

Communications Skill Guide

Create the best mentor/mentee relationship possible. Here are some practical suggestions to help enhance your communication skills.

Mentee Communications Skills Guide

Encourage Feedback

- *Tell your mentor that you want feedback.* Encourage them to give you both good and bad news. Then, thank them for providing such information.
- *Identify areas in which you want feedback.* Do communicate your desire for feedback on issues and areas that you feel are your weak points.
- *Use statements to encourage feedback.* Statements such as “Tell me more about that,” or questions that cannot be answered yes or no will help you receive clarification.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask

- *Ask when lost.* When you're lost, ask more insightful questions. Don't just look for answers.
- *Ask to identify issues.* Questions can be used to solve problems. For example, you might ask about problems your Mentor experienced and how he/she resolved those issues.
- *Ask for information.* Questions can also be used for clarification. For example, you can ask your Mentor what he/she meant about XYZ.
- *Inquire, don't interrogate.* Thoughtful questions are a powerful tool for learning! As with any other communication tool, be aware of your own intention for asking the question (e.g. learning more versus attacking someone else's idea), as well as the tone of your voice and word choice.

Listen Up!

- *Prepare to listen.* Effective listening requires preparation. Put aside papers, books and other materials that may distract you. Make sure your mentor has your full attention.
- *Pay attention.* Give your Mentor your undivided attention.
- *Show that you are listening.* Especially if you are meeting over the phone, encourage your Mentor to continue with small verbal comments like “Sounds good,” “Go on,” or even “Uh huh.”
- *Reflect on what has been said.* Sometimes personal biases and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said.

Promote Consensus

- *Remain open to different views.* While you may not always agree with your Mentor, try seeing things from their perspective. If you still disagree with something, let him/her know.
- *Remember there is no “I” in team.* Talk about what *we* hope to accomplish and how *we* can work together to achieve *our* objectives. Do not emphasize what *I* want done.

Reduce Misunderstanding

- *Think before you speak.* If you rehearse your thoughts, and it doesn't sound right, don't say it.
- *Speak up.* Voice something when you do not understand something.
- *Be clear.* Keep your message as simple as possible.
- *Don't assume.* Unless you say something, you usually cannot be entirely sure the other person knows what you're thinking or feeling.