ALA GUIDE
TO CROSS-FUNCTIONAL MENTORING

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Association of Legal Administrators

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The ALA Committee on Diversity developed the Mentoring Toolkit to be used as a guide for building and implementing attorney or staff mentor programs within legal organizations.

Mentoring plays a critical role in the professional development of both attorneys and staff. It is especially important for women and people of color where the lack of mentoring and feedback is frequently a source of career dissatisfaction that can increase turnover and limit professional growth.

Some of the key roles mentoring can play in your firm are:

- Mentor programs can create a culture and teach the skills which enable and foster on-going mentoring relationships.
- For attorneys, mentor programs can help increase the understanding of the criteria and path to career advancement and the path to partnership.
- For staff members, mentoring provides crucial support for the continued development of the skills required for advancement.

What you will find in this guide:
The goal of this guide is to provide the directions needed for you to design and launch the mentor program that best meets the needs of your law firm or legal department.

To this end, the guide provides a variety of resources designed to allow you to select those that most closely fit your organization and your mentor program. We do not intend for the guide to be a static product. It can be improved by additional resources, ideas and the lessons of experience. Please feel free to send comments and suggestions to **Victor A. Maurer**, Staff Liaison, ALA Committee on Diversity.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope your mentor program is a great success!

1. THE CASE FOR MENTORING

The greatest asset that any law office has is its people. People rest at the center of the business of law - from the attorneys that provide service to the clients to the line staff whose internal client service makes attorney work efficient and profitable. In such an environment, mentoring fits as a strategy for maximizing human capital and achieving business results.

Seven Good Reasons Why You Should Set Up a Mentor program

There are numerous reasons why establishing a mentor program in your organization may be one of the smartest things you can do, but here are seven good ones:

1. Attract and retain the best people
Some studies have shown that the presence (or absence) of a mentor program means more than money to the decision to accept a job offer or remain with an organization.

2. Modeling teaches more
Many of the core skills, attitudes, behaviors and ethics of leadership are best learned by modeling rather than in a formal classroom. Mentoring allows your best people to model good leadership and offer practical guidance to your future leaders.

3. Mentoring encourages excellence
Mentoring is exceptional for its capacity to encourage excellence both in mentees and in those who mentor. While it might be expected that mentees might acquire insight and wisdom through working with a good mentor, experience demonstrates that mentors also gain from the interaction. Mentors frequently explain that their role prompted them to review and reassess their assumptions and clarify their thoughts as they explain things to their mentee.

4. Recognize and reward your best people
By establishing an appropriate selection process for both mentors and mentees and providing the right framework to support this process you can ensure that participation in your program is sought by your best people, rather than perceived as a chore or a burden. Don't take chances with this part of your program set-up as it is one of the critical requirements for its success.

5. Build confidence and self-esteem
Mentoring fosters not only professional growth but also personal growth, and can develop confidence in handling new situations, improve understanding of different approaches to a situation and enhance self-esteem for both mentors and mentees.

6. Improve firm communication and networks.
Mentoring relationships are not usually set up between individuals with line management responsibilities. By establishing mentoring relationships between people from different areas of your organization (or industry) greater understanding and improved cross-functional communication readily follow. Some organizations have found this benefit to be one of the most unanticipated yet valuable company-wide impacts of their whole mentor program.

7. Foster a culture of contribution.
Fundamentally the process of mentoring another always represents a generous gift by a busy person. It is a gift that can typically only ever truly be repaid in kind, over time, when the mentee in turn mentors someone else. As such, mentoring amplifies its impact by embedding values such as respect, generosity and contribution in the corporate culture. This is arguably the ultimate and most powerful impact any program might have.

I.Quick Tips
There are many more ways that a mentor program can add value to your organization. Here are just some of them:
- Mentoring is a very effective way to welcome new employees and induct them into your organization's culture and values or to support recently promoted employees.
- Mentoring can promote diversity and offer effective support for minority groups or special employees
- A facilitated mentor program can build a collegiate group in a productive way.
- Mentoring can assist in succession planning and the development of new leaders, provide a better basis for promotion and advancement decisions and shift high potential individuals onto the fast career track.

Mentoring plays a key role in professional advancement opportunities and is often the vehicle of choice for law firms seeking to diversify their attorney pool.

The Power of Mentoring To Support Diversity Initiatives

There is a strong business case for diversity initiatives. Baby boomers are aging and remaining in the workforce longer, companies are conducting more business globally, women are playing a stronger role in executive teams and a growing number of minorities are entering the U.S. workforce.

Today's workforce is evolving, and the best companies are responding to it by offering diversity initiatives to expand understanding and encourage collaboration across different demographics. That's good news, but there's still a big problem – **most diversity initiatives don't go far enough**. And companies that offer insufficient programs are wasting time and money.

While diversity initiatives often do a good job at educating people on the challenges and obstacles faced by women, minorities or seniors in the workplace, they stop there. The result is that behavior never changes, so the companies fail to realize the value they're seeking by investing in these programs.

For example, a white male attends a training class in diversity. He completes the course feeling more sensitive to the issues facing minorities in the workplace. But then he never interacts with employees who are different from him, so he loses the opportunity to change his behavior in a meaningful way.

The desired behavior changes that diversity initiatives aim to achieve cannot occur without real-life interactions in the workplace. So how can a company ensure that the money they spend on diversity initiatives yields desired results? *By executing a mentor program to supplement the training.*

How Mentoring Promotes Real Diversity

The goal of mentoring is to pair talented, experienced employees to serve as mentors for promising, less experienced employees, or mentees, within an organization. Ideally, over time, the mentee gains skills, knowledge and a better understanding of the organization. The mentor, in turn, typically gains a new perspective and learns about an area of the organization that was unknown previously.

The true benefit and impact of mentoring is often seen not in achieving goals and objectives, but in the personal exchange between the mentor and mentee. Successful mentoring creates real relationships and the opportunity for positive behavioral changes – an outcome that is especially beneficial for companies committed to promoting diversity.

A good mentor focuses on the mentee's total development – coaching the mentee and teaching specific skills, but also sharing resources and network contacts, challenging the mentee and creating a safe learning environment that encourages the mentee to take risks and share vulnerabilities.

This exchange helps impact those intangibles that are so critical to personal success – self-confidence, communication skills and realistic self-assessment. In a successful diverse mentoring relationship – a majority-minority match – these qualities can be developed to an even greater degree.

The right mentoring relationship will benefit the mentor as much as the mentee, especially in diverse matches. It will be not only personally gratifying, but also will give the mentor a new perspective of the organization and its culture. In many cases, senior managers who've served as mentors have said that the relationship has re-energized them and even revitalized their career.

Making It Work – Selection & Process Are Critical

Mentoring works best when professional matching, rather than the self-selection of mentors, occurs. With diversity mentoring, it's even more important. It's natural for individuals to connect with and seek out people who are similar to themselves, so if given the chance to select a mentor, they'll often choose someone similar. This situation usually fails to produce the environment necessary for a transformational relationship to form.

Using a proven process that involves completing questionnaires and being interviewed by a dedicated mentoring professional, however, yields better

mentoring matches. People can be paired based on their experience, style and goals – as well as on the company's objectives for the mentor program. If promoting diversity is a goal, pairs can be created and nurtured as a way to support it. The individuals win, and the organization wins.

Mentoring is about creating and nurturing a transformational relationship that changes both individuals. But it won't work unless both people seize the opportunity to learn from each other. It's critical to create a safe environment where both individuals feel safe enough to honestly address the tough topics related to diversity – the obstacles, fears, prejudices, challenges, misconceptions, etc. This is where mentoring training and an understanding of the mentoring process become important.

Current discrimination laws have created a chilling effect on many people in the workplace. Many individuals fear they will be accused of being racist or sexist if they say certain things. That's why mentoring training is so important. Before they are matched, everyone hears the same message and receives permission to tackle diversity issues within the safety of the mentoring relationship.

Training also helps mentors to take the lead and encourage honest conversations with their mentees. Focused on building a safe relationship with boundaries that are negotiated by both parties, mentoring training teaches both mentors and mentees how to behave in the relationship. Mentees drive the relationship, for example, and are responsible for bringing the content to the conversations. The mentor's role is to create the safe environment, take an active role in the process and welcome potential discussions of sensitive issues.

Mentoring training also gives people permission not to have the tough conversations if they feel uncomfortable or unwilling. While the mentor communicates that the relationship is safe and that there will be no consequences for feelings shared, the relationship remains mentee driven. The mentee always decides on the content of the conversations. When both individuals become engaged and feel safe in the mentoring process, they can confront their own blind spots and prejudices openly and see what they need to change.

It's common for a white male, for example, to mentor a woman and gain a greater understanding of how his wife feels, and why she feels a certain way. It's also common for individuals who are paired with someone of a similar race or gender to make an incorrect assumption about the person based on their shared demographic. The person quickly learns the importance of not projecting their feelings onto someone else who he assumes shares them.

Mentoring allows people to take the theories learned in diversity trainings into the workplace. They practice what they learn because they're being challenged regularly within their mentoring relationships and they know that any prejudices they have will show up.

Finally, it's important for a company to show commitment to any mentor program it sets up. Ongoing training, the gathering of participant feedback and internal follow-up are key components in keeping a mentor program on track to produce desired results. Without a visible, ongoing commitment from the company, mentoring and diversity programs are seen as token gestures.

2. MENTORING BASICS

So what makes an effective mentor program? Zachary (2002) stated that, "successful mentor programs are tied to something larger than just a program" . . . they include:

- structure that exists to support mentoring partners
- mechanisms for providing ongoing feedback
- an evaluation
- a routine benchmarking

The legal workforce, while becoming increasingly diversified, has to date not been able to achieve the level of diversity appreciated by other professions – even in the face of increasing demand by corporate clients that their legal representatives provide evidence of internal diversification. The following are two examples of how the legal community has lagged in diversification efforts:

- women now constitute only one third of lawyers
- minorities represent only ten percent of the profession (Minority Corporate Counsel Association, 2007)

While the legal community has experienced an increase in minority and female representation within its ranks – the positions which they occupy remain disproportionately below the level of partner or executive (Mentoring Across the Differences (2007).

Mentor programs have long been a tool for increasing the diversity of a workforce. In fact, such programs have been key to the professional advancement of both women and persons of color across multiple professions. Ida Abbott, for example, writes, "mentoring plays a key role in women's professional advancement, but many women lack the mentors they want and need." (2001, p. 15). In the legal community, lack of diversity has often served as an impediment to the mentoring opportunities that Abbott found women value and desire. In an earlier study by the Minority Corporate Counsel Association (2003), researchers found that the data corroborates Abbott's conclusions. They conclude that, "there is a serious lack of mentoring for women and minority lawyers." There are multiple reasons for the scarcity including:

- lack of women and minority representatives to serve as mentors

- the billable hour system which yields little time or incentive to those who could serve as mentors
- heavy time pressures on administrators and functional specialists who also have little time or incentive for serving as mentors.

There is little doubt that mentor programs are effective in terms of increasing diversity within the legal community and for creating professional advancement opportunities for both women and persons of color (Abbott, 2001; MentorNet, 2005; Academy for Educational Development; 2007; Douglas, D.M.,2007; Minority Corporate Counsel Association, 2007; Douglas, D.M., 2007).

So how does a firm create a mentor program that attracts both females and candidates of color?

And....what are the key elements of an effective mentor program that provide opportunities for the development of professionals entering the firm's legal administrator mentor program?

The following sections address these questions on a conceptual basis – outlining the high level components of an effective mentor program.

3. THE MENTOR PROGRAM MODEL

The mentor program model takes into account the principles of both **learner-centric pedagogy** and **cognitive-apprenticeship** approaches to learning. Additionally, the model can be aligned to the cultural and organizational structures found in the contemporary law firm.

The following model (**Figure 1**) centers the mentee at the core of the process. This permits the mentee to take multiple paths to achieve various learning outcomes. Specifically, the mentee can opt to use **formal** and **informal** learning resources to enhance their informal learning at any time within the learning cycle.

Effective assessment instruments found within the mentoring model feature authentic assessment strategies. These strategies often focus on concepts such as 'scaffolding' in addition to providing the mentee with multiple opportunities for feedback from the mentor. In scaffolding, the mentor models how to do the task and gradually shifts the responsibility to the mentee.

Figure 1: Cross-Functional Mentor program Model
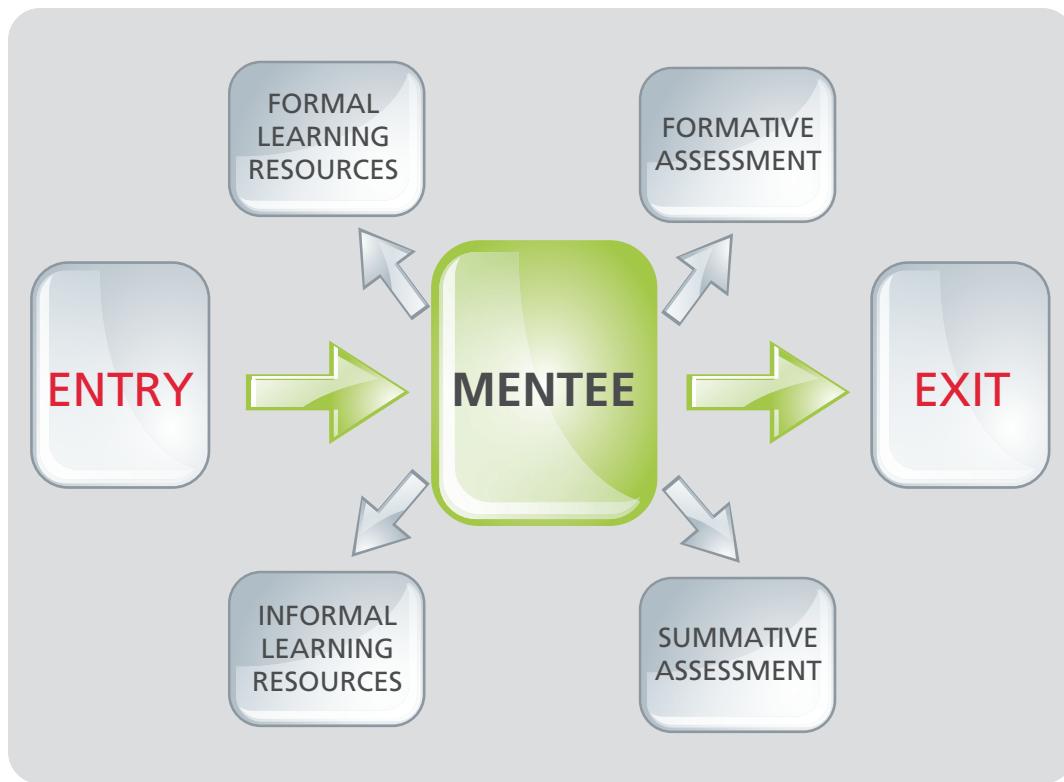
Entry Strategies

To be a sustainable model, law firms need to have an entry strategy in place. An entry strategy must define how the organization will identify candidates both as mentee and mentor and how those candidates will be matched and oriented within the program. Successful entry strategies are typically multi-pronged and often include:

Project or Program Charter: Project charters outline the goals of the overall project or program, the project scope, the resources required to implement and sustain the project over time, the costs associated with development, implementation, and evaluation, the expected return on investment and management level buy-in (i.e. signatures).

Race Conscious Recruiting Efforts: Courts have found race conscious recruiting acceptable under all of the different legal standards. Taking steps to increase the pool of qualified applicants increases chances for diverse candidates, and exposes firms to a broader pool of talent. (Springer, 2006).

Creating Relationships with Universities: Creating relationships with targeted universities and degree programs within universities increases the likelihood of a larger pool of potential candidates. While in the case of staff recruitment there are limited legal administration programs (University of Denver and George Washington University excluded), targeting business and/or human resource degree granting institutions may be fruitful.

Use Job Boards: Job boards can be utilized to advertise the availability of mentor programs as a value-added feature of the firm's culture, particularly if the firm can document desirable mentor program outcomes.

Target Organizations: Recruiting and advertising can be augmented by networking with professionals at professional association events, using professional association job boards, and optimizing relationships with relevant professional associations, including those outside the legal community such as higher education associations.

Marketing Campaigns: The firm should create a marketing plan that includes multiple strategies for recruiting women and minority candidates to your mentor program. These strategies include, but are not limited to, press releases, advertisement, digital banners, newsletters and an area on the firm's website where one can submit one's interest in joining the firm.

Matching Strategy: For firms seeking multiple mentees or in a cross-functional mentor program wherein one mentee is assigned multiple mentors, a matching strategy needs to be included as part of the entry process.

FORMAL LEARNING RESOURCES

In order to create a rich mentor program in a professional field that requires competency across multiple areas, a diverse set of formal learning resources needs to be available to a mentee. These resources include the following:

Mentee Orientation to the Firm
One of the key factors for job performance success is the ability of a mentee to understand the firm's culture. The mentee needs to have access to both formal and informal information regarding the history, mission and culture of the firm. As stated in *Mentoring the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders: A Practical Guide for Managers*, it is critical for the firm to explain its policies, procedures, and plans; demonstrate its internal management systems; identify organizational resources, such as an internal knowledge management database, and define the roles of partners, associates and staff.

Mentee Orientation to the Mentor Program
A formal mentor program should include structured learning and mentoring plans. Structured plans include the identification of the overall learning and performance goals, assessment strategy, learning resources, list of mentor(s) during the program's duration, timeframe, level of interface between mentees and mentors, **a mentoring agreement**, and the types of activities or processes that the mentee will be expected to complete.

Mentor Orientation to the Mentor Program
Best practices indicate that a successful program also features a mentor orientation program that outlines the following:

- expectations
- program scope
- time requirements
- processes
- tracking and assessment requirements
- program procedures

Additionally, significant attention and training should be focused on building the mentor-mentee relationship. This will include focusing on issues of trust, confidentiality and open and honest communication between mentor and mentee.

Books Articles, Texts, and Web-based Materials in Core Disciplines
The mentor program needs to include a set of materials for each core competency required. Minimally, the set should include both **online and paper-based materials** for each competency area required for the performance of the mentee's role. For example, a mentoring program for a legal administrator would need to include materials to cover financial management, human resource management, operations management, general management, communication, project management, and legal industry trends, history and best practices.

Continuing Education Sessions
The mentor program should include a list of both available continuing education and just-in-time learning opportunities. These opportunities are meant to address any perceived or actual learning deficiencies or to provide critical information for supporting an assigned job task or project. These opportunities can include conferences, webinars, courses, workshops, and online learning opportunities that focus on core competencies.

Educational Scaffolding
An example of educational scaffolding is Cognitive apprenticeship. This is an approach to learning that relies heavily on observation (see informal learning approaches below) and opportunities to practice a skill or process with clear guidance available. Two standard educational scaffolding approaches are problem-based learning activities and case studies.

Regardless of learning stimulus (i.e. case or scenario) all activities need to feature ill-formed problems. An ill-formed problem or question is one wherein there are multiple choices to be made, none of which appear as clear right-or-wrong choices. Each choice, however,

produces a set of likely outcomes, similar to the choices administrators and attorneys are asked to make on a daily basis. Using scenario and/or case-based learning allows a mentee to perform an actual process or skill as well as discuss probable outcomes and impact, without actual consequence for the firm or company.

INFORMAL LEARNING RESOURCES

Informal learning resources are the heart and soul of a meaningful mentor program and usually feature the blending of methods. Standard informal learning approaches include:

Internal Interviewing
Mentees should be encouraged to conduct internal interviews aimed at uncovering approaches, skills, abilities, and procedures associated with the core competencies required to effectively perform assigned roles within the firm. Informal interviews are a key method for a mentee to uncover firm culture, standard operating procedure, performance expectations, potential landmines and role expectations.

Shadowing Activities
Job shadowing is a common training approach associated with both new hire orientation and mentor programs. Job shadowing involves "spending a period of time with a seasoned expert, observing everything that he or she does that is related to the work that is expected to be accomplished as part of the daily routine of the job." (Tatum, 2008). Combined with educational scaffolding or drill and practice activities, a mentee has opportunities to reproduce or mimic the process(es) observed, learn from mistakes, question the efficacy of a process, and/or generate new ideas with his or her mentor(s).

Networking Opportunities
As mentor programs are designed to increase the professional opportunities of mentees, part of an effective mentor program includes both internal and external networking opportunities.

Internal networking should take place across hierarchical boundaries, particularly if a program is designed to "mentor" candidates into opportunities that require partner or executive level skills. Internal networking also includes exposing mentees to cross-functional areas so he/she can uncover the connections and dependencies between various areas in the

organization. Mentees, for example, can be invited to business meetings within the firm, social activities and scheduled networking events.

External networking opportunities can include networking with prospective clients, local industry leaders, members of relevant professional associations, key cyber-relationships across geographic boundaries, professional association events and other opportunities specific to the law firm.

Strategic Discussions
Strategic discussions include periodic assessments, mutual conversation regarding the profession and the firm, goal-setting, processing new ideas, problem solving, outlining next steps and building the professional relationship. Mentees should also, when appropriate, become part of discussion-making teams.

Brainstorming Activities
Mentees should have opportunities to brainstorm activities, new approaches, propose ideas or projects and discuss long-term career goals with mentors.

Meetings
A plan for meetings between mentor(s) and mentees, including a process for scheduling unplanned meetings, needs to be included as part of the overall program process/model.

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment
Formative assessments are designed to capture the progress of a mentee at designated intervals within the overall program. Formative assessment instruments include authentic assessment strategies (i.e. actual performance of specific firm tasks), case study responses, scenario discussions, quizzes, trouble-shooting, interviewing, development projects (i.e. research studies, participation on task committees, etc.) and discussion responses.

Summative Assessment
Summative assessments are the type of assessments that occur at the end of a formal training process and include at least one of the following, but preferably both: (1) performance assessment and (2) review of the mentee's experiences during the mentoring process. Performance assessments should include both quantitative and qualitative measures similar to standard management by objectives (MBO) schemes.

Conditions for Learning Success within the Culture of a Law Firm

While mentor programs differ in design across organizational disciplines, best practice research tells us that effective programs have the following key components in common (Academy for Educational Development, 2007):

- The support of leadership for the concept, implementation and follow-through of the mentor program. Support requires not only conceptual buy-in, but the willingness to devote resources to the design and implementation of the program and to provide incentives for those who are assigned mentor roles.
- The completion of a needs assessment and analysis of the firm's resources as they apply to the implementation and evaluation of the mentor program.
- Approaches associated with adult learning preferences and needs.
- The establishment of clear learning objectives and assessment measures.
- Fair and modest allocations of staff time to coordinate, track and administer the program.
- The creation and implementation of orientation programs for both mentors and mentees.
- The use of structured agreements to define roles, norms and procedures.

What Makes an Effective Mentor

Another condition of learning success within the culture of a law firm is that participating program mentors must be capable of demonstrating what we will refer to as The Three C's. That is to say that to be effective, program mentors must exhibit (1) competence, (2) confidence, and (3) commitment.

Characteristics of an Effective Mentor: The Three C's

COMPETENCE
- Professional knowledge and experience
- Respect
- Interpersonal skills and good judgment

CONFIDENCE
- Shares network of contacts and resources
- Allows mentee to develop on his/her own terms
- Demonstrates initiative, takes risks
- Shares credit

COMMITMENT
- Invests time, energy and effort to mentoring
- Shares personal experience

Using The Three C's as criteria, it should be possible to identify the individuals in your firm or company who will serve as program mentors. The next step then, is to define the mentoring relationship between mentors and mentees.

Phases of a Mentoring Relationship

The mentoring relationship typically has four distinct phases:

ORIENTATION - BUILDING THE BASE
During the first three to six months, both the mentor and mentee are getting to know each other, and building trust. During this time, both the mentee and the mentor begin to develop expectations of each other. The interaction which occurs at this stage will lay the foundation for a strong and beneficial relationship.

THE MIDDLE PERIOD
The middle phase is typically the most rewarding time for both mentor and mentee. The mutual trust which has developed between the two can give the mentee the confidence to challenge the ideas of the mentor, just as the mentee's ideas will be challenged by the mentor.

DISSOLVING THE RELATIONSHIP
Typically, the relationship begins to draw apart after a year or two. It is important at this stage that the mentor step back from the formal relationship to discuss how she/he wishes to continue their relationship.

REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP
The mentor-mentee relationship enters a new phase, where both parties can regard one another as equals. They continue to have some form of interaction, although it is now on a more casual basis.

Of course, it is necessary to train program mentors so that they are able to successfully execute the responsibilities and duties that are part of each of the four phases of the mentoring relationship.

The Mentor Training Process

Part of a successful mentor relationship is the ability to transfer knowledge, skills and experience directly from the mentor to the mentee. **This training process has five distinct steps to help the mentee benefit from the past experience and knowledge of their mentor.**

By using this process as a roadmap, the mentor will be better prepared for their role in supporting the development and learning of the mentee. **The mentee also has an active role in the training process that should not be underestimated**. Some steps are designed as suggestions for joint discussions as part of the mentoring sessions and ultimately, the mentee is responsible for reaching their objectives.

The five steps in this process are:

1.   **Prerequisite Activities**
2.   **Plan**
3.   **Prepare**
4.   **Present**
5.   **Practice**

1. Prerequisite Activities
As a first step, the mentor and mentee should meet to start building rapport and learn more about the mentee's goals for the mentor process. The mentor can help establish trust and build mutual respect by asking questions, listening, being supportive, empathetic and positive. The mentee should be prepared to discuss their work history, provide an assessment of their current skills, and share initial thinking about their goals.

As part of this step, it is recommended that the mentor pair complete a Mentoring Partnership Agreement. This agreement ensures that both mentor and mentee have the same expectations for their role in the partnership and how they will work together.

View a sample Mentoring Partnership Agreement

Going forward, it is advisable to continue documenting each mentoring meeting to track progress and ensure that the conversations continue to advance the mentee's development goals. Consider completing a brief mentoring meeting journal or summary after each subsequent discussion.

View a sample Mentoring Meeting Journal

2. Plan
Once a solid rapport is established and the initial prerequisite topics have been discussed, the next step is to jointly prepare a plan to help focus the discussions and activities during the course of the next year. It is critical that this be a joint process between mentor and mentee.

Planning involves:

• Reaching agreement on what needs to be learned and the approach that will be taken
• Identifying and reviewing the knowledge and skills objectives that are to be met
• Reviewing the standards to which the tasks being trained on or the knowledge/skills being acquired will be measured
• Identifying and reviewing resources and materials (activities, policies, procedures, directives, manuals, etc.) needed for learning
• Reviewing the steps of the tasks or developmental activities to clearly determine what is expected of the mentee to successfully reach their objectives

The plan should be documented and referred back to over the course of the year. This can be a formal document or a simple list of bullet points, depending on the degree of structure that is required.

View a Sample Individual Development Plan

3. Prepare
The mentor should prepare to assist the mentee reach their objectives by developing questions related to the knowledge requirements of the tasks and work activities to help assess the various levels of the mentee's knowledge and experience. These questions can take several forms:

• Factual Questions: What is the purpose? What does it do? What is known?
• Theoretical questions: How does it do it? Why does it do it in that way?
• Procedural Questions: Why do we do step 3 at this time? What needs to happen first?
• Situational Questions: Where are we now? Where are we going next? If this happened right now, what impact would it have on the task at hand?
• Judgmental Questions: Questions requiring

evaluation of the situation (good, bad, impact on risk). What's the best outcome? How much risk is present? What's the downside?

The mentor and mentee should both consider any needed resources, information or materials needed to achieve the developmental goals. The mentor should do all they can to support and facilitate reaching the goal. The mentor needs to be sure to raise concerns, identify obstacles and solicit the support of the mentor as needed to attain their goals. **In short, it is a joint responsibility of the mentor and mentee to ensure that the right conditions exist for the mentee to perform the tasks needed to reach their objectives.**

4. Present
This step involves the mentor modeling or description of the task or competency that is to be performed by the mentee to reach their goal. The mentor may do this in several ways:

- Describe the steps of the task or activity to be performed
- Provide a context for the task, knowledge, or skill and how it fits into the "big picture"
- Demonstrate or provide an example of the skill or competency to the mentee
- Encourage the mentee to ask questions while the demonstration and/or discussion is taking place
- Ask questions of the mentee to assess their knowledge level of the task, skill or competency

Learning through the activities and experience of the mentor is a core strength of a mentoring relationship. **The mentor's willingness to share their own experiences is often the key ingredient in creating value from the partnership.**

5. Practice
The next step after the mentor has demonstrated or shared their experience requires the mentee to pick up the baton and apply what they have learned to the actual task. This phase is typically the most time-intensive part of the learning process. As the mentee works through the task or developmental activity, the mentor should monitor their progress, observe their performance and provide feedback along the way. As a mentor, it is important to provide both reinforcing and re-directing feedback to ensure the mentee has all the tools and encouragement needed to obtain their goals. However, this is a shared responsibility. Mentees

should seek feedback from their mentors and others they may work with on their developmental activities to take full advantage of the learning opportunity. Both the mentor and mentee are encouraged to document the progress and refer back to the plan agreed to at the start of the mentor relationship. If the plan needs revising, than be sure to document those changes as well.

By following the steps outlined here, the mentor has the greatest opportunity to benefit from the experience and knowledge of the mentor. In addition, this process also allows the mentor the opportunity to observe the mentee's performance of the task, activity or knowledge to verify that the mentee has acquired the skills needed to perform the task or apply the knowledge gained independently.

4. CREATING A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

How exactly do these mechanisms take place inside of the constraints that exist within a busy law office? There's often precious little time to train new employees, and an expectation that staff and associates can hit the ground running.

Mentoring can help accelerate the formal and informal learning processes that need to occur before a new hire can contribute to the firm's bottom line. However, before you can realize the benefits of mentoring, you will need to create a plan that will allow you to implement the mentor program model within your firm.

Step 1: Determine Organizational Resources
To initiate a mentoring program, it is necessary to assign an individual or team that will be responsible for coordination of the overall program. The scope of responsibilities for that individual or team needs to be considered and appropriate job specifications developed. To assist in this task, it may be helpful to develop a mentor program planning questionnaire for firm stakeholders to complete. This will help clarify the program goals and scope and serve as the backbone for implementation.

View a Sample Firm Mentor Program Planning Questionnaire
In addition to the questions described in the Sample Firm Mentor Program Planning Questionnaire, the following questions will help define the role: How will

the program be funded and will there be appropriate resources? Will the program have administrative support?

Determining the extent of the organizational resources that can be put toward the mentoring program is a particularly important step because of the complex logistics required to recruit, select, match, orient and train the participants. Over time, the organization may want to expand the scope of the mentor program to include other levels in the organization. Executive management needs to understand the complexity of the program and the resources needed to expand from a pilot to a bigger scope. The program coordinator must have a solid foundation before extending program services.

Step 2: Identify Participants

The scope and level at which mentoring will be introduced in the organization are critical. The initial mentoring group could begin with director-level employees to first-line managers. This is recommended for the mentoring activity to be at a high enough level in the organization to be on senior managements' radar screen.

A critical component of a successful mentoring relationship is clarity of commitment and expectations. Coordinators should consider a process of matching the mentees and mentors. The process could use preferences, assessments or legitimate business issues to match the mentee with the mentor. The coordinator should do mentee interviews in order to match the expectations of the mentee and the mentor. This process will increase the likelihood of a good match.

Mentees and mentors need to agree on:
• Scheduling and logistics of meetings
• Frequency and mode of communicating between meetings
• Responsibility for rescheduling any missed meetings
• Confidentiality
• "Off-limit" conversations
• Giving and receiving feedback
• Working with formalized mentee goals

Finding employees willing to become strong mentors requires the involvement of Human Resources. A mentoring relationship requires a special rapport and a deep commitment. Candidates should be successful, well connected professionals. They must commit

to meeting on a regular basis and to provide their mentee with honest, direct and respectful feedback. Mentor expectations should be in sync with those of the mentee. Mentors need to understand the commitment, time and expertise that they will deliver during the program. Mentors also need to understand that the program will require training, communication and measurable outcomes. At the same time, the tangible and intangible benefits of the role should be described.

A formal training program that allows mentors to understand their role is recommended. Such a training program should incorporate career development, assessment, organizational goals of the program and coaching. It can be helpful to provide a checklist for mentors as a guide for laying the groundwork for the relationship.

View a First Meeting Checklist

Mentors should share their prior experiences in the workplace and other critical work experiences. Role-playing scenarios are important during the training to enable mentors to understand how to deal with different career challenges that mentees may pose to them.

It is a good idea to reward mentors with extra vacation time or other perks. It takes a lot to be a mentor. By offering mentors tangible rewards, the organization demonstrates that it values and understands the importance of mentor programs and their effect on retention and productivity.

Step 3: Communicate to all about the Mentor program

Program coordinators should remember that the supervisors of the mentees are important resources. Many programs actually include supervisors as participants in the early planning relevant to the education, training and career development goals of mentees.
Getting buy-in from the rest of the organization is critical to the program's success. The entire organization needs to understand the plan and the purpose of the mentor program. Once all employees understand the program goals and recognize the short- and long-term benefits, the program and its participants will be more readily accepted. Newsletters, orientation meetings and general

information can further this understanding and aid in acceptance of the program.

Section Summary and Conclusion

Launching a mentor program is quite a challenge and takes a lot of work upfront. A successful program will show employees the company's commitment to their development and learning. There are also benefits for the mentors who can impart their experience and leadership to new staff and attorneys who may become leaders in the firm and who will contribute to the firm's bottom line long after the mentoring partnership has been dissolved.

5. ASSESSING PROGRESS AND EVALUATING OUTCOMES

As with any activity involving a significant input of time, there is a keen desire to determine the progress of the mentoring program and to make an assessment of whether the investment in time is worth it. This section deals with some broad principles of assessing progress.

You will recall our model introduced in Section 3 above, and repeated again below. It is the right side of the diagram that we focus on.

Figure 1: Cross-Functional Mentor program Model
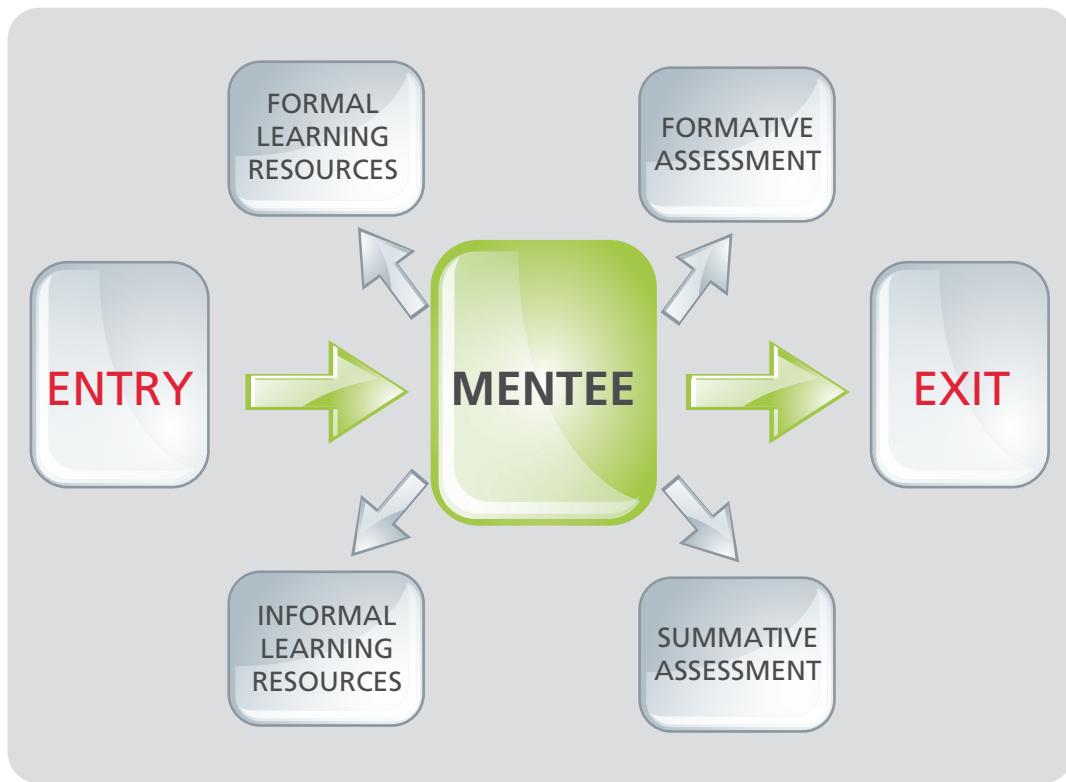
Learning is a dynamic rather than a static process. In fact, most professions espouse the need for lifelong learning or continued education, which in some cases is mandatory. Corporations and firms have increasingly positioned themselves as learning organizations – emphasizing the need to capture changes in the competitive landscape and to provide the professional development required by this rate of change. Assessment strategies need to capture the dynamic nature of learning in order to determine the effectiveness of your learning strategies.

Effective instruction also requires mentors or educators to capture the learning process at multiple points in time in order to:

• Analyze any gaps between actual performance levels at designated milestones and projected performance levels
• Mediate missteps and misinformation
• And assess the benefits of the mentor program overall.

This feedback will benefit both the program participants and the program itself. Those responsible for oversight of the mentor program need to track the assessment feedback and use it to align the program model to best meet the needs of the mentee and the organization.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are designed to capture the progress of a mentee at designated intervals within the overall program. Formative assessment instruments include:

• authentic assessment strategies (e.g. actual performance of specific tasks such as writing or interfacing with clients)
• case study responses
• scenario discussions
• quizzes
• interviewing
• development projects (e.g. research studies, participation on committees)
• discussion responses

Formative assessment techniques need to be directly linked to the written objectives of the mentorship program and be representative of the performance

expectations. Finally, **results of the assessment activities need to be part of a scheduled mentee-mentor meeting as feedback is a critical component of the learning process.**

For example, research results indicate that feedback given as part of a formative assessment helps learners become aware of learning gaps between their desired goal and their current knowledge, understanding or skill and, more importantly, guides them through actions necessary to obtain their goals (Ramaprasad, 1983; Sadler, 1989).

Mentees also need a forum for introducing their ideas and potential changes to an organizational practice or to disagree with an assessment result. Not only is it good business practice to provide fair forums for organizational evolution – but research tells us that learners who understand the learning objectives and assessment criteria *and* have opportunities to reflect on their work or argue a position show greater improvement than those not similarly treated (Fontana & Fernandes, 1994; Frederikson & White, 1997).

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments occur at the end of a formal training process and should include at least one of the following, but preferably both: (1) a performance assessment, and (2) a portfolio assessment. Performance assessments should include both quantitative and qualitative measures similar to standard management by objectives (MBO) schemes.

Portfolio assessments include the accumulation of work product throughout the course of the mentor program. The mentee selects work product or deliverables that s/he believes represent the highest level of performance achieved against each learning objective.

JOB AIDS

For some helpful material on assessing the mentorship see **Mentee Update Survey** and the **Mentor Update Survey** in the Job Aids contained in the Appendices.

6. COMMUNICATING & BUILDING ON YOUR SUCCESS

Exit Strategies

Critical elements of exit strategies include: (1) an assessment measure of the impact of learning for the mentee and the effectiveness of the mentor program itself, (2) a continual improvement process plan, and (3) a maintenance plan.

Assessment

Assessment measures and implementation plans should be structured to assess the impact of learning for the mentee across all four levels of the Kirkpatrick (1994) model. The Kirkpatrick model is, in fact, the standard for evaluating the effectiveness of a learning or training intervention and commits an organization to follow-up processes which evaluate learning from learner reaction to long-term impact on actual performance on the job. While Level One analysis assesses the learner's level of satisfaction with the program, Level Four analysis measures the program's overall efficacy.

Continual Improvement Plan

The continual improvement plan should be a documented and scheduled process for addressing significant findings within the assessment results. A debrief meeting should be held after each phase of the program assessment to analyze findings, brainstorm resolutions to issues and move changes from design to implementation.

Maintenance Plan

As both the law firm and the profession continue to evolve, the mentor program will need to be updated to reflect emergent trends, changes in processes and/or professional standards, and identifying those resources that no longer serve or optimize the learning experience.

Communication Plan

A comprehensive and strategic communication plan is critical to the initial launch and on-going support of the mentor program. In the initial phase, the communication plan should focus on establishing the value proposition for the mentor program. It should provide a clear statement of why the firm supports these efforts and what objectives will be met by dedicating time and resources towards mentoring. These messages should be delivered by senior leaders in the firm to clearly demonstrate their support and sponsorship of the program.

As the program continues, it is important to communicate at regular intervals to maintain momentum and build awareness. In the early phases, it is important to remind mentors and mentees about the importance of the program and encourage them to set aside the time needed for the mentor relationship. Capitalize on early successes and share stories of how the mentor program helped support the professional development and growth of an attorney or a staff member.

It is also important to remember that potential candidates seek out information about the professional development opportunities as part of their job search process. Providing an overview of the mentor program on the careers section of your organization's website is a critical part of communicating your firm's values and support of individual growth and development.
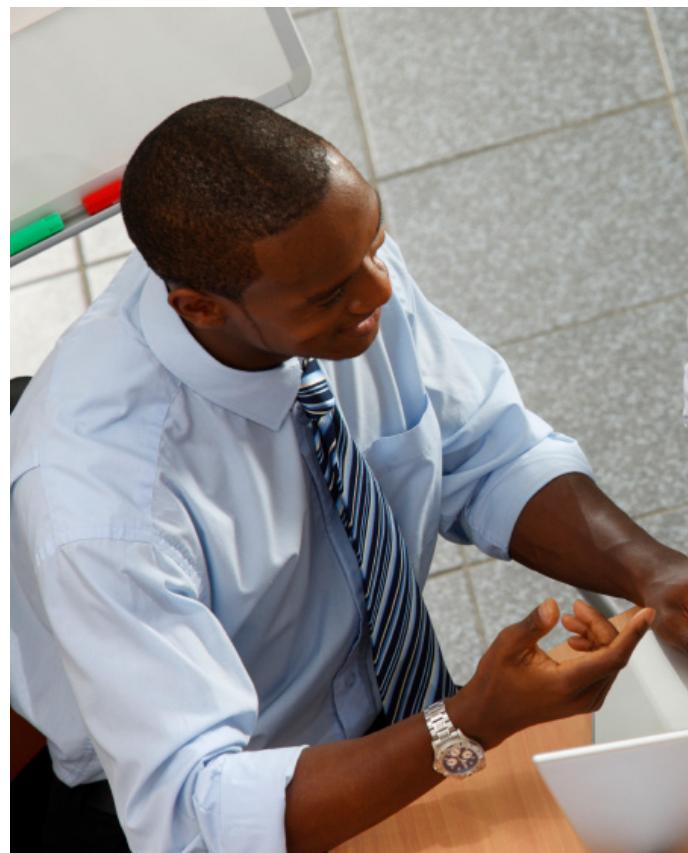
7. CONCLUSION

It is our hope that you now have the foundation you need to begin a formal mentoring program for attorneys and/or staff in your firm. As with all transformational initiatives in your workplace, the most critical and difficult step toward a bright new future is simply to begin. The small steps you take in the beginning will widen to great strides so long as they are taken confidently and with care, but you must begin if you are ever to see results.

By its very nature, mentoring is a rewarding and valuable experience for the mentor and mentee – the sharing of knowledge, expertise and insight helps to create more motivated and accomplished work teams that are better positioned to contribute to the overall success of the firm or practice.

While a mentoring program does require planning and some initial effort, your organization will reap the rewards for years to come. So let the mentoring begin!

The Association of Legal Administrators, through its Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, is dedicated to maximizing the talent of its members by providing support and resources like this guide. For more information on the ALA Diversity Initiative and resources, visit *www.alanet.org/diversity.*

8. DOWNLOADABLE APPENDIX AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

Visit *www.alanet.org/diversity/mentoringguide.aspx* for free, downloadable job aids, checklists and reference materials.

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