



Get Mentored!

MentorGuide: Introduction

1. Get Mentored - It Works!

Mentoring has been around forever because it works. Most major corporations have formal mentoring programs in place because better employees make them into better companies. In the cultural sector, mentoring goes on all the time, often in a haphazard or unacknowledged way. Yet most people working in the cultural sector today would say that some kind of mentoring at some point in their careers helped them get to where they are now.

No other learning relationship works in quite the same way or delivers quite the same results as mentoring can. Career coaching, role modelling, and executive sponsorship are all a part of the mentor's repertoire, yet none of them constitute the whole of mentoring on their own. Internships and apprenticeships are similar in some ways, however unlike mentorships, they are driven by authority or obligation.

Mentoring works because it draws on good will and mutual benefit in a private relationship of trust and admiration. The right mentor for you will be an individual who commands your professional and personal respect, and who sees in you the potential you see in yourself. Perhaps more.

Imagine it - someone who knows enough to believe in you.

Got one in your corner?

Want one?

Produced for Cultural Careers Council Ontario by [NetGain Partners](#)

2. Getting Help to Get Mentored

If you want to jump-start your career by seeking a mentor, there are two ways to do it.

Go it alone and leave things to chance

- or -

Draw on the experience of others and
make things happen

There is an organization at work on your behalf, helping cultural industries to find, train, and keep good people to make the sector stronger. It has commissioned research into the principles and practice of mentoring and produced a step-by-step guide to help you take advantage of the opportunities available to you. It's all you need to get started.

Cultural Careers Council Ontario (CCCO) was created by not-for-profit and commercial partners from Ontario's cultural sector. It represents those in the film and television, live performing arts, music and sound recording, visual arts and crafts, writing and publishing, and heritage sectors. Their role is to identify human resource needs, and to support training, career development, and career transitions for professionals working or seeking work within this sector.

CCCO commissioned this mentoring guide and now offers it free of charge in two forms. You can download it from the website or request it from any of CCCO's partners.

3. What to Expect from this Guide

What you are about to read is distilled from mentoring practices that have proven effective over time in both public and private sector settings. Adaptations to this generic model have been made in recognition of the special challenges you face in the cultural sector.

Chief among these is the expectation that you, the protégé, must take primary responsibility for your own career, often with little direct support or encouragement from employers or government.

This workbook is designed to guide you through the mentoring process from start to finish. Each step is explained and illustrated with an example relating to the way you want your career to change. Where applicable, checklists and queries are included to make sure that all the essentials are covered.

The sequence of steps, as presented in the workbook, is critical to the success of your mentorship. Every step you take improves the likelihood that your effort will produce good results and that predictable problems can be avoided. By skipping steps, you will diminish the potential benefits and risk being disappointed.

Keep in mind that mentoring relationships involve imbalances of age, power, and experience. Care must be taken to ensure that your mentorship doesn't deteriorate into one of exploitation and resentment. For this reason, the workbook recommends simple safeguards to protect the personal and professional interests of you and your mentor.

So, think of this workbook in the same way that you might think of a human. Rely on it to know the way ahead, to suggest shortcuts, to carry your tools, effect repairs, and look out for your interests when difficulties arise. Adherence to the guide's direction is the surest way for you and your mentor to reach your destination.

Core Material Overview

1. Four uses of mentoring

Mentoring is most commonly used in one of the following ways:

1. Breaking in - gaining entry to your chosen field or discipline

2. Moving up - qualifying and positioning yourself for promotion

3. Moving over - training for a different job at the same level

4. Breaking out - taking your talents outside the organization, discipline, or industry in which you started

2. Step 1 - Self assessment of mentoring potential

The fact that you've read this far is as good an indicator as any of your suitability as a protégé.

Some demonstrated characteristics of successful protégés:

- Goal oriented
- Self motivated
- Willing to assume responsibility for career growth and development
- Unafraid of personal and professional challenges
- Receptive to feedback and coaching

But just because you may be lacking in one or more of these traits doesn't necessarily mean you should abandon the possibility of a mentorship altogether. Rather, it could simply mean that you have already identified an area where your mentor can help you improve.

You will not emerge from a mentoring relationship successfully unless you take the initiative to develop your personal and professional skills. Likewise, you must be prepared to invest a substantial amount of your time and attention; your commitment is not limited to time spent with your mentor.

Mentoring is certainly not for you if what you're really hoping for is a personal assistant to help you cope with the status quo. Mentoring, as a form of teaching, is intended to produce change in you, the protégé, not merely change in your circumstances.

3. Step 2 - Self assessment of career needs and objectives

Whether you are inside or outside your chosen field, or rethinking your choice altogether, you need to figure out where you want your career to go and how you want it to get there. Until you do, it will be difficult to know what kind of mentor can help you.

All you need to do is settle on what role or position in your field you wish to fill, when you think you can and should achieve this goal, and how you might need to change in order to make the transition. While these questions might make you a little anxious, keep in mind that they are not immutable choices. They merely set a direction for you and your mentor to follow and will likely change over time.

For future reference, answer the following questions in as few words as possible.

I have the desire and aptitude to assume the responsibilities of a:

(general title
of position or
role, including
self-
employment
possibilities)

in the:

(name field or
discipline).

Given informal training and support (mentoring), I can reasonably hope to prepare myself for this new role within the next:

_____.
(number of
months or
years).

To accomplish this, I probably need to change in the following ways:

Personal

Professional

4. Step 3 - Mentor screening

At some point in this process, the time will come when you sit down face-to-face with a prospective mentor and pop the big question. It may take considerable time and effort to get an appointment, and you can't count on second chances. You want to make pretty sure that the person you've pursued is the right one for you.

Not every successful professional has the makings of a good mentor. The good ones exhibit common qualities, some of which can be seen from a distance and others which can only be observed at close quarters.

Since you have no way of knowing until you ask, assume that everyone you might want as your mentor is willing to do it. Now, who might you want to ask?

You may already have someone in mind, but they might lack the qualities of a good mentor or might not want the extra responsibility. So it makes sense to start a list of candidates.

Logically your list would include people who have succeeded in achieving the goals you have set for yourself. Their success is usually an expression of:

- Technical competence
- Professional status and prestige
- Knowledge of their industry, discipline, and/or organization
- An ability to work closely with others

If you can't identify any by name, or any in your community, you can start your list in some of the following places:

Trade publications

Every industry has at least one publication that will help you identify who is making good news in their professions. If an article catches your eye but doesn't name names, try calling the author. Tell them what you're looking for and see what they suggest.

Arts Service Organizations

Virtually every aspect of cultural activity in Ontario falls under the umbrella of at least one service organization [link or refer to CCCO resource database]. They'll take your call and answer your questions as best they can, or they'll suggest other sources that might be helpful to you.

Professional Associations and Unions

Although professional associations are usually reluctant to share information about their members, you can still learn a lot from them. Often you can get back issues of their newsletters and sometimes a helpful membership co-ordinator will talk to you over the phone about how to hook up with potential mentors (upcoming events, for example).

University or college instructors

Post-secondary teachers in the arts generally try to keep up to date with developments in their fields and can help identify possible mentors. They often follow the careers of their best students after graduation and can put you in touch with them. Have you asked any of your former teachers for help in this regard?

From these and other sources, you should try to identify up to 10 people who have succeeded in some or all of the ways that you aspire to. However at this stage, all you know about them is that they are high-achievers in their fields. Before investing time pursuing any of them, you should try to learn a little bit more about how they might perform as a mentor.

The personal and professional characteristics to look for include:

- Strong interpersonal skills; willingness and ability to communicate and listen
- Supervisory experience; helps set plans, gives good feedback, delegates well
- Leadership ability; sufficiently directive, enforces accountability, charismatic
- Ability to share credit; forthcoming about team and individual achievement
- Patient and risk taking; allows time to accomplish goals of consequence

These are much more difficult qualities to judge, but there are ways to find out enough to make informed guesses.

One way is to contact people who know your prospective mentors. In the cultural sector, where so many people work collaboratively, it shouldn't be too hard to find people willing to express an opinion about

the individuals on your list. Some of these contacts may already have been made in the course of creating your list.

The most reliable sources will be past or present peers or subordinates of the person you're interested in. You'll be amazed what people tell you.

CAUTION - this requires some delicacy, and any inappropriate questions or comments will almost certainly get back to your prospective mentor sooner or later.

5. **Step 4 - Making contact**

As a result of this simple background check, you will form impressions of mentor candidates that make it possible to rank them. Then, starting from the one that you think is best, you can seek a meeting to gauge their interest and make your final determination.

Does this idea frighten you? Doesn't it take a lot of nerve to demand time and attention from important people?

It's normal to feel some anxiety around this step, but don't let it slow you down. It only takes a little nerve, a little deference, and a lot of common sense. If you learn nothing else from this guide, remember this:

PEOPLE WILL WANT TO HELP YOU.

We all like to feel that we make a difference in the lives of others. It's true. If anything, we feel badly when we cannot give enough help or cannot help in the right way. You feel that way, don't you? Why would your prospective mentors be any different?

Influential and accomplished people are usually asked for their money or their time; things that anyone can give. They are rarely asked for what only they can give. But that is exactly what you are about to do.

You are going to ask them to share knowledge and experience that is unique to them, that they have worked for years to acquire. But what's the big deal? They've already enjoyed the benefits of it. What else are they going to do with it? What does it really cost them to share it with you?

Be prepared to ask for help and be confident that people will respond as generously as they can. If someone can't give the time or attention you require, maybe they'll advise you about someone who can, or will permit you to use them as a reference to reach someone who is already on your list. Who knows? But you have to be prepared to

ask.

Convinced? Good. Now here are some suggestions about how to bring them to the table.

First, a short letter is a prerequisite, even if you know the person well enough that they'll take your call. Writing things down obliges you to clarify and organize your thoughts and starts things off on a more professional footing.

Your letter must accomplish the following things in a few short paragraphs:

- State the purpose of your letter (to arrange a meeting or interview to discuss your hopes of finding a mentor)

- Explain why you chose this person (because of their accomplishments and reputation - avoid overt flattery)

- Explain what kind of help you think you need (your career aspirations/frustrations)

- Acknowledge the value of their time (defer to them on scheduling)

- Emphasize that you want advice about what you are trying to accomplish, not a commitment (you can gauge their willingness when you meet)

- Promise to follow-up by telephone within 10 working days

- Thank them for their time and attention

Put it in a sealed envelope and send it in a way that signifies its importance to you (courier, registered mail, or deliver it yourself). The

privacy of your letter is important. You don't want to make them self-conscious by advertising the fact that they are the objects of a protégé's desire.

If you don't hear back within 10 days, go ahead and call or fax them with a reminder. There are all kinds of reasons why they may not have responded, so there's no point in being disappointed. Keep after them until either they respond or you become convinced that they won't ever respond.

It is only realistic to expect some of them to say, "no." Don't be discouraged. You know what to do. Expand your list and continue the process, gathering information and making valuable contacts as you go.

6. Step 5 - Meeting and orienting mentor prospects

It is equally realistic to expect one or more of them to say, "yes." For some people, this is another cause for anxiety. If you're one of those people, grab yourself by the lapels, drag yourself over to a mirror, and repeat these words until you believe them:

**"They wouldn't have said "yes" if they didn't think it was worth their time."
"They wouldn't have said "yes" if they didn't think I was worth talking to."
"They wouldn't have said "yes" if they hated the idea of mentoring."**

All better? Good. You can unhand yourself now.

When someone agrees to a meeting, it's really up to them where and when it will occur. However you can express a preference to avoid workplace distractions and interruptions.

Ask them how much time they've got. You need a minimum of half an hour to get through your agenda. If they can give you an hour, that would be even better.

Here's what you need to cover in the meeting and what you might expect to hear:

- **Thank them for making time for you.**
- **Tell them about what you've been doing to find the right mentor.**
- **Let them know that you think they possess the qualities you're looking for.**

Then just listen. In most cases, they'll hesitate, uncertain about what exactly you're hoping for. Let them state their misgivings so that you know what they need to hear back from you. Be prepared to talk about:

- **What you mean by "mentoring"**
- **How they are uniquely suited to be your mentor**
- **What benefits they can expect [link or refer to list in appendices]**
- **Specific ideas about activities, time commitments, and scheduling**

Then just listen again.

If they are warming to the idea, offer to give them an outline of what you think you might accomplish together and the mutual obligations this process entails. They can mull it over and work on the details until you're both prepared to go forward.

If they continue to hesitate, don't pressure them. Ask them to think about it and seek another appointment to talk it over, by phone if necessary. Wind the discussion down and thank them for their time.

If they are dead set against becoming your mentor, try to get their best advice about how you should pursue your career objectives. Ask them about the other people on your list. What alternatives to mentoring might they suggest?

No matter what response you get, the meeting will have been useful to you. Make a point of saying this at the conclusion of your meeting, and if you think it appropriate, send a note or leave a message of thanks the day after.

This meeting was not just a solicitation on your part. It was the completion of your research on a mentor candidate. Regardless of whether or not they are willing to be your mentor, you must decide quickly whether or not you want them. It's your decision whether or not to enter this relationship.

- **Did you start to develop a good rapport?**
- **Did the person seem genuinely interested in your development?**
- **Did you feel confident and capable talking to this person?**

If you aren't convinced that you can work closely with the person, don't go any further. You can gracefully back out by explaining that you've had second thoughts and want to explore other options. Be

considerate of their feelings and there will be no harm done.

Follow-up on the positive meetings, treat every contact as a valuable one, and with persistence you will find a mentor.

7. Step 6 - Negotiation of a mentoring agreement

Having successfully selected and oriented a mentor, you now need to negotiate an agreement together. The most effective agreement will be one which clearly defines both of your expectations. [link or reference to agreement template in appendices]

I. The Role of the Mentor

Depending on your stated career objectives, your mentor will determine the best ways to assist you. This could mean adopting the role of a model or guide, observing your work and offering feedback, recommending developmental activities, or referring you to valuable resources and opportunities.

II. Confidentiality

Because this is a relationship which demands mutual trust and respect, it is not unreasonable to put to paper your expectations of discretion. Issues to consider here will be what kind of information is to be shared between you and what must be kept private. Keep in mind that your mentor might not want to hear your impressions of peers or any information which is not pertinent to your development plan.

III. Duration of the Relationship

You should by this stage have a pretty good idea of how long it will take for you to reach the goals you have set. If you don't, your mentor will. Establishing an end date helps to ease the eventual dissolution of the relationship and serves as a reminder that this is a temporary arrangement, not to be depended on indefinitely. Also included here should be

specified intervals for deciding whether or not the mentorship is worth continuing. It makes no sense to continue the relationship solely out of a sense of obligation if either of you believe that it is fundamentally misdirected or unproductive.

IV.Frequency of Meetings

You and your mentor will need to meet at least as frequently as you have determined the periods between steps to be. More important than scheduling your meetings is honouring that commitment; a significant lapse in the meeting schedule almost guarantees trouble in the mentorship.

8. Step 7 - Development plan

The creation of the development plan is the first real opportunity for your mentor to influence the direction you're taking. The mentor should be encouraged to consider the plausibility of your career objectives in terms of the time required and the number of intermediate steps to be taken.

Whether your mentor believes your objectives to be unrealistically ambitious or unnecessarily modest, it is unreasonable to suggest that your objectives are unattainable. If the mentor didn't generally believe in the validity of your goals and in your potential to achieve them, he or she wouldn't have agreed to help in the first place.

The onus for creation of the development plan is on the mentor. The mentor's experience and objectivity are required to translate the protégé's career aspirations into activities that will impart the skills and understanding needed to achieve those objectives.

Just as your mentor demonstrated a belief in you at the outset of your relationship, you must now demonstrate a belief in your mentor. If your mentor is proposing activities that strike you as unnecessary or disagreeable, you have every right to seek an explanation, however you should never reject them out of hand except in the most extreme cases. If your selection of the mentor was good one, you should allow time for the potential benefits of specific suggestions to emerge.

You may also find it troubling to see your lofty goals broken down into pedestrian steps. However part of the reason that mentoring seemed necessary was that you were unable to identify or take those pedestrian steps on your own. Again, a little patience and continued good faith will pay greater dividends than insistence on a different approach.

In general, the contents of the plan for each goal will be captured under the following four headings:

Goal - end result, not process

Date - when goal is expected to be accomplished

Steps - list detailed, sequential steps

Target dates - for each step

A worksheet for a development plan has been provided [refer or link to appendix].

9. Step 8 - Periodic meetings

Regular meetings are necessary. There is simply no alternative.

Ideally they will be face-to-face meetings, but when distance and travel are involved there are other real-time or nearly real-time alternatives available. Video conferencing, Internet white-boarding, simple e-mail, telephones, and faxes can all help to keep you on schedule.

Regular meetings serve so many purposes that a significant lapse in the meeting schedule almost guarantees trouble in the mentorship.

By virtue of their regularity, they encourage both parties to maintain the level of their commitment. By virtue of their frequency they provide occasion for timely monitoring of progress and problems for the mentor, and the protégé, within the development plan they've jointly set out.

In addition to the top-of-mind issues arising from execution of the development plan, the meeting agenda should always be open to the following questions:

- **Have your career goals been affected by the mentoring experience thus far? If so, how should the plan be modified to accommodate these changes?**

- **Are both parties living up to the commitments made in the mentorship agreement? If not, what can be done about this?**

- **Given the progress to date, do the upcoming events in the development plan still seem reasonable? If not, how should it be revised?**

If you think about these things just prior to your meetings and make sure to raise them as needed during the meetings, it will help you to make good use of your time together and your time apart.

10. Step 9 - Conclusion or renewal of agreement

Properly managed, a mentoring relationship should end in one of the following ways:

Arranged conclusion - at the time specified in the agreement. If both the mentor and protégé are satisfied that they have got as much out of the relationship as seems likely, then this is a good time to dissolve your formal arrangement, give thanks, and even to examine the conditions under which you may want to remain in contact with each other.

No-fault conclusion - either the mentor or the protégé has the option of discontinuing the relationship at any time, for any reason, expressed or not

Renewal - it is entirely reasonable that the term of the relationship be extended several times. This could be due to underestimating the amount of time required to accomplish specific goals, or rethinking original goals and establishing new direction. In either case, there is no reason why your time together should not be extended as long as both agree that a continued commitment is what is required.

But remember - the conclusion date was set in the early stages of the relationship to serve as a reminder that this is a temporary arrangement. It is easy to become dependent on your mentor, especially a good one. If a pattern of renewal is developing, it might be a good idea to explore your motives. If your mentor begins to feel pressured into prolonging the relationship past what they feel is

required of them, they may not be willing to make themselves available to you for informal support in the future.

Moving Up (Case Study: Angela)

1. Angela - moving up

"Two years ago, I had it all figured out. In five years I would be directing my first film. Now here I am in publishing, and loving it. But I can't be editing copy the rest of my life. I need a new plan."

Angela is a copy editor for a children's magazine. She believes she has the aptitude to perform well at the level of a managing editor, but half of her colleagues also believe this of themselves. With an MFA in Film Studies and no prior experience in publishing, she is not well qualified to compete for promotions.

Not only does she lack formal credentials, she also believes that she is disadvantaged by gender and race. Angela is a woman of colour - black, to be specific.

These are not feelings that she can articulate, and even if she could, none of her colleagues would really understand. Bitch sessions about gender bias in publishing were common, at least among women in the junior ranks. But there was no place for race in these discussions. It was too sensitive.

Yet Angela hadn't failed to notice that the visiting executives from the American head office and almost all the senior executives at the Canadian subsidiary are white males. If this was an expression of corporate culture, as she suspected, there was no point trying to rise in the organization.

2. SELF ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING POTENTIAL

Angela had no doubts about her ability to perform at a higher level in the company. She was willing to take on additional assignments to demonstrate her potential, or to take part-time courses to improve her qualifications.

But her doubts about the company and the industry were demotivating. She didn't want to waste time and effort preparing herself for a chance that might never come. For as long as the corporate culture appeared to be withholding opportunity, she didn't feel fully responsible for the progress of her own career. For a time, the idea of mentoring held no appeal.

Still she couldn't help thinking about what it would be like to assume managerial responsibilities and wield managerial authority over people like herself. She always saw issues from a management perspective, trying to understand all the little things that work to produce a better magazine and a better bottom line. Her co-workers frequently asked her advice and usually accepted her suggestions, and her immediate boss often relied on her to corroborate his decisions.

She wished someone in authority would recognize her potential. All she wanted was someone to give her a fair chance. Kind of a corporate white knight, she thought. A black knight would be fine too. A female black knight, for that matter.

3. CAREER NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES

She certainly couldn't do worse than the managers she worked around every day. None of them had any formal training in management either. They all seemed to be MA's in English who had worked for years in editorial or marketing positions until their seniority allowed them to fill management vacancies.

What should they have done to prepare themselves for their jobs, apart from studying English and being in the right place at the right time? More to the point, Angela thought about how she would prepare herself to be a better manager.

The most obvious things concerned the use of information technologies to improve the production process, and new media to create new products. These were unwelcome notions in an industry where communication still meant envelopes and postage metres, and where publishing still meant heavy presses, reams of paper, and bindery glue. It was a way of working that hadn't changed since Victorian times. It was a generational thing.

With all the tools available to management, it was possible to work smarter. Angela felt that managers could do more to free up time and energy for creative purposes. The company's talent was spending too much time in endless planning meetings or working through piles of internal memos and schedules. If instead she could liberate more time for research, writing, design, networking, and the introduction of new media, the company and its people would prosper.

It was a nice dream, but even she had to admit that it was pretty spongy - soft and full of holes. To put herself in a position to initiate these changes, she would have to change herself. Yet, buried at her desk under memos and manuscripts, there was no time at work to develop these ideas further or to demonstrate her ability to put them into practice.

She needed motivation and purpose from outside her workplace to

reposition herself within the company. Maybe a mentor could provide these, she thought.

4. MENTOR SCREENING

Ironically, the only person in the business that she could really confide in was a white guy from the design agency that handled their layout and graphics account. He was old - late 40's or early 50's, but he wasn't a suit. He thought like a young person, or at least talked like one.

The magazine was an important part of his company's business, so he visited often. Angela got to know him because she was frequently obliged to convey detailed notes to him. She was also the first one to proof the layouts coming back from his studio.

Although he was one of the founding partners in his firm, he always spoke to her with respect and candour. When convenient, they would take a coffee break together in the Starbucks across the road and gripe about their respective problems.

So what could a successful middle-aged white guy have to complain about? His company had invested heavily in digital media, anticipating that demand from their traditional publishing clients would increase through product spin-offs such as interactive CD ROM, videos, and websites. This was supposed to create all kinds of new design needs for his company to satisfy. However his clients never fully embraced the new media, and the new media providers were generating tons of content on their own.

His company was lost in the middle with a lot of excess digital media capacity and design expertise. The print publishers, like Angela's company, understood the value of good design but not the commercial potential of new information technologies. The new media producers understood the value of technology but not the importance of good content and design. In his opinion print publishing was being overtaken or displaced by new media products that offered technical appeal but lacked substance.

Yet when he pitched ideas about bridging the gap between traditional content publishers and electronic media providers, he wasn't taken seriously by either side. No one argued that he was wrong, but no one bought into the notion that his firm's design expertise and multimedia capabilities represented a solution. On one hand he had middle-aged suits deciding that they would partner with a younger, less traditional agency if they were to explore new media possibilities. On the other hand, he had millionaire twenty-somethings dismissing the need for better content and design work in their new media products. He complained that his age was a barrier to winning his share of this new business.

Most of the time, he and Angela talked about the specific work they did together or about the direction the industry was going.

Underneath this talk, she felt that they were both struggling with something that was holding them back, something they couldn't change about themselves.

He was well regarded in the design community, but also knew far more than she did about the publishing industry and emerging technologies. She respected his ability and believed in his vision of the future. She felt that he understood her professional frustration and believed in her potential.

There were lots of people who were better positioned than he was to help advance her career, but for all sorts of intangible reasons, he was the right person to mentor her. In fact, it was the evolution of their friendship that made her get serious about finding a mentor.

She knew that this was illogical, but she'd tacitly rejected everyone else on her mental list. She should have done some research, some comparison shopping, but whether she was choosing him as the prime candidate or the only candidate, she was really asserting that he was her best prospect for mentoring. All that remained was to convince him of this.

5. MENTOR CONTACT

Angela fretted about how to broach the subject with him. In some ways, asking him to be her mentor was like starting all over as strangers, and she didn't want that. Yet he wasn't going to take her seriously if she simply brought it up as if it just occurred to her over coffee one day. Somehow she had to introduce some professional formality to the subject and hope that their personal rapport would survive it.

She decided to write him a letter and have it delivered to his office. All it really said was that she had decided to initiate change in her professional status, valued his opinions, and wanted to meet to talk about it. She tried to keep it light, but there was no mistaking her resolve.

He called soon after receiving her letter. He said he wanted to help in any way he could and agreed to meet after work later in the week.

Given their familiarity and the fact that she hadn't popped the mentoring question, Angela didn't put too much stock in this response. What else could he have said, she wondered? Nevertheless, it was a good feeling to hear him say that he wanted to help and to know that he meant it.

6. MEETING A PROSPECTIVE MENTOR

They met at a brew pub near his company's studios. Angela got there 10 minutes ahead of him and spent the first five minutes running through the agenda in her head. She spent the second five minutes wondering whether or not she'd made a terrible mistake asking for this meeting. There was every possibility that she'd exposed herself to ridicule and ruined a perfectly fine workplace relationship.

By the time he arrived she had worked herself into such a state, none of the things she had planned to say would come out of her mouth.

Instead she prattled on about needing to do something to get out of the trap she was in and how hard it was being a young black woman in this business. She kept tripping over her words and repeating herself, ending over and over again with the words, "I've just got to do something...."

The less sense she made, the harder she tried to explain herself and the less sense she made. Her frustration with herself was somehow transformed into righteous anger against her company and its biases.

When he tried to speak, she interrupted, afraid that he would respond to something she hadn't expressed correctly. Eventually he put up his hand and simply said, "Stop."

He quickly summarized what he had heard. She wanted to advance her career at the magazine, but that persistent bias would keep her from getting the opportunities she deserved. Angela nodded enthusiastically. In response to this, he went on, she had decided that she had to do something. Yes, she agreed.

He slowly repeated the words, "Do... something," a few times. On its own, the phrase sounded much less decisive than when she had said it. "Do... what?" he finally asked.

"Something," she said, laughing at herself. He laughed too.

Once it was clear that she had no specific idea of what she intended to do or how she wanted him to help, they were able to treat the subject in a more relaxed way. He told her that he admired her resolve to make things happen even if she didn't know exactly what she wanted.

He thought he could help her make some decisions about how to pursue her goals, but he was reluctant to go much beyond that. If gender, colour, and corporate culture were her biggest problems, then she would simply have to wait for change or undergo some nasty surgery. To initiate change, she herself would need to change. Then maybe he could help.

This had taken a direction she hadn't expected. Of course she wanted to change, to grow, to add skills, gain experience, and demonstrate her capabilities. But it stung to be told that her career was her

responsibility, despite having to compete in a subtly sexist and racist climate.

Perhaps he sensed this. He pointed out that people with authority and responsibility change corporate cultures, not people with blue pencils. After all, he reminded her, she didn't just want to "do something." She wanted to do something important.

These were sobering thoughts. They agreed to take a week and think about it some more before meeting again.

It's funny how things turn out. Despite having totally screwed up her pitch to him, he was now enthusiastic and she was the reluctant one. Every time she'd thought about their meeting over the course of the week she couldn't help feeling embarrassed.

He brought her around though. First, he confessed to having indulged himself in the same defeatism as she had, and that their conversation had given him the resolve to "do something" as well. It was too easy to conclude that his age prevented him from winning contracts. It was facile, he admitted, to point out that she couldn't change her gender or her colour when it was equally true that he wasn't getting any younger. And that's why he thought they should both try to "do something." Something important.

7. MENTOR ORIENTATION/MENTORSHIP AGREEMENT

Angela still had to give some form to what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. She asked him to act as her mentor, however he demurred, insisting that he would rather try to work together as peers. She pointed out the disparity in their ages, achievements, resources, and contacts. He reluctantly agreed that he would accept the mentor's responsibilities with the proviso that they would be doing something in both of their interests, not merely hers.

Confidentiality was an important feature of their agreement since her company was a client of his, and because the nature of their work involved intellectual property. Furthermore, her status in the company could be jeopardized instead of enhanced should the consequences of their mentorship turn out less than spectacularly. He agreed instantly, pointing out that he had much more to lose from a lapse of confidentiality than she did.

They went back and forth on the question of how long the mentorship should last. She wanted at least six months because she knew it would take some time to figure out what specifically they were going to do. He wouldn't commit to more than 30 days initially. He said that if they weren't committed to a plan by that time that would be a sign of something wrong. If they did have a good plan after 30 days, he would commit himself to work with her for the duration of the plan.

The idea of committing himself for up to six months to the notion of "doing something," was ridiculous, he thought.

He made the same point when she raised the issue of a meeting schedule. They needed to settle on what activities they would engage in before determining their time commitments. However he did volunteer one evening a week and one half day on weekends, if needed, to complete their plan in the first 30 days.

She couldn't really ask for anything more. To keep the process on track, she briefly summarized the terms they had agreed to and provided him a copy the next time they met. He rolled his eyes when he saw it, but she felt better just having it all on paper.

8. JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN

The 30 days flew by. He kept her in a state of constant agitation for the first three weeks, constantly soliciting then rejecting her suggestions. There were two fundamental problems with what she saw as their best course of action.

First, she kept confusing the means with the ends. She kept talking about how she needed to prepare for the work she wanted to do, rather than the work required position herself for the opportunity she desired. If she was right and she was competing at a disadvantage, it wouldn't be enough to simply improve her qualifications.

Second, she tended to regard his interests as incidental to hers. She never failed to point out the benefits for him in what she proposed to do, but she never quite hit on a way of combining their interests in any of her schemes. This didn't seem to surprise or upset him, he just made a few suggestions and sent her back to the drawing board.

By the final week, she noticed that she had been making all the suggestions and he had done nothing but find fault with them. They were running out of time and she was getting frantic, but he seemed quite pleased with how things were going. Exasperated, she demanded that he make a suggestion.

He calmly laid out a detailed scheme in which he and she would create a multimedia product to complement something that her company produced in print. Together, in their spare time, they would solve all of the technical and creative problems, and when they were done, he would pitch it to the Vice President of Marketing at her company.

Angela would manage and administer the entire project from his office in precisely the manner that she wished to manage projects in her own office. Planning, budgeting, organization of the creative team, and participation in the creative work would be done on her own time, using his resources.

If the company bought into the idea, he would credit her accordingly. If the company passed on it, they would have the option to take the concept to another company or forget about it. In either case, they would have added to their own skills, experience, and credibility.

She asked why he hadn't proposed this earlier. He said it would be wrong to assume that he could always come up with the best answer. He didn't know this was worth considering until he had heard what she had come up with

9. PERIODIC MEETINGS

The schedule was brutal at first. Once again he sat back and waited for her to initiate things. She had to set up the meetings and confirm his attendance, set the agenda and follow up with minutes. He cheerfully fulfilled every time and task commitment that she held him to, but never more than that. She had to create the product profile and map out the tie-ins with her company's existing products, help figure out what the new product would do and how it would work, and approve every piece of work along the way. It was up to her to figure out how it would capture new revenue and how to advertise its availability.

However once she got used to the idea of leading the project, she began to appreciate how her mentor intentionally left things undone, occasionally prompting her to avoid delays or disaster. She really was managing her time, his time, studio and machine time, budgets and forecasts, and quality control. When she did it well, things went smoothly. When she struggled, the project struggled. Yet no matter how things were going, her mentor remained calm, as if he'd anticipated every problem along the way.

So they met regularly to review work completed, accept new work assignments, and revise their plans. While he knew what needed to be done at every juncture, he pretended to be working for her. It was his way of keeping the pressure on and making sure that she was sweating the details.

10. CONCLUSION OR RENEWAL OF THE AGREEMENT

It had taken six months to produce, but finally they had something to show her Marketing V.P. It was a website module attached to her mentor's site for demonstration purposes. It provided a means of capturing children's responses to previous editions of the magazine for inclusion in future issues, for selling merchandise from the publishers and their advertisers, for soliciting parental feedback, and for selling subscriptions.

The presentation was to take place at a breakfast meeting set up at the mentor's studios. There was a hook-up to the website from his laptop linked to a projector. They would be able to run through the main features of the module on a large screen at the end of the board room. In addition, there was a print sample package, like a prospectus for people to take away from the meeting. Angela had seen to all of it.

The plan was for her to test the set-up and leave for work before her Marketing V.P. arrived, but at the last minute, her mentor asked her to stay. To get full credit for her effort, she had to be present. She hesitated.

What if they loved the product but failed to acknowledge her role in it, he asked? The way the project was managed was every bit as important as the nature of the product that resulted. Nothing he could say would guarantee her the recognition she deserved.

Even if they hated the product and couldn't care less how it was put together, she had nothing to lose. If they didn't buy into the concept and consider her for a different role in the company, she would likely quit anyway.

It was all really scary, but he was right. This was the last step in the process they'd embarked on together. In fact, she felt it was her duty to stay and support him in the presentation.

So she did.

Breaking In (Case Study: Shannon)

1. Shannon - breaking in

"Being a teacher is all right, but I didn't really choose to do this. I just fell into the profession because of my language skills. But I get a rush out of every minute I spend at the theatre and I'm as good as the professionals there. I just need to find a way to make a living at it."

Shannon is a French as a Second Language instructor who is unsatisfied with her work and wishes to pursue an avocational interest in theatre production. More specifically, she aspires to gain employment as a wardrobe mistress or designer, having worked as a volunteer seamstress for a summer theatre company that operates out of the college where she teaches.

The nice thing about teaching was the security and flexibility it provided. She enjoyed all the employment benefits offered under the college's collective agreement, plus she had more time off than anyone she knew in other professions. In her spare time, she often took on

freelance tutoring jobs for extra income. Apart from feeling unfulfilled at work, teaching afforded Shannon a pretty good living.

2. SELF ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING POTENTIAL

Shannon had been sewing all her life. Everywhere she'd lived, there had always been a room dedicated to sewing. She had all the equipment and workspace she needed to turn out just about any kind of garment with just about any kind of fabric.

Being skilled and experienced were, in her opinion, the only prerequisites for working in the wardrobe department of a theatre company. Unlike teaching, which required a degree, sewing was simply something that you either could or couldn't do. And if you could do it, you ought to be able to make a living at it.

So all Shannon felt she needed was assistance in placing herself in the theatre workforce. Her connection through the summer theatre was too narrow. She wanted to be guided by someone with a broad knowledge of the opportunities available to her.

In that she was skilled and experienced, motivated and willing to be guided, Shannon felt ready for mentoring. What did she have to lose?

3. CAREER NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES

While her primary objective was to work in the exciting world of theatre production, Shannon had a number of unspoken preconditions that needed to be considered as well. She had expectations of income and security that she thought could be met once she had worked in the field for a few years. She also thought that the comfortable home life she had built up over the years should remain substantially intact, despite her desired career change.

In short, the change that Shannon sought was a more dynamic working environment. She expected to make this change by shifting from work in one skill area, language instruction, to another, sewing. It was simple really, just like her career in teaching had been up to this point.

4. MENTOR SCREENING

Being a logical and well-organized person, listing out possible mentors was easy. Shannon went first to the theatre umbrella organization for a listing of year-round professional theatre companies in the province.

There were a lot more than she expected. Then she took this list to the manager of the summer theatre company and asked which of these companies maintained permanent positions in their wardrobe departments. This reduced the list by about 90%.

Then she went to a couple of professionals she had become friends with in summers past and asked them for suggestions about who she ought to approach. This took a while because the people who had been in town on contract during the summer were often away from their home addresses on contract somewhere else or no longer kept the address she'd been given. Those that she was able to reach right away were either between engagements or were lucky enough to have picked up some stage, TV, or film work close to home.

When she got people on the phone, she didn't tell them that she was looking for a mentor. She just said that she was thinking of doing more work in theatre production and was testing the waters with various theatre companies. They were all forthcoming with the names of people she could talk to, but cautioned her against hoping for too much.

As a result of this process, she now had six names of production managers or wardrobe managers who were in a position to tell her what she needed to do to find steady employment in their field. She had ranked them according to the size of the operations they were managing, the length of time they'd been at their jobs, and the strength of the recommendation they'd received from her former colleagues.

5. MENTOR CONTACT

Now all she had to do was phone them and ask to meet or ask them for advice.

One of the six was a wardrobe mistress she'd worked under a few summers before who had caught on with a large regional theatre company since then. Having worked together in a church basement building costumes for the short summer season, Shannon worried about being taken seriously as a professional by her. They were too familiar. Shannon ranked her number six, dead last.

The response she got from the first five prospective mentors was shocking. One was too busy to talk to her and used a snotty receptionist to screen her calls. Another had recently left his position under circumstances so unfavourable that the people in administration wouldn't admit to knowing what had become of him. The third and fourth ones immediately tried to slough her off onto some other unsuspecting souls without any encouragement whatsoever. The fifth

couldn't be reached because the company was going bankrupt and was suspending operations indefinitely, according to the telephone message.

Shannon was very close to giving up by the time she tried the sixth and final one on the telephone. Thankfully she remembered Shannon and thought well enough of her to take the call. Shannon had been unnerved by the other responses and as a result was hopelessly vague about what she wanted. The woman calmed her down and told her they could meet. In the meantime, she asked, would Shannon send her a note being more specific about what they needed to talk about.

Shannon was embarrassed not to have approached this a little more formally. She should have put something in writing if only for her own benefit before making contact with prospective mentors. While she was grateful that her last prospect was familiar and gracious enough to meet with her anyway, her worst fears were being realized. Instead of being considered as a potential professional, her amateurish telephone call would make her more difficult to take seriously.

6. MEETING A PROSPECTIVE MENTOR

By the time they met, Shannon had pulled herself together and sent a short, businesslike note explaining what she hoped to achieve and how she had decided who to call for help. She hoped that it would minimize any skepticism she'd aroused in her phone call and put the prospective mentor at ease.

They met in the lobby of the theatre on a Saturday around noon. There was nothing happening in the building at that time, so they were able to sit in the large room alone, drinking bad coffee from styrofoam cups just as they had a few years before.

At first they reminisced and caught up on news about old acquaintances. Then there was an uncomfortable pause while Shannon tried to summon the courage to ask for help and the wardrobe mistress braced herself to withstand an unreasonable request.

When Shannon finally blurted out what she wanted, they were both relieved. She wanted to do what she had done for the wardrobe mistress at the summer theatre as a volunteer, only she wanted to do it as a full-time professional. All she felt she needed was someone who could advise her on how to prepare herself for this role and how to position herself to gain employment.

She wasn't asking for a job, exactly, nor was she asking for training. She was seeking access to the knowledge and judgement of a professional, someone she knew and respected. It might not be for long and it certainly wouldn't be onerous for the wardrobe mistress.

Shannon was even willing to contribute her labour if it would help.

It wasn't hard for the wardrobe mistress to say yes, although it wasn't all that clear what she was agreeing to. She told Shannon that she felt that her skills were adequate to work at an entry level in any shop in the country, and she had enjoyed the brief time they had worked together at the summer theatre.

Shannon had to understand, however, the difference between volunteers and professionals. It was more about attitude than skills. A professional cannot afford to fail because of the risk to their reputations and future employment, in addition to their commitment to their craft. A volunteer can get tired or bored or irritated and resume their day jobs without missing a beat. Shannon assured her that she was ready to make this commitment and was thrilled by the opportunity she was being given.

On that note, they parted. Shannon drove an hour back to the bedroom community where she lived, imagining the rest of her working life in an entirely different way.

7. MENTOR ORIENTATION/MENTORSHIP AGREEMENT

Shannon recognized that they needed to structure their time commitments to allow for them to meet all their other personal and professional commitments in addition to her travel to and from the city. She laid this out in an e-mail to her mentor, explaining the schedule in terms of the amount of access she felt she needed and the ways in which she imagined them spending their time together.

Her mentor didn't object to the frequency of these meetings, however she didn't commit to anything nor did she confirm any of Shannon's suppositions about what they might be meeting about. Her reply, also by e-mail, asked how long Shannon thought they would have to maintain this schedule and whether or not this was something that Shannon wanted to keep secret from her current employer or others.

These were sensible but disturbing questions to Shannon. She replied that she hoped that she would have access to her mentor until she'd achieved her goal of finding full time employment, and that until then she wanted to avoid jeopardizing her position at the college at all costs.

The next message indicated that her mentor understood and agreed to everything except the indefinite duration of the arrangement. She didn't want Shannon to stake all her hopes on this relationship and didn't want to feel responsible for someone else's career.

Of course Shannon accepted this immediately and e-mailed back confirmation of their next meeting.

8. JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN

From that point on, her mentor's attitude had changed. She no longer treated Shannon as indulgently as in the past.

This stood to reason of course because their circumstances had changed so profoundly. As a volunteer, Shannon had been doing the wardrobe mistress a favour by contributing her labour. Perhaps she was accorded more patience than she might have expected as a professional, and perhaps her ideas were taken more seriously to avoid giving offence. However it was a little hard to take when her mentor dismissed so many of Shannon's ideas about what she needed to do to break into the profession.

Although they had agreed not to alarm the college about Shannon's intentions, her mentor wanted her to more of her week day time available. She wanted Shannon to accompany her to occasional production meetings, to witness the production process from start to finish, and perhaps become acquainted with directors and designers who could help her in the future.

While this was an undeniably generous proposal, it was something Shannon was unprepared for. It demanded a kind of reckoning she had avoided so far. How could she expect to develop a career in one field while steadfastly holding onto a career in another field?

Something had to give. She had to make more time available for her theatre pursuits or satisfy herself with slow progress - or no progress - toward her goal.

She had to be candid with her mentor. She couldn't give up her and risk her future career in education on the chance that she might develop a career in theatre production. It just didn't make sense to her. There had to be another way.

Her mentor thought it was significant that she wasn't prepared to sacrifice security and comfort for a career in the arts. This was a given for most professionals. It was a good time to make Shannon aware that most professionals are on contract, often only seasonal, and the successful ones are obliged to travel extensively to keep themselves employed. If she was unprepared to risk or sacrifice anything of what she had as a teacher, there was really no point in continuing.

Together they came up with a way to make the shift and incur the risks gradually. Shannon would loosen up as many half-days in her workweek as possible, doing all of her lesson planning and grading on weekends or in the evenings. Her mentor would try to schedule something interesting into the times that Shannon was available.

In addition to this, she would help Shannon pick up some piece-work building, repairing, and altering costumes from her home. To do this, Shannon would have to make her availability known and her mentor

would make introductions and serve as a reference to anyone inquiring about the service. The ballet, the opera, the theatres, the film makers, even the female impersonators all needed emergency sewing done from time to time. In this way, Shannon would discover whether or not she liked the work itself enough to give up teaching. She might also start to generate just enough income to begin reduce her teaching to part-time in the future. At the same time, her work would become familiar to the production people who used her.

Shannon was filled with doubt by this arrangement and would have backed out, but she couldn't bear to have her mentor think she was a dilettante. So she had to give it a try, shuffling her appointments to spend time at her mentor's workplace, promoting herself as a contract seamstress, and trying to generate income from the sewing room in her home.

9. PERIODIC MEETINGS

Meetings tended to be erratic in their timing, but averaged out to approximately once a week. This typically took the form of a half workday in the city with her mentor when Shannon could afford it and there was something of significance happening, or it was an evening running through what she was learning through these visits and through her little home enterprise.

At first the meetings were extremely positive. It was exciting to listen in on meetings and see the productions come to life. The discussions and the drawings were so much more stimulating than the exercises she was constantly repeating in the classroom. Even the promotion of her sewing services was invigorating in a way. She knew that her mentor was making her known to people who could give her work, and that could only be good.

However it all began to wear a little thin as time went on. With all the driving, a half day in the city meant leaving home very early and then returning to work, or leaving work as early as possible and arriving home late.

Making up for lost preparation and grading time was made more difficult as calls started to come in for sewing jobs. There weren't many, not enough to produce much income, but they were always urgent and they all entailed trips into and out of the city to pick up or deliver things.

Shannon found herself missing meetings occasionally. It was hard to maintain a desire for full time work in theatre production when she was already overextended. She was hardly home, and when she was there was never any time to relax.

10. CONCLUSION OR RENEWAL OF THE AGREEMENT

Eventually she had to tell her mentor that she was at her limit, that she couldn't continue this way any longer. She felt defeated and ashamed. No matter how her mentor responded, she would surely feel contempt for Shannon.

She was wrong. Her mentor was very gracious. She explained that she could never see how Shannon imagined she would pull it off, but knew that if she didn't try to juggle two lives and two careers, she would never try to realize her dream nor would she ever be content teaching. There was no doubt that Shannon had learned a great deal in the time they spent together, and with her other skills, she was readily employable.

But by now she had also experienced the stress, the dislocation, and the unpredictability of life in the theatre, and was finally in a position to judge whether or not it was worth giving up the security and relative affluence afforded by her position at the college. Her mentor was curious and put the question to her directly: "Knowing what you know now, are you ready to make the change?"

Shannon said she didn't know. Her mentor told her she didn't have to answer. At least she understood the question fully, and if she ever did decide to make a life in the theatre, they could start again.

Moving Over (Case Study: Vanessa)

1. Vanessa - moving over

"It was like, 'Oh great, I'm working for a gallery!' And all my friends were so jealous because they had to chase work in advertising and design, while I got to work with "Art." Well, I totally love this place and these people, but I don't get to do anything involving the collection, the exhibitions, or the artists. I've paid my dues. I've got to get away from this desk."

Vanessa has worked in the administration of a medium-sized public art gallery since graduating from an art college almost two years ago.

The initial excitement of working in a gallery has faded. Her administrative responsibilities have grown along with her skills, however she regrets the distance this puts between her, the artwork, artists, and the visiting public. She believes that the understanding of the gallery she has gained as an administrator would stand her in good stead were she to work in a curatorial capacity, however she is having difficulty getting anyone in the organization to recognize her potential.

2. SELF ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING POTENTIAL

Vanessa was a good candidate for mentoring because she had become extremely goal-oriented and disciplined during the two years she spent in the gallery's administration. She was a fast study and could complete unfamiliar tasks with very little direction. This demonstrated a willingness to take responsibility for her own training that set her apart from other entry level people. The Executive Director was clearly grooming her for advancement by giving her increasingly important assignments involving government relations and financial management. Yet there was something about being bound to her desk while so near to the exhibition space that was distressing her more every day.

3. CAREER NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES

Vanessa wasn't shy about her credentials. She knew about art theory and criticism. She also knew how to deal with artists, having also had a lot of studio work in college. What's more, she moved in the same social circles as a number of emerging artists. She couldn't think of anything that a curator might do that she wasn't ready for. In fact, given her detailed knowledge of gallery finance and operations, she was probably better prepared to take on curatorial duties than the people currently occupying those positions. But despite the broadest possible hints, neither the Executive Director nor the Head Curator seemed the least bit inclined to discuss the possibility with her. All she wanted was someone to give her a chance, someone to make introductions and open a few doors. If someone would give her a break she was ready to make a move immediately.

4. MENTOR SCREENING

Vanessa knew that it would upset people in her organization to know that she wanted out of her administrative responsibilities. Her only other high-level contacts in the field were from other cities. These were people who had come with a touring exhibition to supervise the handling and installation of the works. At most, she had attended meetings with them or shared a glass of wine at an opening.

Based on this slight familiarity, she placed a few discrete calls. She was dismayed that every one of those who returned her calls asked about her experience outside of administration. She was furious with one who told her that there was a lot to learn, that she needed a lot more than introductions and recommendations. Adding insult to injury, this guy offered her an unpaid internship at his gallery.

She talked her problem through with someone she trusted at one of the funding agencies. This person referred her to someone else who was knowledgeable about project funding, and that person was able to

suggest the names of some people who were active in the visual arts but weren't tied to any of particular organizations.

5. MENTOR CONTACT

Some of these names were familiar to her and some were not. Assuming the familiar names to be the most helpful, she did some research to see who had been doing the most interesting work and appeared to be the best connected. She then sent each of them a note asking for an interview.

Two of the three agreed to meet. On both occasions, Vanessa was told in no uncertain terms that she had underestimated the difficulty of her plan and that it would take longer than she thought. One of them told her to go back to school or pay her dues as an intern somewhere else and wait for an opportunity.

6. MEETING A PROSPECTIVE MENTOR

The other was more helpful. He liked her resume and suggested that she work on her own time to gain some credentials. He felt that the best recommendation for someone in her position would be having her name on the catalogue of a critically successful exhibition. Since he was in the early stages of assembling just such a thing, he asked whether or not she wanted to be involved.

He was going to hire an experienced assistant anyway. If she wanted to learn on the project, it would take longer and demand more of him, but it would be workable if she contributed unpaid time.

She knew immediately that this was the best thing for her, and she accepted. However there would have to be conditions placed on her involvement to ensure that she could carry on with her current job while contributing enough to his project to warrant the credit he promised. He agreed to entertain a proposal.

7. MENTOR ORIENTATION/MENTORSHIP AGREEMENT

Vanessa's proposed mentorship agreement needed a little fine-tuning. In places it was extremely specific, going so far as to dictate how she would be credited for her participation. In other places, it was very open ended. For example, she wanted the mentorship to carry on after the initial project's completion either through opportunities arising from the project itself or through opportunities that her mentor might help her seize.

He was a little taken aback by this and almost balked until she suggested a few amendments. First, she would let him set the level of involvement required for her to be credited in the catalogue, and second that their arrangement would come up for renewal upon completion of the project, with extension by mutual consent.

He agreed, promising to provide more information about the project and her role in it in the form of a detailed workplan.

8. JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN

Her mentor laid out the project in its entirety for the first time so that they could define a role for Vanessa within it. Whatever she took responsibility for had to fit with her long-term objective of gaining credibility to compete for new opportunities in her field.

His plan was to perform original biographical work on a recently deceased Plains Cree artist, track down works held in public and private collections, and attempt to represent every phase of the artist's development in relation to the cultural and historical changes that occurred in his lifetime. So in addition to assembling the works themselves for exhibition, there was research, interpretation, writing, and design work to be done. If the research was particularly fruitful, there was also the possibility of creating an illustrated biography of the artist for publication following the exhibition's tour.

Because she had to keep her day job, she was limited to assignments that could be completed in her spare time. Biographical research and the tracking of art work would be her primary focus. However he was also willing to include her in meetings and in the writing, layout, design, and production of the catalogue. He promised to let her do as much as she could and to acknowledge her effort to whatever extent seemed fair.

9. PERIODIC MEETINGS

Their schedule was set more by his commitments to funders, sponsors, gallery bookings, and his other work. To make their deadlines, she had to put in a couple of evenings each week and report to him either in person or by fax prior to their bi-monthly meetings. They spoke on the phone often, particularly when one or the other of them turned up an interesting lead or needed a question answered.

Although she was content to be immersed in this work, he felt that it would be good for her to meet some of the people he was seeing on a regular basis. She would get more out of her time with him if she became acquainted with all the other players in a project of this sort.

Archivists, technicians, printers, publishers, lawyers, insurers, publicists, sponsors, and especially the curatorial staff of host galleries each presented a different perspective on the kind of work she aspired to. In his opinion, it was time for her to let her colleagues know about the project and ask for some flexibility in her hours.

She refused at first. She was afraid of looking foolish and of jeopardizing relationships in her workplace. Her mentor gave her courage by assuring her that people would be impressed by her initiative. No one had to know that she was working without pay, and if anyone asked about her role, he would be sure to emphasize her importance to the project. If her workplace relationships changed, it could only be for the better given her current level of frustration.

The Executive Director was indeed impressed and was willing to go along with occasional absences provided they were made up later. It was more of a time management problem than anything else.

Time management and contact management skills, acquired in her administrative capacity, stood her in good stead during her research. Also her ability to use the Internet for research and communication came as a pleasant surprise to her mentor. By the end of the project, he was trying to use the techniques and tools she had shown him.

10. CONCLUSION OR RENEWAL OF THE AGREEMENT

As the last of their deadlines was met and the exhibition went on tour, Vanessa had to decide whether or not the time had come to quit her day job. Her mentor asked a lot of questions about how life at the gallery had changed since they first met. From her answers, he gathered that she was in a position to seek more interesting assignments at the gallery or to seek employment in a non-administrative role elsewhere. At least people were taking her aspirations seriously and were including her in discussions about the artistic side of the gallery's operations.

He advised against leaving before the gallery had time to find a different role for her. If this didn't happen, she always had the option of taking on other projects or of going to another institution. While he had enjoyed working with her, and would certainly invite her to join him on future projects, she appeared to require the security of a stable organization around her.

Breaking Out (Case Study: Emile)

1. Emile - breaking out

"When I came here, things were a mess. I mean, the basics just weren't there - no control of inventory, labour costs, materials, trucking.... Management thinks I'm a hero for cutting costs, but while we were getting more efficient, the number of productions went down. Now we've got down time and I'm sending guys home. We could handle outside contract work, but management won't let us. I can do better on my own."

Emile thought he saw an opportunity for himself and the opera; by adding contract work to the shop, he was sure they could run at break-even or even generate a profit. If the opera wasn't willing to let him take on extra work, he could start up independently, and treat the opera as a client. Then he could take on all kinds of related work from other performing arts companies. He was convinced that he could deliver better quality and at a lower price.

Given his experience with the opera, Emile was certain that he could continue running an efficient shop independently, but that was the extent of his expertise. He had no confidence in his ability to run a business, and recognized that things could get out of hand. Going into business for himself entailed huge risks, and he knew he wasn't ready to go it alone. Not wanting a boss or a partner, Emile decided he needed a mentor.

2. SELF ASSESSMENT OF MENTORING POTENTIAL

Emile knew what he wanted and was willing to take a chance. His abilities always seemed to go beyond what his job required of him, and he enjoyed a challenge. But he wasn't stupid. He knew he needed someone in his corner who recognized his abilities, and who had the experience he lacked and was willing to share it with him.

3. SELF ASSESSMENT OF CAREER NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES

Emile knew that before he could approach a prospective mentor, he needed to clarify what he wanted to accomplish and what kinds of help he would need. Putting pen to paper, he determined that his goal was to become "owner/manager" of the biggest and best scene and prop shop in the city, and he felt he could accomplish this in about 18 months. He knew he would have to change the way he related to trades people, who would now be employees, and with business people who he might need for credit, legal, or tax help. Professionally, he put down that he needed to learn about accounting and finance, contract law, and marketing.

When he stopped and took stock of what he had written, he felt a little uneasy. He hadn't before realized the scope of what he needed to

learn, but on the other hand, he didn't yet know enough to be sure he couldn't. It was time to talk to somebody who knew something.

4. MENTOR SCREENING

All the business people he knew professionally were suppliers or contractors, and Emile wasn't sure that he could rely on their discretion. He resolved that his search would have to begin with complete strangers.

He decided to approach it from the private sector side of things. When he considered where this type of work goes on commercially, he immediately thought of commercials, or more specifically, advertising.

He recalled once having lost a good carpenter to a commercial presentation company, and thought that if he made it clear that he wasn't going into that business someone there might talk to him.

After a fruitless search of the yellow pages, Emile enlisted a friend in administration to run a list of donors and subscribers to see if he could find anyone in advertising who liked opera. Two names came up which matched the list of companies he had made.

He called them both. One never returned his call, but the other eventually phoned him back. He was an account executive with the third biggest ad agency in Canada. Emile told him that he was working on a business plan to reduce production costs at the opera, which was theoretically true, and that he knew that he was an opera supporter, which he hoped was true. The executive offered to have his secretary send a list of the companies that his agency used, along with the name of the contact person at each company. He even went so far as to let Emile use his name to get an appointment with them. A good start.

There were eight names on the list. Emile called the receptionist at each company and asked whether or not they had any promotional materials. These took a few weeks to come in, but they were worth waiting for. Not only did they give him an idea of the individual companies' production capacities, but he also got client and project lists.

Four of them listed among their clients the ad agency he'd started with. Emile called the secretary of the executive he'd started with, told her he didn't want to disturb her boss, and asked to be connected to someone who could tell him about the commercial presentation companies. She referred him to their Creative Director.

Emile spoke to the Creative Director, using the account executive as a reference, and she gave him her impressions of the key people at the four companies she was familiar with. He asked her if he could use her name to get an appointment with one of them and she agreed.

Although Emile was making progress, the process was a difficult one. He had been through the phone book and business directories, donor and subscriber lists, and had made at least twenty phone calls over a three week period. But what he found most difficult was mustering up the confidence to press on; everyone he had talked to so far had been willing to help, but he couldn't help but think his luck would soon run out.

It didn't.

5. MAKING CONTACT

Each of the four people on his list had the business experience to help him, but Emile ranked them according to the Creative Director's opinions about who she liked dealing with best and which company delivered the best value.

He drafted a note for the first one, but quickly got the impression that it wouldn't pan out. He then adapted the letter for the second one and followed up a week later. They played phone tag for another week, but when they finally talked, he was clearly intrigued by the business case Emile was making.

6. MEETING AND ORIENTING MENTOR PROSPECT

They agreed to tour each other's shops and to sit down over coffee. As it turned out, his mentor had started out as a finish carpenter in the construction industry. He got into building for commercial presentations by accident. He saw the niche, struck out on his own with a small crew, and kept reinvesting until the company was stable and secure. While he didn't seem rich, he was obviously secure and satisfied with his accomplishments.

It came up that he had never seen an opera, so Emile arranged some tickets for his mentor and his wife, then met them after for a backstage tour. His mentor was impressed with the music but was critical of the set construction - it was a rented show. His wife was more impressed that someone could get her husband out to an opera. And Emile must have made an impression, because by the end of the night, he had a mentor.

Emile was up most of that night thinking things over. Again his confidence waned, and he couldn't make sense of why this guy was so willing to spend his time helping him. Emile phoned in the morning and asked him outright, "what made you decide to help me?" His mentor explained that he found the whole thing exciting, and that reminded him of how he felt when he first started up his own company. He complemented Emile on his approach and enthusiasm,

and added that he thought that he might learn something about his own business as they worked together. He might even learn to like opera.

7. NEGOTIATING A MENTORING AGREEMENT

His mentor wasn't big on process, so he bridled a bit when Emile told him that he wanted to draft an agreement for them. He said he wanted to keep things as informal as possible, and that commitments were unnecessary. But after Emile explained what it was that he wanted to address in the agreement, his mentor felt much better about it. He recognized that it was in their best interests.

He had a problem with regular meetings, however. He was willing to commit as much time as Emile, he just couldn't or wouldn't say exactly when he would be available. They got around this by agreeing to speak every second Monday evening to set a mutually acceptable meeting time for later in that week. While this may seem complicated, it gave his mentor the freedom he required

8. JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAN

The next time they got together, Emile talked about his plans in more detail. His mentor was surprised by what he heard about the performing arts business, but conceded that the plan could work if Emile's impressions of the industry were accurate.

When Emile specified where he thought he needed help, his mentor was skeptical. He told Emile not to waste time studying accounting and finance, and that the people management and negotiating skills would come with experience.

They decided that the best thing to do would be for Emile to draft a business plan under his mentor's supervision. All his assumptions would be tested in this way, and by the end of it Emile would be well versed in every detail of the operation. This should give him confidence and would stand him in good stead with lenders and clients later on.

9. PERIODIC MEETINGS

They began meeting for two hours every second week, and that went on for about nine months. His mentor only missed two meetings, and even that wasn't particularly disruptive as they talked regularly on the telephone and exchanged faxes.

Piece by piece the plan came together - competitive analysis, marketing, financing, financial projections - until one day his mentor said "We're ready." He had made an appointment with his banker to look over Emile's plan and consider financing his start-up. The two arrived together, and after making the introductions his mentor took a back seat and left Emile to make his pitch. It went well, and over the next few weeks he made any necessary changes to satisfy the bank, and began negotiating a deal with the opera to put their scene shop under his control.

In the end, with a letter from the bank to lend credibility, opera management accepted Emile's offer to take over their shop, including the lease, equipment, and materials, provided he was willing to assume responsibility for existing employment contracts, and provided they would outsource all their set building to him. It was a tough negotiation and a complicated deal. Emile was on the phone with his mentor about it almost daily.

10. CONCLUSION OR RENEWAL OF AGREEMENT

Within days of signing the lease agreement and taking possession, Emile and his mentor had their last meeting. It came as a bit of a shock to both to discover they had been together for over a year. Emile pressed for renewal, but his mentor declined, saying that Emile had learned too much for him to remain comfortable with the role of mentor.

They had become friends, but the foundation of their relationship was still business. They agreed to stay in touch, and occasionally his mentor would outsource work to Emile to keep a lid on overtime costs during peak periods.

Emile couldn't tell whether or not this was another favour his mentor was doing him. He already felt that he owed his mentor a huge debt, but his mentor assured him that he got a lot out of the year. On the other hand, he blamed Emile for his wife's new interest in opera. "We're all square," he said.

Mentorship Appendices

1. **Appendix 1 - Predictable Problems & Safeguards**

Mentoring entails risks caused by human nature and errors in implementation. Most of these are quite predictable and adherence to the mentoring guide will avoid most of them.

Neglect of current job

Even the mere perception that you are short-changing your current job can result in pressure to curtail your mentoring activities. The best way to avoid this problem is through better organization of your time and more careful reporting on tasks to your immediate superiors. If all parties can see that you are honouring your commitments, there will be no grounds for complaint.

Conflict with current employer

The introduction of a mentor to the employer-employee can result in a conflict of styles and techniques. These conflicts can arise from the employee's desire to apply what has been learned through mentoring or from the employer's sense that the employee is departing from the company's agenda. In either case, it is up to you to harmonize what you are learning outside of the workplace with your employer's policies and procedures for as long as you wish to maintain your current position.

Unrealistic expectations of advancement

Through wishful thinking or with encouragement from the mentor, it is easy to become convinced that the mentorship will lead directly to advancement of your career objectives. This is an unreal expectation and should not form the basis of any decisions about your current employment. Mentoring can equip you to pursue your career objectives, but cannot be relied upon to carry you to the desired ends.

Transfer of responsibility for career development

Under a strong mentor or over an extended period of time, it can begin to appear that your progress is dependant on your mentor, or that your mentor has assumed responsibility for seeing to it that you realize your career objectives. This is less likely to occur if your mentoring agreement and the development plan contains clear limitations on what your mentor has committed to and if you review the agreement from time to time. Even if the mentor goes beyond the terms of your agreement, this does not signal a transfer of responsibility for your career.

Becoming the object of jealousy and gossip

Ideally, your colleagues would be pleased and encouraged by the opportunity you are creating for yourself by entering into a mentorship. However the attentions of a powerful or prominent person in a highly competitive profession can quickly damage workplace relationships unless confidentiality is strictly maintained or disclosures are made in a planned and controlled fashion. In spite of all the new experiences, skills, and opportunities that might occur through mentoring, alienation from your colleagues might do short term and long term damage to your career. It is up to you to anticipate how news of your mentoring will be accepted in your workplace, and if, how, and when to inform colleagues of what you are doing. In the absence of information, people will speculate, so it is better to err on the side of disclosure than secrecy.

Mentor becomes possessive

Many of the mentor's rewards [refer or link to appendix] result from

the fulfilment of personal or professional needs that may not be immediately apparent to either party, or which may become more or less pronounced over time. This may take a variety of forms, but can generally be recognized in any activity area where the mentor's sense of urgency exceeds what is required in your development plan.

Excessive demands on your time or attention, or pressure to focus on mentoring assignments to the detriment of your other obligations are not reasonable and should not be mistaken as tests of your commitment or ability. When this occurs, it is up to you to revisit your development plan, and if necessary your mentoring agreement, the next time you meet with your mentor. Your mentor may have a perfectly sound rationale for the heightened demands and this may or may not warrant revision of your development plan. The essential point here is that, although you may be the mentor's protégé in terms of professional status, you are the mentor's equal within the mentoring relationship. You have a responsibility to keep the relationship within the bounds of the agreement entered into by both parties, and are entirely within your rights to amend or conclude that agreement if you feel it necessary. Of course the best cure is prevention through a sensible and reasonably specific mentoring agreement and development plan at the outset.

Mentor fails to keep commitments

Given their professional status, your mentor may have more demands on his or her time than you do, and for this reason may fail to fulfil some commitments. Presumably you have already tried to address this problem in your mentoring agreement and development plan. All that remains to be done is to table the issue at the first opportunity and allow your mentor to make a more realistic assessment of time commitments. If your mentor's commitment is, on review, inadequate for your needs and no further accommodation is possible, you must consider slowing your progress through the development plan or of terminating the relationship altogether. While this would be a regrettable outcome, there is no possibility of a more satisfactory outcome for as long as your level of commitment is significantly out of alignment with your mentor's.

Mentor fails to give you credit for your work

Whether this is an ethical failure, in which your mentor takes credit for your work, or an oversight, in which your mentor fails to draw attention to what you've accomplished, it can be extremely hurtful both personally and professionally. Mentoring works best in an atmosphere of trust, so there is little to be gained by obsessively watching for signs of betrayal. However trust can be buttressed with sensible measures and open communication. Be up front about the importance of recognition when drafting the mentoring agreement and development plan, and where possible, document your contribution to any joint projects in ways that will make your skills and abilities obvious to others. This is the best way to get good value out of your mentoring experience regardless of how your mentor ultimately behaves.

2. Appendix 2 - Mentorship Agreement Outline

I.Role of the Mentor

Describe in broad terms the types of help the mentor is prepared to offer, relating each one to the personal and professional changes identified in the "Self-Assessment of Career Needs and Objectives."

II.Confidentiality

What kinds of information, if any, will the mentor share which must be regarded as confidential?

What kinds of information, if any, will the protégé share which must be regarded as confidential?

What kinds of information, if any, cannot be shared between protégé and mentor?

III.Duration of the Relationship

Date by which objectives should have been met?

Grounds for concluding the relationship early?

Grounds for extending the relationship beyond expected duration?

IV.Frequency of Meetings

Anticipated minimum frequency of regular meetings (days or weeks)?

V. Other Terms & Conditions

Note any other issues of concern to either party

3. Appendix 3 - Self-Assessment of Career Needs and Objectives

I have the desire and aptitude to assume the responsibilities of a:

(general title of position or role, including self-employment possibilities)

in the:

(name field or discipline).

Given informal training and support (mentoring), I can reasonably hope to prepare myself for this new role within:_____. (number of months or years).

To accomplish this, I probably need to change in the following ways

Personal

- **Augmentation of professional network**
- **Acquisition of new experience and/or credentials**
- **Entry level familiarization with organization, discipline, or industry**
- **Enhanced job and career satisfaction**
- **Improved performance in current capacity or position**

Personal:

- **Increased job and career satisfaction**
- **Personal and social development and discovery**
- **Renewed sense of optimism and enthusiasm**
- **Positive change in life skills and habits**
- **Fresh perspective on personal goals and aspirations**

Risks

Professional:

- **Communication between mentor and employer**
- **Displacement or neglect of other professional responsibilities**
- **Huge commitment without realistic hope of advancement**
- **Mentor may take credit for protege's work**
- **Non-performance by mentor**
- **Loss of collegiality with peers**

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