



# BNHRA Mentoring Toolkit 2009

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## **I. BNHRA Mentoring Program Guidelines**

By applying to the program, each participant agrees to the following guidelines:

- 1) Students must make initial contact with mentor within 1 week of matching notification.
- 2) Mentors and students must dedicate a minimum of one hour a month to each other. This meeting should ideally be one on one, in a quiet setting without interruptions.
- 3) Mentors and students must provide feedback to BNHRA on the mentoring relationship regularly, preferably after each monthly meeting. Please email your confidential notes and comments to [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com). Your feedback is important to the success of this program.
- 4) If the mentoring relationship dissolves or terminates, please notify BNHRA's College Relations Committee by emailing [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com).

## **II. Benefits of a Mentor Program**

Mentor programs offer a structured setting in which to develop beneficial one-on-one relationships between students and professionals. Acting as a friend, a teacher, and a guide to the professional world of human resources, mentors have the opportunity to encourage and advise students by sharing their own experiences and knowledge of the HR profession.

A successful mentoring relationship provides opportunities for students to...

- Explore the world of work through interaction with professionals in the HR career of their choice.
- Gain an experienced HR practitioner's perspective on applying textbook concepts to real-life situations.
- Familiarize themselves with corporate protocol.
- Identify long-term professional development needs.
- Realize the value of networking.
- Develop a meaningful professional relationship over a specified period of time.

A mentor program benefits hr professionals by allowing them to....

- Contribute to the professional development of the future HR workforce.
- Identify potential interns and new hires for their organization.
- Assist students in beginning successful careers.
- Give something back to the profession.
- Reflect on their own Career

## **III. Essentials of a Mentoring Partnership**

In a successful mentoring connection, the mentor and the student must both want the relationship to work and be willing to commit time and energy to the process.

Five elements are essential:

- Respect:

This is established when the student recognizes the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the mentor and when the mentor appreciates the success the student has reached to date and the student's desire to develop to their full potential.

➤ Trust:

Mentors and student should build trust through communicating, being available, reliable, and loyal to each other.

➤ Partnership Building:

The mentor and student are professional partners. The barriers that partnerships face may include miscommunication, an uncertainty of each other's expectations, and perceptions of other people. In order to overcome these barriers, they should work together to maintain communication, address and resolve problems promptly, examine how decisions might affect goals, and frequently discuss progress.

➤ Realistic Expectations and Feedback:

A mentor encourages the student to have realistic expectations of the student's capabilities, the amount of time and energy the mentor can commit to the relationship, and what the student must do to earn the mentor's support for their career development. The mentor gives honest feedback when discussing the student's traits, abilities, talents, beliefs, and roles.

➤ Time:

Set aside the time to meet, even by e-mail or telephone. Don't change times unless absolutely necessary. Control interruptions. Frequently "check in" with each other via informal telephone calls.

#### **IV. Suggested Procedures for Mentor/Student Meeting: The beginning of the relationship**

a. Initial Contact: Phone Contact

- Student calls mentor to arrange initial meeting and discuss scheduling. Refer to Section I, number 1 of the document.

b. 1st Meeting

- Choose a neutral setting for a face-to-face meeting without distractions and interruptions.
- Discuss expectations and set boundaries.
- Discuss when and how often you will meet. Refer to Section I, number 2 of the document.
- Agree to confidentiality.
- Get to know each other.

**Student:**

- Explain why you are interested in the HR profession.
- Discuss your perceptions and expectations of the mentor relationship.
- Ask questions.
- Plan future meetings and contacts.

**Mentor:**

- Discuss your current job responsibilities.
- Explain how you got into the profession.
- Discuss the necessary academic and personal preparation needed for your career.

- Share your feelings on the importance of networking and continued professional development.
- Have the student start thinking about goals.

c. 2nd Meeting

- Have the student identify short-term and long-range goals.
- Taylor goals, if necessary, to meet career aspirations and/or professional development goals.
- Explore the mentors experiences and resources to expand the opportunities for the student.

d. Continuing the Partnership

- Going forward, at each meeting discuss progress, experiences, and next steps.

e. Additional Suggestions for Mentor/Student Activities

- Mentor, student, and several other HR professionals meet to discuss everyday challenges encounter in their work.
- Student attends a company-training program with mentor.
- Mentor and student discuss proper business and telephone etiquette and corporate protocol.
- Student attends a company staff meeting.
- Mentor and student attend a professional HR/NY chapter meeting together. Mentor introduces student to other HR professionals.
- Student accompanies mentor to other professional meetings.
- Mentor discusses common employee grievances and issues such as sexual harassment and substance abuse. Explains how they are handled.
- Student observes the development of a special project such as a wellness program or health fair.
- Mentor reviews student's resume and offers suggestions for improvement.
- Student spends a day "shadowing" the mentor during a typical working day.
- Interviewing techniques.

## V. Students in a Mentoring Relationship: How To Be An Effective Mentee

Suggestions for students to make their mentoring connection more successful:

- Work hard at building mentor/student partnership.
- Come prepared for each mentor/ student meeting.
- Strive to acquire new skills and knowledge given to you by your mentor.
- Be flexible, an active listener and open to new options.
- Take initiative and seek your mentor's advice when needed.

The student has to want to be a partner in the mentoring connection. To that end, they prepare and do the appropriate "homework" for meetings with their mentor.

The student has to be able to discuss their needs and objectives with their mentor. This means that the student has to look inside himself or herself to identify areas that may need work and share them with the mentor. The student must take responsibility for his or her career and goals. Although they have the benefit of the mentor's guidance, they are responsible for their own path.

The student needs to be able to receive feedback and look at the situation from the mentor's perspective to gain a more objective viewpoint. One of the biggest values of the connection is the ability to have a more experienced person's viewpoint.

The student has to be willing to try new things, to consider different ways of “getting there from here.” The student has to periodically assess the progress of the relationship, letting the mentor know when priorities must be reset.

To summarize, the desired characteristics of a student in a mentoring relationship are:

- Eagerness to learn – the student has a strong desire to develop existing skills and learn new skills.
- Ability to work as a team player – the student must contribute to the relationship through seeking information and initiating discussions with the mentor.
- Patient – the student should be realistic to know that career development doesn’t happen overnight.
- Risk Taker – the student must realize that in order to grow it is necessary to take chances.
- Positive attitude – this trait is so important to the student’s success. An optimistic student will be able to stay on track even when things do not go exactly as planned.

## **VI. Mentors in a Mentoring Relationship: How To Be An Effective Mentor**

A mentor should be:

- Committed to the growth of his/her student.
- Supportive.
- Patient.
- Respectful.
- People-oriented.
- A Good Motivator.
- Respectful of others.
- An Effective Teacher.
- Self-confident.
- A Good listener.
- Confident in own abilities and achievements.
- Willing to share personal experience relevant to the needs of the student.
- Committed to the time promised together.
- Honest about their time limitations from the beginning.
- Interested in student’s growth.
- Allow student to develop at their own pace.
- Encouraging student to take risks and provide support regardless of the outcome.
- Helpful in setting development goals, creating action plans and scheduling time for the student.
- Able to give feedback and coaching to reinforce positive behavior.
- Willing to assume and demonstrate leadership.

A mentor can expect his or her student to be competent, credible, ambitious, eager to learn, loyal, and candid; have a positive attitude; and be able to listen, work as a partner, keep confidences, and accept responsibilities.

As a mentor, you should be aware of the stages of mentoring:

- Laying the foundation:

In this first phase, the foundation is established. As the two partners get to know each other, boundaries are set as to what each expects of the connection. As they begin to know more about each other and become comfortable, trust is established. They reach a point where they can discuss things openly and

honestly, clarifying where they're going. In this phase, the mentor helps the student to look at realistic possibilities and options. Together they develop a plan to help the student reach his or her goals and aspirations. The mentor's roles in this phase are primarily as coach, motivator, and counselor. The mentor devotes more time to this phase than any other, focusing on providing detailed information on many workplace issues and procedures and sharing the benefits and insights of his or her experiences. It helps to give examples of good and bad experiences, share what did and did not work along the career path, and suggest pitfalls to avoid. During this time, the mentor gives a lot of praise and builds the student's self-confidence.

➤ Helping the student grow:

In this stage, the mentor serves most as a counselor, guide, and door opener. The mentor persuades the student to find answers on his or her own. The mentor also prods the student to take risks, try new strategies, ask questions, and make discoveries. Some of the activities a mentor might recommend to his or her student during this period are:

- Formal training that could help the student become well rounded and aid in his/her advancement.
- Reading books, articles, journals, and other publications to enhance knowledge.
- Trying new projects or special assignments.
- Involvement in projects, working groups, or special events.
- Attending conferences and symposiums.
- Writing an article for a newsletter, magazine, or professional publication.
- Shadowing a seasoned hr professional person for a day.

## VII. Mentoring Skills

The following skills are key to the mentoring relationship:

f. Communication:

A lack of effective communication is the greatest barrier to healthy relationships with others. The mentor and student must both effectively listen and give meaningful feedback.

g. Listening:

There are two types of listening: **passive** and **active**. Passive listening occurs when a listener does not verbally respond to the speaker. The listener may deliberately or unintentionally send non-verbal messages through eye contact, smiles, yawns, or nods. However, there is no verbal response to indicate how the message is being received.

Sometimes **passive** listening is appropriate. If the person wants to air a gripe, vent frustration, or express an opinion, you may want to listen passively. The person may not want or need a verbal response; rather he or she may want a sounding board. Passive listening is also appropriate when you want to ease back mentally and be entertained. It would be a mistake to interrupt as he or she relates a good joke or story.

**Active** listening involves verbal feedback. One type of feedback involves questioning. You ask for additional information to clarify the person's message. For instance, you might ask, "What do you mean?" By asking this type of question, you want the person to elaborate on information already given.

Another type of feedback is paraphrasing (e.g., "Let me make sure I'm with you so far," or "What I hear you saying is..."). Then you rephrase the ideas in your own words. With this type of feedback, you demonstrate that you have understood the person's concerns.

You can strengthen your listening skills and improve your concentration with the following tips:

- Hold your fire: Learn not to get too excited or angry about the individual's point until you are sure you understand it.
- Do not immediately draw conclusions, good or bad.
- Reduce your emotional reactions.
- Listen for main points: When listening, focus on the main ideas.
- Make a mental outline of his or her most important points.
- Resist distractions: While listening, try to ignore your surroundings (e.g., outside noises or other people).
- Try to concentrate on the person's facial expressions and his or her emphasis on certain words.
- Capitalize on thought speed: On average, a person speaks 125 words a minute. But people process what they hear at almost four times that speed. Don't let your mind stray while you are waiting for the person's next point. Instead, try to "*listen between the lines.*"
- Listen for the whole meaning, feeling as well as fact. In other words, try to get inside the other person's head.

Effective listening is a skill that comes from practice and a desire to understand the other person. The following is a checklist of tips for active listening:

- Stop talking
- Empathize with the other person
- Ask questions
- Be patient
- Concentrate
- Show the other person that you want to listen
- Put the talker at ease
- Be aware of your emotions and prejudices
- Get rid of distractions
- Get the main points
- React to ideas, not to the person
- Don't argue mentally
- Listen for what is NOT said
- Listen to HOW something is said
- Don't antagonize the speaker
- Avoid classifying the speaker prematurely
- Avoid jumping to conclusions

#### h. Feedback:

You never stop communicating with the world. You give feedback to others just by being alive, and sometimes it is unintentional. This occurs when someone interprets your behavior and reacts to it based on possibly inaccurate perceptions. This can lead to conflict and misunderstanding that can negatively affect relationships. You can break the cycle by giving feedback to the right person.

Feedback is a gift! It gives you information about your behavior, its impact on others, and whether it is consistent with your intentions.

To give effective, direct feedback, it must be:

- Specific
- Non-judgmental
- Timely
- Direct
- Asked for
- Motivated by a desire to help

When you give feedback, describe the behavior and its impact on you. Example: “when you yell at me (the behavior), it shuts me down, and I withdraw (the impact).” Be direct, clear and caring in your delivery.

There are three types of feedback aside from direct feedback:

- **Nonverbal** feedback is communicating through facial expressions, physical gestures, or body language as your reaction to what is taking place.
- **Indirect** feedback is communicating your message in roundabout, unclear way. It is the “read my mind” approach. Example: “Those cigarettes have a strange smell” may mean, “I don’t like your smoking.”
- **Inappropriate** feedback is communicating your message in an aggressive or degrading way. It often results from waiting too long so that hurt or angry feelings build up and are then expressed in a passive aggressive way. It can also be motivated by a desire to hurt someone.

Feedback nourishes and challenges you and provides an opportunity for growth. Mentoring partners should discuss feedback at the outset, setting the stage for honest and direct communication.

## VIII. Frequently Asked Questions

- Question: Do I as the mentor or the mentee have to be a member of the BNHRA?

Answer: Yes, you must be member of the BNHRA to participate in the program.

- Question: Do I have to be a student to participate?

Answer: Yes, students must be a part-time or full-time student enrolled in the equivalent of at least six (6) credit hours per term in a professional degree-seeking program. The course coursework must support a demonstrated interest in Human Resources Management. Recent university graduates cannot participate.

- Question: How is matching completed between mentor and student?

Answer: The College Relations Committee strives to match applicants with the person who most closely matches their career goals and interests. The Committee cannot guarantee participation in the program nor guarantee that all preferences will be met. In general, the more information provided on the application, the better BNHRA can match an applicant.

The College Relations Committee assesses the preferences provided on the application form. These are travel, gender, meeting time, meeting location, and HR area of interest/specialization. The applicant is asked to rate their most desirable/important preference (this is a “1”) to their least desirable/important preference (this is a “5”) to consider during the matching process. If these preferences are not provided or ranked by the applicant, then no preferences are assumed. If the hr specialization preference cannot be met (i.e. no mentor/student with this particular hr specialization applied to participate in the program), the committee does its best to match other preferences.

- Question: Are there any pre-arranged meetings with all students and mentors?

Answer: No. There are events that are suggested to attend, but they are not mandatory.

- Question: Do you have to meet once a month?

Answer: No. The requirement of the program is that mentor and student dedicate a minimum of 1 hour a month to the mentoring relationship. This can be in a face-to-face setting, per phone or email. A face-to-face meeting is suggested, as it is often the most effective.

- Question: What do I do if I do not hear from my student/mentor for a long time (he/she does not answer my phone calls, emails, etc over a long period of time)?

Answer: Contact the College Relations Committee at [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com). We will help you.

- Question: What do I do if my mentor/student and I do not get along, and I want to terminate my mentoring relationship with him/her?

Answer: Contact the College Relations Committee at [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com) and we will discuss your options. Please give your mentoring relationship at least 3 meetings before you decide that it will not work out. BNHRA cannot guarantee that you can be matched with another student/mentor.

- Question: If the mentoring relationship dissolves or terminates, what should I do?

Answer: Kindly notify the College Relations Committee at [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com). Often there is another mentor or students waiting to participate and would be happy to take another person's place.

- Question: What do I do if I realize I cannot commit the time required to my student/mentor (1 hour a month)?

Answer: Contact the College Relations Committee at [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com). Often there are other mentors or students waiting to participate. Please be fair to your student/mentor. If you cannot commit to the time required the mentoring program, let both BNHRA College Relations Committee know, as well as the student/mentor.

- Question: How do I provide feedback to BNHRA regarding my mentoring relationship?

Answer: Please send your confidential notes and comments to [BNHRAmentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAmentor@gmail.com). Please stay in touch regularly. Your feedback is important to the success of this program. The College Relations Committee will also be in touch with you to ask for feedback. Kindly answer these requests in a timely fashion.

- Question: How often does BNHRA want feedback on the mentoring relationship?

Answer: Ideally a brief email after the monthly meeting is what the College Relations Committee would like from both the mentor and student. All feedback is kept confidential and anonymous, and only College Relations Committee members will read it. Periodically emails will be sent to mentors and students to solicit feedback as well.

- Question: Why do I have to provide feedback?

Answer: The College Relations Committee requests your feedback in order to continuously improve the mentoring program. All information is kept confidential and anonymous.

- Question: May I continue the relationship with my mentor/student after the program is officially over?

Answer: Of course, the BNHRA encourages mentoring relationships to continue if both mentor and student agree upon it.

- Question: Can I participate again in the program?

Answer: Yes. The student/mentor will have a chance to indicate if he or she wants to continue the mentoring relationship with their existing student/mentor, be re-matched with new student/mentor or discontinue their participation in the program. The College Relations Committee will collect this information in the summer just after the Mentoring Program ends in May/June.

## **IX. Summary**

The College Relations Committee of the BNHRA wishes you much success on the new relationship that you are about to embark on. We welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas anytime. Contact us at [BNHRAMentor@gmail.com](mailto:BNHRAMentor@gmail.com). Thank you for supporting this initiative of the College Relations Committee.

## **X. Sources**

BNHRA's College Relations Committee would like to thank the following organizations and people in their assistance in developing in this guide.

- HR/NY
- SHRM
- Structure Tone, Inc., Human Resources Department