

Blood: Water Technical eUpdate Vol. 8 – Mentorship

Dear Partners:

As we continue to roll out the Organizational Strengthening components of our partnerships, we will begin to have conversations around issues like succession planning, staff development planning and leadership styles. Mentorship will be a key activity that we must actively seek to undertake in support of these and other critical areas of organizational health. Mentoring provides benefits for mentors as well as mentees. It can expand your energy, stimulate more informed action, result in more job satisfaction and carry over into your personal and professional relationships.

Effective mentorship is planned and deliberate. It does not and cannot happen accidentally. Below you will find the **key Ingredients of intentional and planned, mentoring relationships**. Let this serve as a guide to frame the development of mentorship activities within your teams:

1. Purpose

This relationship is a high priority for both of you. You consider finding mentors and being a responsible mentee as one of the most important growth steps you can take. You and your mentor are clear on why you're together and the reasons you're meeting. You've discussed and agreed upon what you'll work on, and you'll recognize when you've met your purpose. You feel good about the focus of your relationship and what you're doing in it. From time to time you check in to see if you should change your purpose or focus in some way. When you've accomplished the goal or goals of your relationship, you're willing to see the partnership shift focus or perhaps end for the time being.

2. Communication

You communicate in the ways (in person, phone, text messaging, email, mail) you both prefer. You get back to your mentor in the timeframe you've agreed upon. Your mentor generally does the same. The communication between you adds up to at least one or two hours a month and is frequent enough for both of you. You're an effective listener, and you remember what your mentor tells you. You ask appropriate questions, and your mentor responds. You share information about yourself. You monitor your nonverbal language to be sure it's conveying what you want it to. You invite your mentor to give you suggestions for how you can communicate better, and you try these out in a timely manner.

3. Trust

The trust between you is growing. You welcome and keep in confidence the information your mentor shares with you. Your mentor knows he/she can count on you to be honest and to follow through on your promises. You avoid any trust-breaking behaviors such as canceling appointments without compelling reasons, talking negatively about others, or making excuses about why you can't follow

through on commitments. You're increasingly sharing more of yourself and are becoming less guarded than when this mentoring partnership started.

4. Process

Your meetings and other interactions are moving along at the right pace. You meet often enough to suit you both, and those sessions are usually the right length. You both like where you're meeting. You enjoy the 2-4 hours of effort you devote to follow through on agreements between your mentoring sessions. You're aware of the four stages of formal mentoring (planning, building relationship/negotiating agreement, developing the mentee/maintaining momentum, and ending the formal mentoring part of the relationship) and are carefully moving through them. You like how you operate as a mentoring pair and check in with each other to see if you're both satisfied.

5. Progress

You've made it easy for your mentor to help you identify appropriate life goals and build competencies to reach those goals. You take the lead on identifying interesting learning experiences and report the results of these to your mentor. You've made significant progress toward your goals since starting to meet with your mentor. You're also making notable progress in your ability to be mentored.

6. Feedback

You told your mentor how you wanted positive and corrective feedback. When you receive positive feedback, you express your thanks and use the information to reinforce your efforts. When you receive corrective feedback, you're non-defensive and take immediate steps to apply it. You remember to give your mentor positive feedback about his/her mentoring and other things he/she has shared. If agreed upon, you give your mentor suggestions for improvement.

To better support the development of mentorship activities within your organizations, I have attached a document entitled, **"Best Practices: Mentoring."** This comprehensive manual provides a deeper understanding of mentorship within an employment context. It also provides guidance on developing a plan and rolling it out successfully based on best practices in the workplace.

More to Come!