



ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTEE

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After being asked to be a mentor and deciding that you are [ready to accept](#) such a position, the next thought you may have is "now what?" Start by agreeing on the basics of when, where, and how often you'll meet. Then, discuss the expectations each of you has for the relationship and the confidentiality needed for the arrangement to succeed.

Lisa Quast – founder of Career Woman, Inc., and the [Wing to Wing Women's Mentoring Project](#) and author of the recently launched [Career Savvy e-books](#) and *Your Career, Your Way* – says that helping the person create a career development plan should be a top priority. "The first key to helping your mentee achieve career success is having her take the time to clearly define career aspirations, goals, and objectives. You can then use your knowledge and experience to help her determine the actions necessary to get where she wants to go."

Talking about your own experiences, successes, and failures can help your mentee to learn. Remember, though, your role is to teach, not to micromanage.

"Don't provide all the answers," Quast says. "Help your mentees think through their hurdles and barriers and come up with their own plans on how to overcome them. Learn to ask the kinds of questions that allow them to explore their situation. Instead of telling them what to do, try asking, 'What do you think are some ways you could . . .?'"

Quast also recommends that you don't immediately open up your network. "Work with your mentee until you fully understand her knowledge, skills, experience, and ethics and are comfortable sharing appropriate networking opportunities. Taking the time to build trust is essential because mentors place their own reputation on the line when recommending their mentees for job opportunities."

Finally, keep your mind open to what you can learn yourself. As you hear things from the perspective of someone who is at a different stage of her career, you may enrich your own understanding of the company and perhaps even reevaluate your own decisions.

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