

For Mentors: 25 things To Do with Your Learning Partner

1. Spend some time building the relationship before formally tackling the Learning Partner's objectives.
2. Offer to tell your career story in some detail. How did you start your career? What changes did you make along the way? Include both high and low points and how these learning opportunities helped you.
3. Introduce your Learning Partner to at least two people who could be helpful to them. Give them tips on what to do and what to avoid.
4. Help your Learning Partner set up a small team of supporters, "personal board of directors," to which they will hold themselves accountable for their development. They might meet as a group or simply offer one-on-one support.
5. Invite your Learning Partner to some of your key meetings, as appropriate, such as staff meetings, important customer interactions, and other non-confidential meetings. Prepare the Learning Partner and the other attendees beforehand, and debrief the meetings with your Learning Partner afterward.
6. Send your Learning Partner potentially useful articles or loan them helpful books, DVDs or CDs. Discuss their reactions after they have read, viewed or listened to the material.
7. Offer to edit a letter, proposal or other document they write.
8. Suggest a presentation they could make to a group.
9. Suggest a safe non-job or community setting to develop your Learning Partner's skills, such as joining Toastmasters or leading a youth project.
10. Ask your Learning Partner to take the lead on your mentoring sessions: prepare the agenda, keep the meeting moving, summarize agreements, etc.
11. Observe your Learning Partner carefully during your mentoring sessions and provide them with feedback on how they come across and affect you during these sessions. Are they late? Do they exhibit patterns of speech or behavior that could sabotage their success?
12. Ask your Learning Partner for advice about a project or problem on which you are working. Then tell them how you used their advice in solving your problem or completing your project.
13. Explain some of the "unwritten rules" you've learned about being successful in the City.
14. Teach your Learning Partner, step-by-step, a process that you know very well (i.e. getting a group's buy-in on an idea, etc.)
15. Have your Learning Partner teach you something.
16. Help your Learning Partner research, then write up or draw a chart of several career paths they might take within your organization (or elsewhere).
17. Suggest that your Learning Partner interview several individuals happy with particular career decisions and several who have had second thoughts. Ask them to present their findings to you.
18. Practice (role play) upcoming situations your Learning Partner faces.

19. Occasionally call unexpectedly just to check in.
20. Connect with other Mentor-Learning Partner pairs for lunch or some other activity. Notice how your Learning Partner interacts in these social situations and later discuss your observations with them.
21. Have your Learning Partner shadow or observe you as you work. Make it impactful through structured shadowing. Prepare them beforehand, do the activity and debrief afterward.
22. Provide visibility for your Learning Partner. Let them be seen with you at meetings, or have them make presentations to your group.
23. Help your Learning Partner identify potential career or business risks they will face in the next few months (risks related to deadlines, quality, communication, ethics, etc.). Help them plan ways to minimize the risks.
24. Ask your Learning Partner to explain how they made a decision and what they considered along the way. Note any patterns and inconsistencies that need work.
25. Help your Learning Partner identify classes and workshops to take.

Adapted from: 75 Things To Do With your Mentees:
Practical and Effective Development Ideas You can Try
By Linda Phillips-Jones, Ph.D.