Tips for Successful Mentoring Relationships

You have decided to become a mentor — congratulations! Thank you for offering your time to provide guidance to an aspiring corrosion professional. The NACE Mentoring Center encourages you to follow these tips to build a successful mentoring relationship with your mentee.

What is my role as a NACE mentor?
Just as a financial advisor gives advice on how to meet personal finance goals, you will act as an advisor to your mentee and offer support and advice on how she can meet her professional development goals. As a mentor, sharing your experiences gives your mentee valuable industry insight and will help her to gain a better understanding of what the corrosion profession can be like. The conversations you have with your mentee should focus on answering questions she may have about your job, your career and the industry. You can address any challenges the mentee may have with her career growth and help her discover ways to progress.

A mentor-mentee relationship is built on trust. Remember to keep your conversations confidential. The mentee will look to you as a person to trust with his personal career questions and concerns.

What makes a successful mentoring relationship?
There are three key elements in a successful mentoring relationship:

- Clear communication
- Achievable goals
- An action plan to meet those goals

Begin your mentoring relationship with clear communication about what the expectations of the mentorship will be. Let your mentee know how long you are able to act as their mentor, when you are available to meet in person or talk on the phone, and the goals you can help your mentee achieve during the period of the mentorship.

Ask your mentee to share what her professional goals are. Then talk together about three achievable goals that you both can work on during the mentorship period. Defining the goals of the mentorship will help you to create an action plan to achieve those goals. See the next section for ideas on action steps you can take to support your mentee’s professional growth.

How do I provide mentoring?
There are many ways you can provide quality mentoring for your mentee. A few include:

Phone conversations. It is up to you how often you would like to be available for phone conversations. The NACE Mentoring Center recommends that you have at least one significant discussion with your mentee for each month of the mentorship. Some conversation starters include:

- Sharing about how you got your first job in the industry
- Describing a challenging moment or project in your career and the steps you took to overcome it
- Giving tips on what you know now that you wish you knew then

Skype calls. Skype or other free online video chats are an excellent way to connect with your mentee, especially if you both are not living in the same city. Video calls can be fun and help mentors and mentees create and maintain bonds.
Email. Tell your mentee that he can email you with any questions that he may have. Email is a quick way to get in touch and mentees will feel comforted knowing they can reach out to you by email.

Networking events or trade group meet-ups. If you are part of a trade group or networking organization that relates to your mentee’s field of interest, invite your mentee to join you for one of the meet-ups. Check to see if your professional group allows a free guest attendance or a student discount rate. This is a great way to expose your mentee to the industry.

Job shadow. Invite your mentee to shadow you at your company for a day or half-day. Give your mentee a tour of your workplace, explain your daily job tasks, and introduce him to your coworkers.

Resume editing and feedback. Ask your mentee to email you her resume. Take time to provide useful feedback. Proofread the resume for typographical errors. The resume is the most important professional document your mentee will have to represent herself in the industry — help make it a great one.

Professional portfolio. Help your mentee build a professional portfolio of his best work. Portfolio items may include writing samples, project samples, performance evaluations, complimentary emails or letters of recommendation, awards and certificates. If the mentee is able to post his work online, such as on a personal website or social networking site, encourage him to do so.

Job search tips and resources. If you are aware of useful job search sources, websites, or services, bring them to your mentee’s attention. Recommend articles, books or websites you think would contribute to your mentee’s industry or career knowledge.

Connect on LinkedIn. Be sure to connect with your mentee on LinkedIn. Suggest any professional groups you think your mentee could benefit from joining. Job recruiters say that LinkedIn is one of the top ways they search for candidates. If your mentee does not have a LinkedIn profile, encourage her to sign up and create one. Provide feedback once she has started to fill out her profile.

What are the benefits of a mentorship?
A mentoring relationship can be a fulfilling experience when mentors and mentees maintain open and honest communication and share personal experiences and stories. Almost everyone can recall a time when they took a step forward in life because of the help or advice given by a good friend, teacher or colleague. A mentorship is an opportunity to connect with a fellow corrosion professional, build your network, share your knowledge, and “pay it forward.”

Throughout your mentorship, if you have questions or concerns, contact the NACE Mentoring Center or Cindy Tracy, Section Support Coordinator, at 281-228-6240 or cindy.tracy@nace.org.