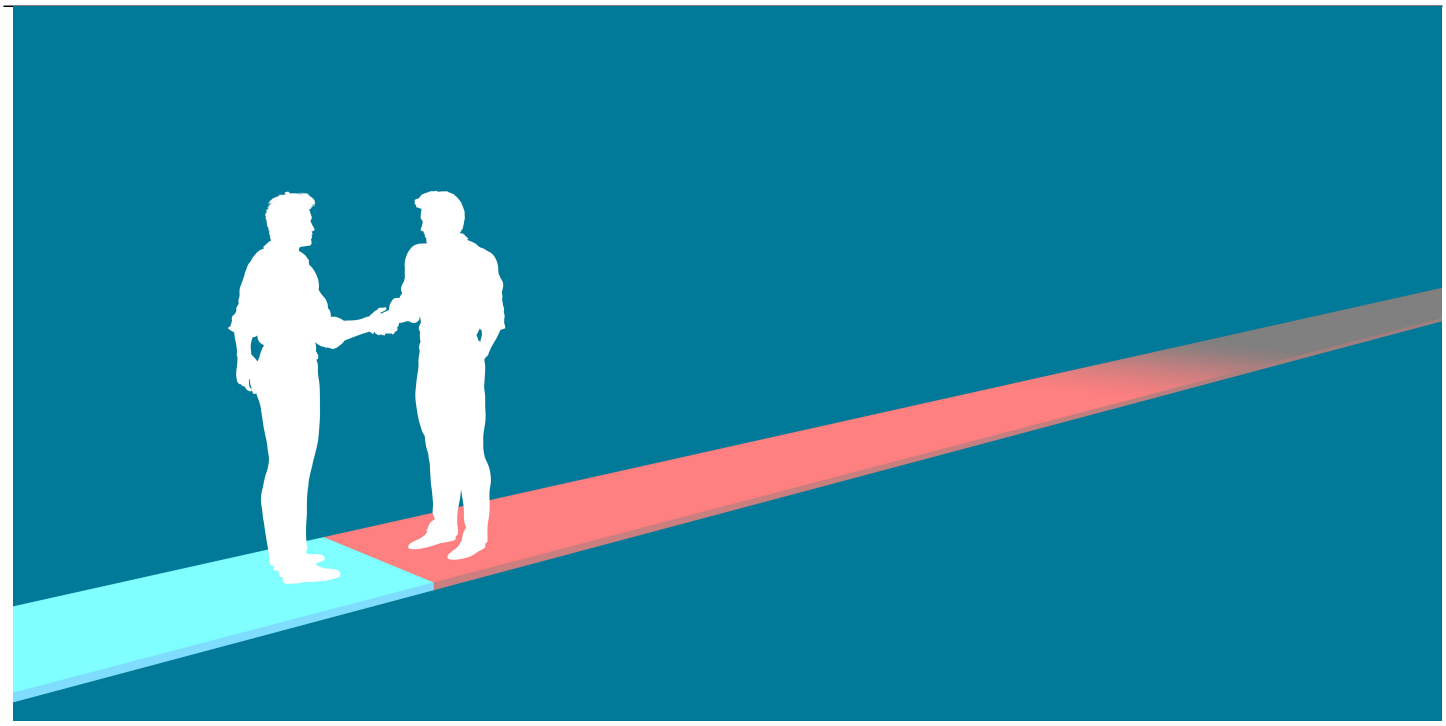


Your Launch Pad: The Art of Effective Mentoring — Practical Tips for In-house Counsel

Career Development



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Mentoring is one of the most powerful tools available for professional growth — yet it's also one of the most misunderstood. A great mentoring relationship is not a casual chat when things get tough, a teacher-student dynamic, or a box-checking exercise. At its best, it's a protected, trust-based relationship that transfers judgment, perspective, and leadership wisdom from one professional to another. Here are the key principles that make mentoring truly work.

Know what mentoring actually is

Start by getting clear on the purpose. Mentoring exists to support learning and experimentation and help individuals develop their potential. The mentor's role is to guide, not to solve. The mentee owns the agenda. When mentors step in to fix problems or dispense advice freely, they inadvertently undermine the very autonomy that great mentoring is designed to build. Resist the urge to be the expert in the room; curiosity is a far more powerful tool than a ready answer.

Build trust from day one

Confidentiality is the bedrock of an effective mentoring relationship. Without it, honest conversation is impossible. From your very first session, establish that what is shared stays between you. Beyond confidentiality, trust is built through consistency: showing up prepared, being fully present, and following through on every commitment you make. If you say you'll send a resource or check in before the next session, do it. Small acts of reliability compound into a relationship where the mentee feels genuinely safe to be vulnerable.



Lead with questions, not answers

One of the most transformative shifts a mentor can make is moving from advice-giver to question-asker. Powerful, open-ended questions unlock thinking in ways that advice simply cannot. Try prompts like:

- What matters most to you right now?
- What's getting in your way?
- What would you pursue if nothing were holding you back?

What assumptions are you making that may be getting in the way?

These questions invite the mentee to do the real work: examining their own thinking, identifying blind spots, and arriving at solutions that are authentically theirs. Equally important, get comfortable with silence. A pause after a good question isn't awkward; it's an invitation for deeper reflection.

Explore ACC's Mentor Match program

Use a simple, consistent meeting structure

Great mentoring sessions don't just happen organically; they benefit from a light framework. A reliable four-part structure keeps conversations focused and productive:

1. **Warm-up** — Put the mentee at ease. Ask: "What's most on your mind right now?"
2. **Focus Topic** — Identify the central issue. Ask: "What would you like to explore today?"
3. **Insights** — Create momentum. Ask: "How can I help you as you deal with this?"
4. **Action & Close** — Consolidate learning. Ask: "What insights can you take from this conversation? Are you ready to take an action?"

This format respects the mentee's time, keeps the relationship goal-oriented, and ensures every session ends with something tangible.

Commit to the journey

Effective mentoring is not episodic; it is a sustained commitment. Meeting twice monthly for one hour per session is a proven cadence. Schedule dates upfront and protect them. Consistency signals that the relationship matters. Over a six-month arc, build in structured check-ins to benchmark progress, discuss what's working, adjust goals where needed, and ultimately celebrate growth. Tracking development (even informally, through self-ratings on key skills) gives both parties a concrete sense of progress and keeps the mentee accountable to their own aspirations.

Remember: Mentoring benefits both sides

It's easy to frame mentoring as something the mentor gives and the mentee receives. The reality is more reciprocal. Mentors sharpen their listening skills, gain fresh perspectives on challenges they may no longer face firsthand, and deepen their own leadership thinking. The relationship strengthens not just two individuals, but the broader professional community to which both belong.

The bottom line: mentoring works when you show up, with curiosity, consistency, and a genuine commitment to the other person's growth. That's when the relationship becomes something truly worth having.

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Annie Cavlov



Executive and Personal Coach

Annie Cavlov Coaching

Annie Cavlov is an executive and personal coach who partners with growth-oriented professionals — especially in-house counsel and legal leaders — to elevate leadership, sharpen strategy, and align legal with business goals. With over 20 years in the legal information industry, Cavlov held senior roles at Wolters Kluwer, Bloomberg Law, and ALM, and worked with LexisNexis and Thomson Reuters. She brings deep industry fluency, a direct yet empathetic coaching style, and strategic insight that drives real change. Cavlov works primarily with senior professionals — including General Counsel, Partners, and C-suite leaders — often during transitions in role, sector, or purpose. Trained by Coaching Development Ltd., an ICF-accredited program, she is actively pursuing ICF certification.

One client shared, “Annie provoked and challenged me through insightful questions and precise analysis … always direct, practical, and hands-on.” More information about Cavlov and her practice can be found on her website www.anniecavlov.com.