goals and the numerous career paths technical communicator can pursue.

Mentor benefits

Mentors who participate in a mentoring relationship

- Gain personal satisfaction from helping others discover and reach their potential
- Gain exposure to new perspectives from the protégé
- Expand professional networks
- Enhance coaching, feedback, and leadership skills.

Protégé's role

The success of a mentoring relationship is often based on what the protégé wants to achieve from it. The protégé should

- Ask questions
- Listen
- Share ongoing career planning and development
- Be open to the mentor's suggestions
- Keep the lines of communication open with his or her mentor.

Protégé benefits

Protégés who participate in a mentoring relationship

- Develop networks
- Receive valuable sounding boards
- Receive career guidance
- Increase their visibility
- Learn to adapt to changing professional and organizational circumstances
- Develop or enhance skills needed to move forward in their careers.

Although a mentor can suggest growth opportunities and career guidance, the protégé is ultimately responsible for his or her own career development.

How should mentors prepare for their roles?

To help ensure the mentor/protégé relationship is successful the mentor should

- Be willing to commit a minimum of two hours a month to the relationship
- Think about what relevant books and Web resources might be of value to the protégé.

How long should mentoring continue?

Because each individual learns and absorbs information at different rates, the length of time the mentoring relationship lasts depends on the individuals involved. Therefore, each mentor and protégé must determine how long the mentoring relationship should continue. Some relationships last for years.

To start, consider the following time scale:

- 3-6 months for relationships within an organization
- 6-12 months for relationships between organizations
- 1-2 terms for professional/student relationships