RCA Mentor Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for mentors volunteering with the Radio Club of America's Mentoring Program. The guidelines are designed to maximize the effectiveness of the interaction between you and your mentee(s), and to avoid creating issues that could reflect negatively on the club.

Keep communications open

The RCA will coordinate the first call between you and your mentor. Afterwards, you should arrange a regular meeting schedule, and feel free to exchange messages as topics or questions arise. During the course of the interaction, your mentee may reach out as topics or questions arise, and you may also reach out if you come across new information that could help your mentee.

Initial contact

Tell the mentee a bit about yourself, professionally and personally. Listen carefully and ask questions for clarification when needed. Within reason, reply promptly to messages sent to you. Consider setting goals for frequency of communication with your mentee. If email communication seems slow, remember that younger people tend to ignore email and you may want to consider text messaging as a way to keep communication open. Younger people also tend to avoid phone calls and voicemail messages. Define your communication preferences up front, and be willing to be flexible.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Keep in mind that younger generations can and often do have a different ethos regarding race, gender, sexuality, and culture. As a general guideline these topics should not be part of interactions in a professional mentoring relationship, but remember that things like a mentee's preferred pronouns can be areas where unintentional conflicts may arise. If a mentee offers you their preferred pronouns, try to use them.

Define expectations

Establish clear expectations and ground rules at the onset of the mentoring relationship. Consider writing down a list of realistic goals for the mentoring relationship together with the mentee. To develop these goals, assess their needs and what they hope to accomplish with you as a mentor, as well as how the mentee believes you can help them. Revisit and revise these goals together and use them to evaluate progress over the course of the year.

Take initiative and be an active mentee

Be proactive in all aspects of the mentoring relationship. Listen carefully and respectfully to your mentee's needs and ask questions to help you share experiences that are most helpful to your mentee. Remember that the most effective mentor-mentee relationships are built on mutual learning, so also think about ways you can introduce new ideas.

Help your mentee expand their opportunities
Your mentee is involved in this program to help grow their career and be part of a larger professional community. Guide your mentee into joining professional organizations, conferences, writing opportunities, and look for ways to have them participate and volunteer.

Be available
Be mindful of your professional and personal schedule, and let your mentee know if you will be unavailable for extended periods of time. Within reason, be flexible in adapting to your mentee's schedule. Be punctual and respectful of your mentee's time. Whenever possible, plan on meeting face to face at conferences or other professional venues.

Be reliable and consistent
Be careful and realistic about the commitments you make to your mentee, but always follow through on those commitments. Gain your mentee's trust, while them giving yours.

Be prepared to provide honest yet kind feedback
Feedback should be the starting point of further conversation. Ask questions to fully understand your mentee's goals and interests. Do not feel like you must impress your mentee, but do communicate your strengths, interests, and skills. Give your mentee feedback and recognition for accomplishments they achieve during your mentoring period.

Be sensitive to cultural and ideological differences
Be open to new ideas. Your mentee's life experience and perspectives will likely be somewhat — or in some cases very — different from your own. Embrace these differences and use them to grow your own perspectives and worldviews.

Respect confidentiality
Keep all conversations and disclosures between you and your mentee private and confidential. Make sure this expectation for confidentiality is clear and reciprocal; your mentee should maintain your confidentiality, and they must also feel confident that you will maintain confidentiality of information they disclose to you.

Address misunderstandings as they arise
Communicate problems, issues, and misunderstandings within the mentoring relationship directly with your mentee, and in a timely fashion. Do not allow issues to fester and build resentment.

RCA Resources
The RCA Mentoring Program Committee will schedule and facilitate an introductory call with you and your mentor. After the introductory call, the RCA Mentoring Program Committee will contact you to check on initial progress, and will contact you every two months afterwards to check on progress.

Contact the RCA Mentoring Program Committee Co-chairs with any questions or concerns you may encounter during the mentoring program.

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