

Communications Skill Guide

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

Mentor Communications Skills Guide

Encourage Feedback

- *Tell mentees that you want feedback.* Encourage them to give you both good and bad news. Welcome disagreement on issues. Then, thank them for providing the information.
- *Identify areas in which you want feedback.* Do communicate your desire for feedback on areas that can help your own communication style.
- *Consider scheduling feedback sessions.* It is easier to prevent mistakes or problems.
- *Use statements to encourage feedback.* Statements such as “Tell me more about that,” or questions that can't be answered with yes or no will better foster a real conversation.

Provide Constructive Feedback

- *Relax.* Remember your highest intentions are to bring out the best in your mentees. Making an effort to relax will make a positive difference in the tone of your meeting. Be respectful.
- *Share your intentions.* Remind your mentee that your feedback is NOT to tell them what they are doing wrong. Instead, you are trying to bring out the best in them.
- *Clarify your expectations.* Unvoiced expectations create problems when it's time to provide feedback. Be clear.
- *Ask questions.* When providing feedback, do not always assume that your Mentee understands or agrees with everything you have said.
- *See the positive as well as the negative.* Remind your mentee of what their strengths are.

Listen Up!

- *Prepare to listen.* Effective listening requires preparation. Put aside papers, books, and other materials that may distract you. Make sure your mentee has your full attention.
- *Pay attention.* Give your Mentee your undivided attention.
- *Show that you are listening.* Especially if you are meeting over the phone, encourage your mentee 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

- *Clarify the discussion.* Make sure that the activity is understandable, orderly and focused on one issue at a time.
- *Remain open to different views.* Good Mentors often learn from their mentees. Also, mentors can serve as models for the behavior of others by not being over-opinionated.

- *Remember there is no “I” in team.* Try to promote yourselves as a team. Talk about what *we* hope to accomplish and how *we* can work together to achieve *our* objectives.

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.