Group Mentoring Manual for Mentors
APPENDIX

Note: these are the same resources that are in the "Group Mentoring Manual for Mentors" eBook. We made these resources available as a PDF so that you can print them out.

> The best teacher is the one who suggests rather than dogmatizes, and inspires his listener with the wish to teach himself.
> **-Edward Bulwer-Lytton**

(The Appendix Section contains tools, which the MGL may wish to utilize in working with the group as well as with individual mentorees. All of these tools can be adapted and should be to meet the needs of both the Mentoring Group Leader and the group.)

First Meeting Agenda Form

Goal: Establish the group norms for your group and create an agenda for ongoing meetings.

Outcomes: At the end of this first meeting:

- Group norms will have been established and agreed to
- The roles of members and Leader(s) will have been clarified
- Expectations on the part of members and Leader(s) will have been discussed and clarified
- Agenda for next meeting and time/date/place will have been agreed to

Suggestion: The first meeting is a most important one as it establishes the rules that will operate within the group and is the first time all members are together and so how things work and how well they work will leave an impression after the meeting is over. A poorly run first meeting will make members skeptical of how well the group will work and may lead some to already begin to disengage or lower their commitment to the process. A well run first meeting will leave members more comfortable and more enthusiastic about returning and working together.

It is recommended that you allow enough time to successfully conduct your first meeting even if it involves more time than you will normally allow for ongoing meetings. Two hours is the recommended amount of time as a minimum if you are not intending to do much discussion about a given content area. It is best to conduct this first meeting in one period of time rather than breaking it into to because the subject matters are closely related.

Ice Breaker: Since members are meeting for the first time, it is always a good idea to create a fun atmosphere to help reduce anxiety and open up communication. You can choose any of the number of icebreakers that are available on the market or that you have used and enjoy. The following is one that we have used and you may wish to try.

Have one member interview another and introduce that member to the overall group. If you have an odd number then one person will interview two people. You should be interviewed as well to form part of the group.

Have each person ask the other the following questions and write the answers down on a piece of paper to refer to when they introduce their partner.

The questions are:

- What is the person's name?
- What do they do at the company?
- How long have they been with the company?
- Where were they born?

- What other group have they been a member of that they enjoyed and why?
- What is their favorite animal and why?
- What is their Zodiac sign or what month where they born?
- What is their favorite food?
- What is their favorite movie OR book OR tv show?

Once time is up have each person stand up and introduce his or her partner. Once this is done then you are ready for Step 1.

Step 1: Why are we here?

The group will work best if they have input into the content and process of the group. The first item to consider is to establish the why of this group. Some of this may be apparent due to the program guidelines but as this is the first time the group is meeting, it's important for members to begin to share with one another. Let members know that today's agenda is to get to know each other and to establish how the group will operate. This means that each member will have a role to play in coming to decisions about these issues. An approach to use would be to state that you want to begin this process by going around the room and asking each person to introduce themselves in the following way:) *If you have used the exercise above then modify this introduction to have each member simply state their name again and answer the last two questions)*

- Name
- What they do at the company?
- How long they've been with the company?
- What are they hoping to learn by participating in this group mentoring>
- What's the one issue they would like discussed today concerning how the group will operate?

You might begin by introducing yourself in this manner and indicating that the one issue you would like to discuss is establishing the group norms for the group.

Use an easel pad to put the list of items so that all members can see them as each person is introduced.

Step 2: Expectations (If you prefer to skip this step then go to Step 3)

Although with the list of issues to discuss you could proceed to address each individually, one other option is to also have two breakout groups (3 or 4 members in each group) to give participants the opportunity to state their expectations of the group and one another. Have each group meet separately and on a flip chart answer the following questions:

1. What are my expectations of what I will learn from participation in this group?
2. What are my expectations of the MGL?
3. What are my expectations of other members of this group?

You may want to allow about 15 minutes (5 minutes per question).

Once the groups have finished placing their answers on the flip charts, then go through each question with each group and see the commonalities and have members respond to the list, including yourself…especially with respect to their expectations of you as the MGL.

Hints: Some items should automatically appear on the lists:

- Confidentiality
- Who will control the group
- Commitment
- Honest feedback
- How disagreements will be handled in the group

These should be discussed in greater detail and should be agreed upon by the group. Be sure you hear from <u>everyone</u> on key issues and get the group to reach a consensus or, if they can't, resort to voting if necessary.

Step 3: Discussion and Agreement:

If you did Step 2 above you have already begun this process. If not, then this step will get you to discuss and agree on how the group will function (agreeing on the group norms). Below are list of items that you should get agreement on by the end of your session. This list is not meant to be exhaustive so there may be other areas you will need to get agreement on. ***You may also want to use the Group Norm Checklist that follows this exercise in the Appendix.***

- Definition of confidentiality within the group and outside the group
- Besides this agreement, what is the your (MGL's) definition of confidentiality with respect to information you share with the group throughout the program
- What kind of commitment is expected from each member with respect to:
  o Attending each meeting (How many meetings can a member miss and still be part of the group. Who confronts an errant member on this issue?)
  o Being on time
  o Not speaking too long or too frequently
  o What process is in place to notify MGL if a member must cancel
  o At what point is a decision to be made to cancel a group meeting if not enough members can attend? Who has the responsibility for making that decision?
- What kind of contact may members have with one another outside the group and how does that relate to the definition of confidentiality agreed upon?
- What kind of contact may members have with you (MGL), if any, outside the group? Can one call as needed or on a regular basis? Can one email you? What, if anything, is open for discussion in such contact points?
- Will you (MGL) be having an individual quarterly meeting with members to provide feedback? If so, what will that consist of?
- How are meetings to be scheduled and who will do the scheduling?
- How are topics for discussion to be chosen?

- How are content experts to be contacted and by whom?
- Can one drop out of the group and what process allows for this to happen?
- What is the process for discussing issues surrounding how the group is operating? Example, can one bring an issue up whenever or is there a set place within each meeting to allow for this kind of issue to arise?
- Who is responsible for ensuring that a member is not "attacked" within the group? This relates to how feedback is to be given within the group between one member and the next. For example, one rule might be for a member to ask permission to provide feedback to another and, if granted, the feedback is given in a manner consistent with effective giving and receiving of feedback
- How is conflict to be resolved within the group? A point to keep in mind is to resist the temptation to have the group designate the MGL is the only person who confronts others. Make each member responsible for ensuring the full participation of others and calling members to task as well.
- What method will be used to determine how well the group is functioning as well as whether the purpose of the group is being served?
- What will be the structure of each meeting? Example:
  o MGL begins by asking members for feedback from last meeting
  o Topic is discussed within group with or without content expert
  o Time set aside near the end to provide feedback on how this meeting has gone with recommendations for improvements
  o Time set aside at the end to summarize what was learned and next meeting details are announced

Although the above list is long, some of the items will be quickly agreed to while others will require more discussion and time for building consensus. You can also see from the list why we recommend a two-hour session as a minimum for the first meeting. Laying the groundwork for your group is the most important first step and should not be compromised by hasty decisions made by too little time to allow for discussion and consensus building. If you set your foundation properly, you will find that your group will operate more smoothly and you will avoid common mistakes that could have been avoided by taking the necessary time upfront to discuss the above issues.

Step 4: Closure and Next Steps

When you are nearing the end of your first meeting, it is good to allow time to get feedback from each member on how the process felt for them as well as providing a summary of key points and a reiteration of details for the next meeting. Keep in mind that the extent you can go around the room and get each person to comment will create a norm that invites and expects everyone to participate within the group. You should also let the members know that you will put the group norms agreed upon in writing and will send it to each member or have it available at the next meeting so that everyone will have the same information and will be able to refer to these group norms whenever necessary.

Congratulations, you have successfully completed your first meeting as the Mentoring Group Leader!

GROUP NORM CHECKLIST

- ❑ **Sessions begin and end on time**
- ❑ **Members are expected to attend and to arrive on time and to notify the MGL in advance if they will not be**
- ❑ **No phone calls or beepers during the session**
- ❑ **Confidentiality of the group and the MGL is defined**
- ❑ **Everyone takes responsibility for participation and for getting what they need out of the group**
- ❑ **Every idea and comment is valid**
- ❑ **Members are not to be interrupted when speaking**
- ❑ **Members come prepared for meetings**
- ❑ **Members need to be sensitive to giving everyone an opportunity to speak on an issue**
- ❑ **Use "I messages" when speaking**
- ❑ **Help one another on issues and in participating in the group**
- ❑ **Conflict is acceptable as long as it is done in a professional manner**
- ❑ **What process will be followed if a member is frequently absent or late?**
- ❑ **How many times may a member be absent or late and still remain in the group?**
- ❑ **One person speaks at one time**
- ❑ **Ask permission before giving feedback to another**
- ❑ **Say what you mean and mean what you say**
- ❑ **This is a group created to allow for professional and personal growth and not to solve everyone's problems**
- ❑ **All final decisions rest with the MGL unless otherwise agreed to by the group**
- ❑ **Every member is equal within the group**
- ❑ **Diversity of ideas/opinions and experiences is valued and is encouraged to be shared with the group**
- ❑ **The Mentoring Group Leader has the prime responsibility for making sure that members are not attacked by other members**
- ❑ **We all have something to contribute from which we can all learn**
- ❑ **The person ultimately responsible for making this a positive and learning experience is each individual member**
- ❑ **Although risk taking is encouraged, each person has their own level of comfort in taking risks in groups and each member is respected for his/her boundary in this area**
- ❑ **Group mentoring is meant to be a fun learning experience so we expect to laugh and enjoy one another**

Second and Ongoing Group Meetings

You and the group will have already decided at your first meeting on how the group will operate. What we are providing below is a sample of how this might happen.

At each meeting the following will take place:

- The MGL brings the group together and shares any further insights or items that s/he has been made aware of by members that may need attention or closure. For example, questions left over from the last meeting on a given topic or a decision needing to be reached about a given issue, i.e. what has happened to member so and so.
- The topic for discussion begins either with the introduction of content expert for that meeting or a member of the team who is the leader for that day assuming control of the meeting
- Time allowed about 15 minutes prior to ending to do an overview, provide feedback on how the meeting went and next steps. The next meeting details are also provided.
    - If you do this type of check-in at each meeting ask the following:
        - What worked well today?
        - What could have gone better?
        - What changes do we need to make for meetings to be more effective in light of our experience today?
        - What feedback do members wish to provide to the MGL about how his/her role in facilitating the meeting? What should s/he do more of or less of?
        - What feedback does the MGL wish to share about the group? What could be done more or done less?

Although the above is a guide, it is valuable to allow for time within the meeting for feedback and assessment, especially at the beginning of the group-mentoring program as that is a way to ensure that good habits are being formed and bad habits are being avoided or changed to have a more effective group experience. Be careful about giving feedback about a specific member in the group if it is of a negative nature. Sometimes it is best to do this privately. On the other hand, it is important to hold members accountable and to engage others in assuming responsibility for maintaining group norms and participation rather than having that fall all on the MGL's shoulders.

Another possible approach is to allot on every 3 or 4th meeting a greater time for the group to assess how the group is working and what is being accomplished. This might mean that half the meeting is devoted to content while the remainder is devoted to assessment and feedback. Doing this at the 3rd or 4th meeting will depend on how often the group meets. If meeting once a month, then 3rd meetings are preferred (once a quarter) which is a logical place to do this. If meeting 2x month then perhaps at the 5th or 6th meeting may feel more natural.

Attending to the group process rather than content is an important component for successful group mentoring to occur but, on the other hand, one doesn't want to overdo process either. Use your own judgment in terms of what works best for your given group. If the group seems to be working very well and you are not hearing outside information indicating otherwise then it may not be important to have as much opportunity for process. The ideas presented here are meant more as suggestions rather than requirements. Use what makes sense.

Group Processing Notes for Each Meeting

<u>Purpose of this form</u>: To give the MGL a tool to take quick notes when observing the group process and to be able to use this information for providing feedback to members as needed. It is important to remember that this form is simply a tool meant to provide notations for future reference. It is not intended as an evaluation form on a member or members. It is also not meant to distract the MGL from the task of attending to the dynamics in the group. The form should be used only if it will be helpful. Some MGL's find using a form distracting while others find a form useful for recalling how meetings went and how members interacted.

Group Meeting Observation Sheet

Meeting Topic:_____ Date of Meeting:_____

Member Name	Predominant role(s) played by member in this meeting	How many times member spoke at this meeting	Ways in which this member contributed to group at this meeting	Ways member was not as helpful to the group at this meeting	Other comments or observations

Group Meeting Observation Sheet

Meeting Topic:_____ Date of Meeting:_____

Member Name	Predominant role(s) played by member in this meeting	How many times member spoke at this meeting	Ways in which this member contributed to group at this meeting	Ways member was not as helpful to the group at this meeting	Other comments or observations

Form to Observe the Mentoring Group Leader In Action

This form is meant to provide an opportunity for the Mentoring Group Leader to gain feedback on how s/he is mentoring his/her group. It is used by someone designated by the MGL to attend a session of the group as a silent observer using this form to gather useful information that can then be shared with the MGL privately to create a learning opportunity.

Use of this form is not a requirement. Some Mentoring Group Leaders obtain this kind of feedback by soliciting it directly from the mentorees in the group or through other means that satisfy their desire to get feedback on how well they are mentoring.

Keep in mind that the purpose of the observation sheet is not to rate your performance but to provide feedback that will assist you in enhancing your skills.

A MGL can call upon a trusted colleague to attend a specific mentoring meeting and have him/her complete the form and provide verbal feedback privately at the end of the session. One other possible variant is to designate a specific mentoree at each meeting or periodically who will take on the role of observer and complete the form and provide the feedback privately to the MGL. Using an existing group member has the advantage of getting insights on the feedback that might otherwise not be possible from someone observing the group for the first time.

A note of caution: If you have an observer present who is an outsider, be certain to let group members know upfront as to why the person is and why s/he is there. Be certain to make clear that they are there to observe the MGL's performance NOT the members'.

If you are using an existing mentoree member to observe then make certain that you care clear as to how this person was chosen for this role to avoid the appearance of favoritism. There are a couple of ways of doing this. You can seek volunteers and/or you can randomly select from names out of a hat or other similar means.

Form to Observe the Mentoring Group Leader In Action

Group Leader:_____

Observer:_____ **Date of observation:**_____

Observation	Notes
Room Setup: ▪ Does the setup encourage sharing by participants? ▪ Is the seating arrangement conducive to equal participation or are some members more influential as a result of where they sit? ▪ Do you notice any other issues that seem to impact the group's interaction or effectiveness as a result of the arrangement?	
MGL at start of meeting: ▪ Was how the MGL opened today's meeting effective? ▪ Was the agenda for the meeting made clear? ▪ Were issues from the previous meeting brought up at the beginning and were these addressed effectively? ▪ Any other points that was particularly effective or could be suggested to make the beginning more effective?	
MGL as Facilitator during meeting: ▪ In what ways was the MGL attentive to members' needs during the meeting?	

▪ If there was a guest speaker, did the MGL effectively encourage members to ask questions and/or participate in discussions? ▪ If the MGL was the content expert for this meeting, did s/he balance the sharing of information with inviting members to actively participate? ▪ How effectively did MGL control how often people spoke and for how long? ▪ Did the MGL draw out members who were too laid back or seemed reticent to speak? ▪ Did the MGL allow for disagreement and was this resolved satisfactorily? ▪ Did the MGL get buy-in for decisions made?	
MGL concluding the meeting: ▪ Did the MGL provide a summary of key learnings/points and was this effective? ▪ Did the MGL solicit feedback from members and did they provide useful feedback? ▪ Did the MGL address all issues needing to be addressed by the end of the meeting? ▪ Did the MGL remind everyone of the next meeting and any special issues needing attention prior to that meeting?	
Overall Comments: Provide any other summary points, ideas and/or suggestions as a result of your observing this MGL in action.	

Individual Feedback Form for Quarterly 1-on-1 meetings

The following form is a tool for the MGL to use when meeting on with a member of the Mentoring Group. It serves two purposes:

- To gain feedback from the mentoree about his/her experience within the group
- To provide an opportunity for the MGL to give feedback to the mentoree about how s/he is contributing to the group

As mentioned previously, this form and this meeting are not for the purpose of an "evaluation" in terms of performance. Rather, they allow for the creation of a learning opportunity for both the MGL and the mentoree. Feedback received and given by both parties can enhance the group experience so that all benefit through this exchange of information.

Prior to using these sheets you may want to review your notes from the Group Meeting Observations sheets if you have used them. From these you may want to copy key ideas onto the Individual Feedback Form so they are readily present to you while you are conducting the meeting.

The feedback questions provided on this form are suggested. You may add or remove any that don't meet your needs. They point is to get information that will help you ascertain whether the group is accomplishing its overall goals and whether the group process is working appropriately for most, if not all of the participants.

How much time should you allow for this individual meeting and should it be face-to-face? At most you should allot about one hour but provide room in the event you have a fruitful dialogue and you wish to continue. Face-to-face is always the best way to obtain feedback as you are getting the full message: visual as well as verbal. However, sometimes that is not practical and a verbal phone exchange will have to suffice. Avoid simply sending an email to get the feedback, as it is too impersonal and not likely to give you the understanding of the issues that are gotten from verbal or face-to-face contact.

Also bear in mind that this individual meeting is like having an individual mentoring session with you. You want to be available to address the needs of the mentoree but also be aware to avoid turning the group mentoring into a 1-on-1 ongoing session. In other words, do not begin a 1-on-1 relationship with a member of the group that goes beyond these set meetings. If you do so you will be demonstrating favoritism and this will be noticed by other members of the group and will seriously affect your effectiveness as a MGL.

Individual Feedback Form for 1-on-1 Quarterly Meetings

Mentoree:_____ **Date:**_____

Feedback About
1. Ask mentoree for feedback on how well s/he is accomplishing their goals as a member of the group. Ask them to be specific about these goals.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
2. Ask mentoree for feedback on how s/he would assess their participation in the group.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
3. Ask mentoree for feedback on what s/he would suggest be changed in the group that would make it more successful.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
4. Ask mentoree for feedback on your role within the group: things you do that are helpful and things that they would recommend you do differently.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
5. Ask mentoree for feedback about some of the things they have gained thus far by participating in this group. This could involve goals, new insights, greater confidence, etc.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
6. Provide feedback to the mentoree on your observations of how the mentoree contributes to the group and his/her level of participation.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
7. Provide feedback to the mentoree about any areas that you've seen the mentoree develop thus far.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
8. Provide feedback to the mentoree on what you would like him/her to do more of that is or would be helpful to the group.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Feedback About
9. Provide feedback to the mentoree on what you would like him/her to do less of to enhance the group experience.
Notes   **Action Steps:**

Suggestion: Open up dialogue for any further discussion on any issue important to the mentoree. At end, summarize key points, thank the mentoree for his/her feedback and encourage him/her to continue to fully participate in the group process.

Mentoring Group Time Line and Schedule

This form is to assist the MGL in planning the group meetings. It will help facilitate scheduling of time, venue as well as content experts needed for each session. Once completed, it can then be distributed to everyone so that all members have the information to do their own planning.

The form allows for 14 meetings to be planned in advance.

Mentoring Group Timeline And Schedule

Group Name:_____ **Mentoring Group Leader:**_____
                                      Phone:_____

Meeting Date	Time & Location	Topic	Content expert Speaker(s)	Any assigned responsibilities	Notes

BRINGING CLOSURE TO YOUR MENTORING GROUP

When the mentoring program is about to end then it is time for the Mentoring Group to begin the process of completing their work and ending their group. Successful mentoring groups can form close bonds among members and, as such, the ending of the group will impact how these bonds will be maintained, if at all. Group mentoring is like any relationship and closure is an important process in making certain that there are no loose ends when the group finishes its work.

Bringing closure is not the same thing as evaluating the success of the group. Closure refers more to the interpersonal relationships and how these get completed or managed after the group is ended. It is less about "What did we accomplish" and more about, "What do I do now after the group is over?" If the members feel a close bond and have enjoyed the group, the will likely miss the camaraderie of the group as well as the nature of its work. When the group ends, members may feel a sense of loss and a certain lack of direction without the structure of the group. In fact, don't be surprised if a member or two skip the closure meeting(s) altogether because they find it difficult to express their feelings in this way. They'll have a good reason: "It's the last meeting anyway, and I have some work related issues that I've been putting off till now and really need to attend to them." For this reason, we recommend a process that provides an opportunity for members to work out these issues as part of the group process.

What is recommended here is a tool. Some parts may be more applicable than others and your own comfort zone will also affect what you select with the instrument. We recommend that, at a minimum, you provide an opportunity for members to express feedback about the group's ending. You can do this by devoting a few minutes of the last couple meetings to this kind of process or leave it to the last meeting. What we don't suggest is that you skip this process. This would be a disservice to your mentoress.

BRINGING CLOSURE TO YOUR GROUP
INSTRUMENT

Purpose:

- To complete any remaining work needing to be accomplished in the time remaining to the group
- To provide an opportunity for members to share their experience of what it was like to be part of this group
- To encourage members to continue their relationships outside the group if desired
- To determine your relationship with members of the group once it is disbanded

Suggested Approach:

Allow up to two meetings for this process in the event it takes more time than anticipated. Either use the last two meetings or use the last meeting and get the group to agree to an additional meeting if it is felt that it is needed. Another approach is to allow more time for the one meeting rather than having an additional meeting. If this is your option, be sure to get members to commit to the additional time prior to the meeting.

Begin by explaining what the purpose is for this meeting and that you will be facilitating the process as per usual.

First, begin by sharing with the group whether you see any remaining goals that have not been accomplished and what should be done, if anything, about these. For example, it could be that a topic was not addressed due to lack of time. You could ask for suggestions on how members might be able to get insight into this topic after the group ends, i.e. call a special meeting or network with someone, etc. If there are items that cannot be addressed practically due to the group's ending, then acknowledge that and move on.

Second, discuss the fact that though the group is ending, this does not mean that members can't continue to see one another if they desire. If they do, they are free to negotiate with one another as to how this will happen. It's also possible that a member might want to take responsibility for organizing future meetings of the group. One easy way to facilitate this is to make certain, if this wasn't done previously, that members have a list of their peers in the group with contact information: telephone, email, etc.

Third, decide what process you will use to have the group discuss the questions below.
The questions that are presented here are illustrative and you should feel free to add your own. You can choose to process these questions in a variety of ways that get each member of the group to articulate and share their feedback. For example,

- You can have each person answer the questions privately and then share with a partner and then you can ask each pair to share some of these with the larger group or, a variation is to have each person share their answers with the entire group.
- You can have groups form and put their answers on easel pads that get shared with the group
- You can divide the group in twos and assign a separate question to each member of the first group to ask each member of the second group. This is done in round robin style. Once all members of the second group have answered then you reverse the roles of the group so that by the end, each member has asked a question and answered al the questions as well.

The Questions:

The following questions are in no particular order of importance and how many questions you use will depend on the number of participants in your group and the method you use to obtain the information.

- What are the three most important things you gained by participating in this group?
- Describe what it was like to be a member of this group in short sentences or key words: (challenged me, surprised me in significant ways, let me down, etc.)
- What are you proudest of having contributed to the group?
- What are you proudest of having accomplished as a member of this group?
- What would you have liked the group to do differently?
- What was the most challenging thing that happened to you in this group?
- What disappointed you the most about being in this group?
- Did this group meet your goals and, if not, what could the group have done to do so?
- How would you describe the Facilitator and the role s/he played in the group?
- What's the one thing you would have liked the Facilitator to have done differently in the group?
- Which group meeting was the most enjoyable/interesting and what made it so?
- Which group meeting was the most difficult and what made it so?
- How would you describe your experience in this group to someone considering being in a mentoring group?
- What's the one thing you would do differently in the group now that you have had this group mentoring experience?
- Would you participate in another mentoring group? Why or why not?

How you share this information will depend on the process you elected to gather the information. In processing the information gained, what you want to do is give the group the opportunity to see how common people's feelings and reactions are about the group. You also want to emphasize the positive aspects to leave the group on a positive note. This does not mean you should skip over the negatives…they should be acknowledged but not dwelt upon. Once the group has had sufficient time to review the comments made and to provide further feedback, you should also be prepared to provide your feedback to the group.

Your Feedback

Group members are always interested in how the Facilitator perceives the group's work and how the members related to one another. Since members are being asked for their feedback, it is reasonable for you to provide yours as well. In doing so, avoid making personal comments about members as this will have the effect of showing favoritism or criticizing another. Rather, provide feedback on the process as a group. What you might share is the following:

- What was enjoyable about facilitating this group?
- What was the biggest challenge for you in this group?
- What was the session that was the most interesting and why?
- What session did you feel you were at your best?
- What session do you feel you were not quite as effective as you would have liked?
- What would you do differently if you did this again?
- In what ways did you see the group grow over time?

If you so desire, you could provide in a sealed envelope specific feedback to each member of the group. You could simply thank them for their participation and mention what you found that they did that was the most helpful in the group and also point out any specific growth you saw in them as the group progressed. If you do this you must do it for every member of the group. You can include other things depending on your comfort zone in terms of sharing individual feedback…what your hopes might be for the specific person as they develop, what particular quality you noticed most that they demonstrated in the group or if they did something particularly effective or risky in one of the meetings.

The final piece in terms of your feedback is whether you wish to maintain contact with individuals and in what capacity. This is an important issue. Again, favoritism can be perceived so you want to be clear about what you are willing to consider, if anything. For example, you may simply state that you are happy to have had this experience and that you are not in a position to be available beyond this group due to the demands upon your time. Or you may wish to allow for ongoing contact by saying that if anyone wants to contact you in the future with a question or issue that you are available. Don't promise something you are not prepared or willing to do. Just be clear about your feelings concerning ongoing contact and make that clear to the members.

You can always finesse this by simply not making any comments about ongoing contact but be prepared to answer the question if asked.

Lastly, when all the feedback has been given then it's time to end your meeting. Thank everyone for their participation and call the meeting to an end and invite members to stay around and chat with one another if they so desire after the meeting. Some facilitators may wish to use a closing technique, which may involve exchange of simple gifts, or having each person in the group say a few last words, etc. This is a very personal choice and depends on how well the group functioned and how comfortable you are as a facilitator in using one of these techniques. You should do what works for you, as that is likely to be the one that is most successful.

CHAPTER 5

TOPICAL RESOURCE GUIDE FOR DISCUSSIONS

"Follow the path of the unsafe, independent thinker. Expose your ideas to the dangers of controversy. Speak your mind and fear less the label of 'crackpot' than the stigma of conformity. And on issues that seem important to you, stand up and be counted at any cost."

-Thomas J. Watson

Topical Discussion Guide

The Topical Discussion Guide is meant as a resource for the MGL in facilitating a discussion of a given topic with his/her mentoring group.

The topics are in no particular order of importance and are meant to serve as a tool that the MGL can use or adapt based upon the needs of the group. It is not expected that all the suggested questions be asked, as some are different versions of the same question. Rather, you should select one that best gets the discussion going and refer back to the list to bring the topic into focus throughout the discussion and to bring closer at the end.

Although the questions are sometimes phrased as an individual question, this can be changed to make it a group question. Another approach is to have members pair up to share their answers and then return to the larger group and do an easel pad collection of the answers to generate common themes and ideas. This approach allows for some private discussion between two individuals as well as the larger group discussion. If you do this, make certain that the pairs change from meeting to meeting rather than having people stay with the same person.

MANAGING YOUR CAREER

Goal: Assist participants in assessing their current marketability and what steps they need to take to enhance their skills/knowledge to continue to succeed.

- Where do you want to be in the next few years in terms of your career and what have you done to ensure that this happens?
- What research have you done and/or what resources have been the most helpful in managing your career?
- What skills/knowledge or experience do you need to add to your current repertoire to maintain or increase your marketability? How can you get what you need?
- What ideas/strategies does everyone have in this group about how to maintain your marketability and what resources/networks to use?
- What have been the most effective tools thus far in your career development?
- In looking at your current position, what do you need now to be successful in the future? What needs to be in place to make this happen?
- What is your system of networks both inside and outside the organization? How often do you access this system, if at all? How can you further develop this system of networks?
- Can each of us provide a name of someone we would recommend for networking purposes and in what areas they can be the most helpful?
- Besides being in this group mentoring program, who has a personal mentor and how did they get this person?
- What's most important to you in developing your career and can that be achieved based upon what you have today with your existing background? If not, what do you need to do to make that change?
- What kind of goals do you set for yourself and how do you do that? What success have you had in achieving these goals?
- What have been some of the common mistakes that each of us have made that have stalled or even derailed our professional development?
- Would you describe your career development as reactive or proactive? Why? Do you want to change this in any way and how?
- What is the one thing you will take away from our discussion today that you will implement to improve your marketability?

TRANSITIONING TO NEW JOB/ENVIRONMENT

Goal: Assist participants in identifying the challenges they face in moving to a new job/environment and share with each other strategies that worked and didn't work.

- In your new position/environment, what is the most important item you need to attend to? Why? What assistance do you need from this group?
- Describe the positive and less positive aspects of your previous job/environment and compare that with your new situation.
- What impact has the new change had on your relationship with your new/current manager?
- How has the change impacted your relationship with peers and other employees?
- If you have moved from a non-supervisory position to one that involves supervising others, what have been the most challenges aspects of this change?
- If you are now supervising former peers, describe the kind of issues you've had to deal with and with respect to adjusting to your new role as their manager. What has worked and not worked? Cite examples.
- How does this new transition affect your current and future career plans?
- Were you prepared for this change or were you caught off guard and how did this affect you?
- What kind of support do you need now that you are in your new position and how can you ensure that you get the support you need—from your manager, peers and others?
- What is your biggest concern about being in this new position and what can you do to minimize that concern?
- Being in a new position requires strong communication and conflict resolution skills. Can anyone cite a specific example in any of these two areas that we could discuss to share ideas and strategies on resolving the issues more effective?
- What is the one thing you will do differently as a result of today's conversation?

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Goal: For participants to discuss what leadership means and how their specific definition impacts their professional success.

- What does the term leadership mean? Is leadership the same as managing?
- How does the company define leadership?
- What kind of leadership is demonstrated in the company?
- What kind of leadership do you demonstrate within your current position?
- What are some of the most important strategies that a leader can use to achieve his/her objectives?
- How many of these do you use and how successful are you when you do use them?
- Is your leadership reactive or proactive?
- If you don't manage a staff can you still lead? How?
- Being an effective leader is to think strategically. How familiar are you with the company's strategic vision for the organization? How does your department/role fit into that vision?
- When was the last time you feel you demonstrated leadership and what happened?
- Do you create strategic alliances with others in the company? How?
- A leader also has to deal effectively with conflict. What is your experience with resolving conflicts when you are in a leadership role? What determines when you are successful and when you are not?
- Do you bring strategic thinking to your career development? How?
- Would your manager describe you as a leader? Why or why not?
- If your manager wouldn't or doesn't view you as a leader, how can you change that perception?
- What is the one thing you will do differently as a result of today's conversation?

NETWORKING

Goal: To discuss the important of networking and exchange ideas on how to do this more effectively.

(Note: Networking is something that every mentoree wants to do better, as this is perceived as a critical skill in career advancement. Have members use one another as a network to enhance the possibilities of networking.)

- Why is networking important to you?
- What is the downside to networking?
- How have you been able to effectively network? What did you do? What did you do that didn't work?
- How often do you contact your network(s)? Has this been prearranged or do you simply contact when you have a need?
- Have members write down their list of people they network with. Have them then answer the following questions privately:
    - What do I want to get from networking: skills/knowledge/experience and/or influence?
    - On a blank piece of paper, do the following:
        - List a name of someone you network with and specify if s/he provides you with skills, knowledge, experience or influence. Some may only provide you with one or more while others might provide you with all.
        - Now list the top five people you network with in addition to the current name and do the same for them
    - What, if anything, is missing from this list of contacts?
    - Where would you like more assistance from someone?
- Can you identify 1 to 3 individuals that might be a good contact for others in this group? List their names and what they have to offer someone in terms of background, knowledge, skills, and influence. Be ready to share this with the group.
- Does anyone in the group need a contact and, if so, in what specific areas?
- Does anyone have someone they can recommend for this person?
- Are there resources someone can recommend that have proven especially helpful in networking both within the company and outside?
- Who is the one person you will attempt to contact to add to your network system as a result of this meeting?

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPANY

Goal: To assist participants in gaining a greater understanding of the company and its culture and how to effectively operate within this system.

- How would you describe the company's culture or norms?
- How do you know that these are truly the company's culture and norms?
- Is this culture/norms the same throughout or do different departments/divisions have their own?
- What are some of the unspoken rules or ways of doing things that are important to be successful at the company?
- What are some of the typical mistakes people make upon coming into this culture?
- How is success defined at the company? How does that impact your success?
- How would you describe the mission or purpose of the company?
- Who are the company's customers?
- Who are its main competitors?
- What distinguishes the company from its competitors?
- Can anyone chart the organization in terms of divisions/departments?
- How does your specific job/department fit into the overall scheme of achieving the company's mission or purpose?
- What are some of the company's strategic plans for this year?
- Have each participant share his/her department's strategic plan for this current year.
- What are some of the major trends that are going or are affecting the business of the company?
- What are some of the things you would like to learn more about with respect to the company and its way of doing things?
- What is the one thing you will do differently as a result of participating in this discussion?

THE IMPACT OF MY ROLE WITHIN THE COMPANY

Goal: To provide an opportunity for participants to learn about each other's responsibilities and to gain a greater understanding of the importance each person's job in the overall success of the company.

- Ask each person to briefly describe to their peers what they do: the major aspects of their job, responsibilities and how what they do affects the bottom line for the company.
- You may want to visually illustrate this by placing a square with each person's name and job title on an easel pad and connecting it with the others as each person speaks. This will point out the interconnections and links within the group.
- What is your understanding about how what you do affects the department's and the company's bottom line?
- What aspects of a given person's job is empowering? Which aspects are disempowering?
- How would you describe your relationship with your immediate manager?
- What do you like about that relationship?
- What would you like to change about that relationship?
- What steps can you take to make that change?
- How much interaction do you have with other departments?
- Which of these are positive and which of these are less so? Which would you like to change and why? What steps can you take to make that change?
- How are you proactive in your work?
- What factors hinder your effectiveness?
- What factors enhance your effectiveness?
- What is the single most important contribution you have made in the last three months in your job?
- What is the single most important thing you wish you had made in the last three months in your job?
- How does what you currently do impact your professional future?
- What is the one idea/strategy that you will implement as a result of today's discussion?

VALUING DIVERSITY AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY

Goal: To gain awareness of what diversity means both personally and within the organization and how to bring this dynamic into everyday thinking.

- Go around the room and ask each person to define diversity. You may wish to put key thoughts on an easel pad to gather that information.
- How do these definitions compare to the company's definition of diversity?
- If everyone is unique then doesn't that make the definition of diversity irrelevant?
- Are there certain aspects of diversity that impact business greater than others and what might these be and why?
- How do I, as a unique individual, continue to be myself within this definition? Can I? What compromises must I make, if any and why?
- Is a discussion on diversity uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- What can diversity bring to the bottom line in this company?
- What can create problems with diversity? Are these preventable and how?
- When was the last time you thought about diversity when discussing a business issue or arriving at a solution? If you haven't thought about this, why not?
- What has the company done that has fostered a sense of awareness and acceptance about diversity?
- Is this enough or is there more that should be done?
- What are come of the barriers that prevent specific diverse groups from having a full impact on the organization?
- What's one strategy you can think of that you could use in your everyday work to help overcome some of these barriers? Will you do so?
- How do strategic thinking and diversity impact one another as a business strategy?
- What specific behavioral change will I commit to that will demonstrate a greater valuing of diversity on my part as a business strategy in my day-to-day job?

MANAGING CHANGE

Goal: Help participants understand how change has affected their development and how they can use change as a positive force in their career.

- What has been the most significant change thus far in your career and how has that affected you? These changes could involve job, location, manager, etc.
- What words do you associate with the word "change"? Are these positive or negative? What makes them so?
- What is your attitude toward change both positive and negative?
- What concerns you the most about change?
- Can you point to an experience where change was a welcomed event? What made that event different?
- How have you managed the change(s) you have described and how could you have managed that change(s) more effectively?
- What has been the most positive aspect of the change(s) you've recently undergone?
- What has been the less positive aspect of the change(s) and could that have been avoided? How?
- What have you learned about yourself from experiencing this change so far and how can you use this experience in the future when faced with changes in your career, job, etc?
- Change is a constant in our lives, what future changes can you anticipate for yourself in your current situation and what can you do now to prepare yourself for dealing effectively with these changes?
- Managing change is more effective if we have a plan in place. How many of you plan your changes and how has that worked or not worked for you?
- After discussing the issue of change, with is the on thing you will do differently to manage the impact of change in your career?
- What is the one new technique or idea you will carry with you today and implement in your work environment?

COMMUNICATING SUCCESSFULLY

Goal: To give participants the opportunity to present a "real life" communication breakdown to their peers and receive feedback on how this could have been handled better with more effective communication skills.

This discussion topic is different from all the others in that it uses a "case study" format and provides an opportunity for peer coaching among members as well as feedback from the MGL. Given the size of the group, this topic will need at least two sessions if not more so plan accordingly. We're talking about allowing about half-hour of group time for each person. If this is not practical then what you can do is simply ask for volunteers who wish to use this process with the group and proceed with that number. Which option you choose will depend on group size and program length.

Process: Ask each person to come to the next meeting with a specific "real life" situation where the communication went sour. This should be submitted in writing and no more than one paragraph giving a brief summary of the issue involved and what happened. If practical, only first names should be used in the scenarios. The presenter should bring enough copies for each member.

The presenter of the scenario takes center stage and lets the group read the scenario. The presenter then gives a verbal reporting of what happened keeping it fairly brief and elaborating on key points not included in the written summary. After this is done then the members should ask questions and a discussion should follow. Questions to ask might be:

- *How did you feel going through this experience?*
- *What could you have done to prevent this from happening?*
- *What assumptions did you make that tripped you in achieving your goals?*
- *At what point did the conversation clearly break down and why?*
- *Did you have the support or resources you needed prior to entering into this discussion?*
- *Was this the best setting to discuss this issue?*
- *What do you think were the hidden agendas in this meeting?*
- *Was there seriousness about resolving this issue in a win/win format?*
- *What would you do differently now?*

It is often very helpful to practice new techniques in communicating. This can be done in role-playing with others observing or it can be done on an "as happens" situation. Role-playing would involve playing the scenario with assigned roles and trying different behaviors based upon the discussion that has occurred. This again takes time but is often the most helpful. However, there are individuals who are intimidated by role-playing and would prefer not to engage in this technique.

An alternative is the "as happens" situation. This means that if someone throws out an idea or suggestion that you role-play that particular piece at that moment and very briefly. For example, someone suggests that perhaps the presenter should be more assertive in the conversation. What then happens is the presenter is asked what they would say to do that and when this is done, the MGL or a peer responds as though they were the person being addressed by the presenter. This can go on for 2-3 interchanges just enough to give the presenter an idea of what it might feel like and what might happen should s/he use the suggestion. The value of this "as happens" is that it is spontaneous and is short-lived in front of the group so the presenter doesn't feel the anxiety they might when doing a full role play.

Near the end of the allotted time for the presenter and the discussion, leave time for a summary of key ideas and get buy-in from the presenter on at least one new behavior they will attempt in the future.

You can then move on to another mentoree and follow the same process.