

## Guidelines for NECA Mentors

The following guidelines are based on research on experiences and accepted best practices of mentors in the business world, as well as a growing body of experience from the NECA Mentoring Program.

1. BE POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE - The ability of the Protégé to learn and grow is dependent on self-esteem. He or she has to be able to ask for advice without feeling “at-risk.”
2. ASK QUESTIONS BEFORE PROVIDING ANSWERS - Unsolicited "constructive advice" can make the Protégé defensive. “Suggestions” almost always meet *your* needs more than the Protégé’s. If you really disagree with a practice, ask questions to reveal the Protege's thinking behind his or her actions or decisions. This will encourage the Protégés to ask these questions for themselves later on.
3. FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF THE PROTÉGÉ - Your success as a Mentor is dependent on the Protégé’s readiness and openness for learning. If you offer advice before the right time, it probably can't be understood or used yet by the Protégé. Listening to and analyzing what the Protégé says should be your first priority.
4. BE WILLING TO "BACK OFF"- Sometimes you will make mistakes in timing or approach, even when your ideas may be very good and very needed. Be open about asking the Protégé for feedback when that happens and make adjustments to your approach.
5. DON'T TAKE REJECTION OF YOUR IDEAS PERSONALLY- A Protégé’s rejection or non-response most often relates to his or her lack of readiness to learn and should provide guidance to you as Mentor as to how to change tactics. Remember that in the end the decision to act or not act on your advice is up to the Protégé.
6. REINFORCE THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP – Mentors and Protégés acknowledge confidentiality at the outset of the mentoring arrangement. Mentors should recognize and reaffirm the growing confidence and trust placed in him or her by the Protégé. Reinforcing this trust encourages Protégé sharing and risk-taking and facilitates growth.
7. PLAN AHEAD SO YOU ARE TRULY “AVAILABLE” DURING YOUR SESSIONS WITH YOUR PROTÉGÉ - It is better to postpone a Mentoring session than to attempt to engage with and be responsive to your Protégé when you are under pressure. At the very least, let the Protégé know what the situation is rather than leave him or her wondering if you are really “into” the discussion.
8. MOTIVATE PROTÉGÉS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES - Use questions to promote higher level thinking and self-assessment by the Protégé and to encourage them to discover for themselves the underlying reasons for decisions. Then take the time to discuss these reasons.
9. DO NOT GET DRAWN INTO SOLVING THE PROTÉGÉ’S DAILY OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS – Keep the discussion and your advice focused on the fundamental business and organizational topics that will establish a knowledge base for the Protégé’s continued decision-making, growth and success after the Mentoring relationship has ended. Mentors, too, should not get caught up in telling their own “war stories” to the extent that their relevance may be lost on their Protégés.