

# COMMANDER MOBILE MINE ASSEMBLY GROUP

## MENTORING HANDBOOK



## DEVELOPING FUTURE LEADERS

## MENTORING

**Mentoring** is a powerful form of human development. It is not a new concept and it has always been a part of professional development. You may recognize it under these alias names, "**Sea Dad, Big Brother/Sister**" etc. Regardless of the name, it has been an effective vehicle for developing talented technicians, leaders and managers.

Mentoring offers an opportunity for Mentors and Sailors to expand their leadership, interpersonal and technical skills. The process can be simple and natural, or very sophisticated.

This handbook provides information on the mentoring process to potential Mentors and Protégés. It describes their roles and responsibilities so both will know what is expected in a Mentor/Protégé relationship.

**Note to Protégé:** You are responsible for your career development. A Mentor will provide you valuable advice and help you reflect on and learn from experiences, but it is up to you to take initiative, demonstrate your capabilities and seize opportunities.

**Note to Mentors:** Relax ... depending on your personal approach, mentoring should be a very easy, rewarding and natural process, or a very sophisticated one. In fact, you've probably been mentoring Sailors for years (whether or not you called yourself a "Mentor"!).

**Do not hesitate to start off easy and natural!** The following material is not intended to complicate your view of the mentoring role, but rather clarify it; increasing your understanding, effectiveness and enjoyment of that role.

**NOTE: THE WORDS SAILOR, SERVICE MEMBER, INDIVIDUAL AND PROTÉGÉ ARE INTERCHANGEABLE AND HAVE THE SAME MEANING THROUGHOUT THIS HANDBOOK**

## **MENTORING QUESTIONS/ANSWERS**

### **Q1: Why Should I Get Involved in Mentoring?**

**A1:** Most people think of mentoring as a benefit to the Sailor being mentored, but there are also many benefits to the Mentor and the Navy.

#### ***For the Mentor:***

##### **Career Advancement for the Mentor**

Becoming identified as a "star-maker" attracts highly qualified, high potential individuals to the Mentor's department/organization. Developing others to follow in your footsteps can be very rewarding in both personal satisfaction and a proven way of demonstrating leadership talents.

##### **Personal Satisfaction**

Mentors feel a sense of pride in watching their Protégé develop, and a sense of contribution to their organization. It is an opportunity to pass on your legacy and knowledge to the next generation of Sailors.

##### **Sharpened Management/Leadership/Interpersonal Skills**

Mentors sharpen their own skills as they challenge and coach the Sailors they mentor. In fact, mentoring is an important management competency in the naval leadership continuum.

##### **Source of Recognition**

Mentors are well-respected at all levels of the organization.

#### ***For the Command:***

##### **Increased Commitment to the Command/Mission**

Mentoring increases a service members understanding and acceptance of command goals and values, and helps Sailors feel like they are an integral part of the organization. They feel "cared for" by the command.

##### **Improved Performance**

Both Mentors and the Protégés they mentor have an opportunity to expand their technical, interpersonal and leadership skills through

the Mentoring process. More specifically, mentoring helps Sailors identify and prepare for leadership roles which best fit their needs and interests, but also contributes to the needs of the Navy. Mentoring is functionally efficient because instead of floundering on their own, Protégés are helped by their Mentors to develop more direct career paths.

### **Improved Flow of Organizational Information**

Mentoring encourages the sharing of organizational information within the chain of command. Mentoring Sailors supports the goals of the chain of command, making the best of the Sailors assigned.

### **Leadership Development**

Mentoring increases leadership development. It generally produces Sailors who are comfortable with the responsibilities of leadership positions and who are able to motivate people and effectively utilize resources. The process helps to give our Sailors a chance to shine and succeed.

### **Long-Term Leadership Succession**

Mentoring facilitates the smooth transfer of organizational culture, values and other key components to the next generation of leadership.

### **For the Protégé:**

#### **Personal Growth**

Mentoring helps build confidence and encourages the individual to grow beyond the usual expectations. It encourages individuals to become more involved both personally and professionally.

#### **Role Model**

The Protégé is provided a role model and an individual that they can feel comfortable taking questions and concerns to in a neutral environment. Someone who can be trusted to provide the correct guidance.

#### **Increased Commitment**

Mentored Sailors have a better understanding of the Navy and the command, and what is needed to succeed and advance. They feel they are part of the organization are encouraged to contribute more to the organization.

**Q2: What Does a Mentor Do?**

**A2:** A Mentor is a person who oversees the career and development of another, usually junior, Sailor. **Most simply stated, a Mentor helps the Protégé clarify career goals, develop and execute a Military Career Development Plan (MCDP).**

**Teacher** - Teaches skills and knowledge required to perform the job successfully.

**Guide** - Helps navigate through the inner workings of the organization and provides explanations to "unwritten organizational rules".

**Counselor** - Establishes a trusting and open relationship.

**Motivator** - Generates motivation through encouragement and support, enabling a Protégé to complete difficult assignments or pursue an ambitious goal.

**Coach** - Assists in overcoming performance difficulties.

**Advisor** - Helps develop professional interests and set realistic career goals.

**Role Model** - Sets a living example of the values, ethics and standards of the Navy. Takes an active interest in the personal and professional development of personnel.

The Mentor must be an example worthy of following.

**Q3: How Does Someone Find/Get a Mentor?**

**A3:** The Command Master Chief will be intimately involved in the Command Mentoring Program and the selection of qualified Mentors. The Mentor and the Protégé must be carefully matched to ensure success. This program, when carefully managed, can yield long-term positive results. If Mentors are not properly selected and matched with the Protégé, negative results are sure to follow. First and foremost, Mentor and Protégé matches, must be accommodating. It would be great if all matches were natural, but sometimes, if not most, matches must be "arranged" to ensure the best results. Before any commitments are made, individuals should **meet with potential Mentors** - that is, sit down with them and discuss career aspirations, what each person expects from the mentoring relationship and learn more about each other as individuals.

**Q4: Who Should be a Mentor?**

**A4.** The Mentor:

- **Should be someone other than the individual's first- or second-level supervisor; and**
- **Should be in a grade level above the individual; and**
- **Must be an exemplary Sailor, someone who clearly is a positive "Role Model."**

The Sailor already has access to his or her first- and second-level supervisors and is encouraged to discuss career goals and developmental needs with them on a regular basis. Because of this pre-existing access, the Sailor should be assigned someone else to serve as a Mentor. Also, there may be, at times, reluctance on the part of the Sailor to discuss some work-related problems or career aspirations in a candid manner with the immediate chain of command. Such a relationship could also create perceptions of favoritism, which should always be avoided.

A Mentor who is very senior to the Sailor may be too far removed, unable to provide some kinds of very practical guidance on how the Sailor can get to the next step. Also, while many people would like to select senior leaders as Mentors, there usually just aren't enough to "go around."

The Mentor should be someone within two - three paygrades of the Protégé, open and honest, motivated, squared away, and someone who genuinely cares about helping their shipmates.

**Q5: What is the Time Commitment?**

**A5.** The amount of time a Mentor and Protégé choose to invest in the relationship varies greatly, based on the needs, expectations and desires of both parties. The greatest commitment of time is generally in the beginning, when the focus is on getting to know each other and creating the initial Military Career Development Plan. As the relationship evolves, the time spent together will naturally evolve based on the needs of the relationship.

**Q6: What else should a Sailor look for in a Mentor?**

**A6.** Good Mentors take into consideration work and communication styles that are right for you. Know what you want from the relationship, based on your current situation, and think about the skills/competencies you'd like to develop and your career goals, and communicate them to your Mentor. Have realistic expectations.

Some important things to consider (in no particular order):

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- What are your career goals and needs?
- Does the Mentor have knowledge and experience in related areas, or better, in many areas?
- Is the Mentor proficient and professional at what he/she does?
- Is the Mentor a positive role model?
- How does the organization judge the Mentor? Is he or she well respected?
- Is the Mentor supportive and respectful of others?
- Does the Mentor value the Navy, enjoy the challenges and understand the vision, mission and values of the organization?
- Will the Mentor be available for uninterrupted, quality meetings?
- Will you feel comfortable talking with the Mentor honestly; do you trust him or her?
- Will the Mentor take a genuine interest in your development? Is he or she enthusiastic about mentoring?
- Will the Mentor give you honest feedback about yourself and your developmental needs?
- Can the Mentor help you find opportunities to gain visibility/demonstrate your capabilities?
- Will the Mentor give you candid information about the organization, and be willing to share knowledge, experience and insights?
- Is the Mentor a good teacher/coach/motivator?
- What do others say about the Mentor?
- What are the Mentor's expectations?

**Q7: Can a Mentor be from Another Command?**

**A7.** This is certainly possible, but should be given careful thought. A drawback is that an outside Mentor may not have much knowledge of the internal operations, issues and priorities of the Sailor's command, or know many key people in the organization. This could limit the Mentor's ability to help the member identify developmental and career opportunities within the organization. Mentors from outside the command are not encouraged.

**Q8: Is There a Limit on How Many Protégés a Person Can Mentor?**

**A8.** No. Each Mentor should decide what is most suitable for him or her based on individual preferences and time constraints. Mentors should not hesitate to refer Sailors elsewhere when they feel they have reached their personal limits.

**Q9: Can a Person have More than One Mentor?**

**A9.** Especially in today's environment, the more viewpoints, information and perspectives a person taps into, the better. Because of the time and energy typically committed to a specific mentoring relationship, it may be difficult to juggle more than one. However, developing relationships so you can turn to many different, respected individuals for advice is very wise.

**Q10: What do Sailors Say they Most Want/Expect from a Mentor?**

**A10.** When asked what is wanted or expected from a Mentor, typical responses include:

- Encouragement
- Support
- Honesty/Consistency
- Candid Information & Advice
- "Big Picture" view
- Guidance
- Suggestions
- Honest appraisal of capabilities
- Help with "Vision"
- Assistance in making "Good" choices
- Information on opportunities available/possible help in defining & reaching goals
- Benefit of Mentor's experiences: What Did and Did Not Work?
- An effort to really understand service member's abilities & concerns
- Availability, without interruptions
- Non-attribution, honest discussions about tough issues
- Assistance in formulating a cohesive career plan
- Idea stimulation, insight to career paths

**Q11: What are Some Characteristics of a Good Mentor?**

**A11.** The following behavior-related characteristics typify ideal Mentors:

**Supportive** - Supports the needs and aspirations of the Protégé; encourages the Protégé to accept challenges and overcome difficulties.

**Patient** - Willing to provide adequate time to interact with the

Protégé.

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**Respect** - Has earned the admiration of people within the organization; others look to the Mentor as a positive role model.

**People-Oriented** - Genuinely interested in people and has a desire to help others; knows how to effectively communicate and actively listen; able to resolve conflict and give appropriate feedback.

**A Good Motivator** - Inspires the Protégé to do better/realize or achieve full potential, through encouraging feedback and recommending challenging work assignments.

**Respectful of Others** - Shows regard for well-being of others; accepts the Protégé's minor flaws, just as the Protégé must accept minor flaws of the Mentor.

**An Effective Teacher** - Helps to manage and guide the Protégé's learning process - this means actively trying to recognize and use teaching/learning opportunities (the opposite of a "sink or swim" approach).

**Self-Confident** - Appreciates a Protégé's developing strengths and abilities, without viewing them as a threat; enjoys being a part of his or her growth and success.

**An Achiever** - Sets lofty career goals, continually evaluates and strives to reach them, takes on more responsibility than is required, volunteers for more activities and climbs the "career ladder" at a quicker pace; inspires the Protégé he or she mentors with the same drive for achievement.

**Values DON** - Takes pride in the Navy, relishes the everyday challenges that typically arise, understands the mission, vision, and values of the Navy, and supports the Department's initiatives - can interpret these for the Protégé.

**Q12: What Should Prospective Mentors Look for in a Protégé?**

**A12.** Making a Mentor/Protégé connection is not just about a service member interviewing and selecting a Mentor! Both must consider their own, and the other person's interests and expectations. Before agreeing to mentor a particular Sailor, the prospective Mentor may look for the following:

- Positive attitude
- Competence, credibility
- Ambition

- Desire to learn

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- Commitment to the organization
- Initiative
- Desire to do better
- Desire and ability to accept more senior-level responsibilities;
- Loyalty
- Similar perceptions of work and the organization
- Ability to establish networks
- Ability to work as a team player
- Candid information and feedback
- Respect confidentiality

**Q13: What are the Responsibilities of the Sailor Being Mentored?**

**A13.** The Sailor must be an active participant in the relationship (after all, it's his or her career). In particular, he or she must:

**Prepare** - Do appropriate "homework" for meetings with the Mentor.

**Develop** - Work to achieve skills/competencies, knowledge, and ability.

**Be Flexible** - Listen to the Mentor and consider new options which may be proposed.

**Take Initiative** - Do your homework; find a possible solution, then take it to the Mentor for advice when needed.

**Begin with the End in Mind** - Don't get lost in the process. If it is not clear, ask the Mentor how the process leads to the goal.

**Q14: What is Most Important in a Mentoring Relationship?**

**A14.** There are five essentials for a successful mentoring relationship. Both the Mentor and the Protégé must want the relationship to work. Watch for signs of "lopsided" mentoring: both the Mentor and the Protégé should be committing appropriate time and energy to the process. Five things are essential:

1. **Mutual Respect** - When a Protégé recognizes knowledge, skills and abilities in the Mentor that he or she would like to possess. The Mentor appreciates the success of the Protégé and the Protégé's desire to develop his or her capabilities, experiences and value to the organization.

2. **Trust** - This is a two-way street. Mentors and Protégés should work together to build trust through communicating, availability and loyalty.

3. **Partnership Building** - The Mentor and Protégé are professional partners. Natural barriers that all partnerships face may include miscommunication or an uncertainty of each other's expectations. Activities that can help you overcome these barriers include:

- Maintaining communication
- Fixing "obvious" problems
- Forecasting how decisions could affect goals
- Frequent discussion of progress
- Monitoring changes

**Successful partnerships develop through:**

- The expressions of enthusiasm.
- Activities of idea exploration and successful problem solving.
- Developing strategies and tactics of change that move slowly enough to be monitored and adjusted.

4. **Realistic Expectations & Self Perception** - A Mentor should encourage the Protégé to have realistic expectations of their capabilities:

- Opportunities in terms of present and potential positions.
- The energies and actions the Mentor will commit to mentoring.
- What the Protégé must demonstrate to earn the Mentor's support of his or her career development.
- A Mentor may help define the Protégé's self-perception by discussing social traits, intellectual abilities, talents and roles. It is important for the Mentor to always provide honest feedback.

5. **Time** - Set aside specific times to meet; do not change times unless absolutely necessary. Meet periodically at mutually convenient times when you can minimize interruptions. Frequently "check in" with each other via informal phone calls, e-mail, etc. (It is a good idea to schedule even informal activities to assure regular contact.)

**Q15: How Does a Mentor Know What a Protégé's Developmental Needs**

**Are?**

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**A15.** The Mentor should start by sitting down with the Protégé and doing a thorough interview and Service Record review. The Mentor should find out the Protégé's perceived strengths and weaknesses, hobbies, future plans, etc. This information is essential in assisting the Protégé with determining developmental needs. The Mentor needs to find out the Protégé's current short and long-term goals. Working together, develop a concise list detailing the final goals mutually agreed upon. (one list for short range, one list for long range) These lists should be realistic yet challenging for the Protégé. As the Mentor and Protégé sit down in future meetings, it will become clear what the Protégé's true developmental needs are. All this information will assist in developing a Military Career Development Plan (MCDP).

**Q16: What Types of Training Methods Can A Mentor Suggest Besides Formal Classroom Training?**

**A16:** Formal training is just one small part of career development. When thinking about appropriate developmental activities, be creative! Some things to consider:

- Reading books, articles, journals, Government/DOD/DON news publications, etc.
- Trying new projects/special assignments
- Covering for shipmates who are on TAD or leave
- Temporary details (rotational assignments) to other positions
- Giving presentations
- Assuming lead-person responsibilities
- Joining or chairing workgroups
- Involvement in collateral duties/task forces/organizational change efforts
- Professional society participation
- Activity presentations/special events/MWR functions
- Authoring professional publications
- Teaching subject matter courses
- Observation experience (then practicing desired skills)
- Informational interviews
- Completion of Navy Correspondence Courses
- Community service

**Q17: Who should be Responsible for Scheduling Meetings/Interactions?**

**A17.** In a good mentoring relationship, both parties contact each other regularly.

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**Q18: What are the Boundaries Around the Types of Advice a Mentor Can Give?**

**A18.** Again, Mentors should follow regular standards for appropriateness. While personal rapport and candid feedback are both characteristics of good mentoring relationships, advice should be career related. Mentors should take care to always respect the chain of command and private lives of those they mentor, particularly when it comes to giving advice. The Mentor/Protégé relationship is always professional.

**Q19: What are Some Signs of a Successful Mentoring Relationship?**

**A19.** Signs that a mentoring relationship is successful are:

- The Protégé is open to change and transition, to exploring possibilities, helping others and learning from others.
- Both parties are inspired by the relationship and gain a great deal of satisfaction from it.
- There is a commitment to understanding and growing, and to confronting and working toward solutions to problems that may arise.
- The Sailor feels a bond or connection with the Mentor, experiencing the relationship as one of value in which mutual interests, respect and straightforward communication are constants.
- The Protégé is comfortable going to the Mentor when counsel and support are desired, taking responsibility for meeting his/her own needs in the relationship.
- The Mentor shows the Protégé new aspects of his or her potential, helping them learn about themselves.
- The Mentor has established a comfortable environment for learning and discussion, and enjoys watching the Protégé grow.
- When it becomes time to separate, the relationship is on equal footing and the Protégé regards the Mentor as a friend or peer he or she can seek for advice in the future. Because of the relationship, the service member has increased self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-confidence.

**Q20: What is a Mentor Not Able to Do?**

**A20.** A Mentor should never be used to bypass normal and appropriate procedures or the chain of command, or to exert

pressure or influence on an individual (the Sailor's supervisor) who is the appropriate decision making authority. For example, if a supervisor denies a particular request for training or an assignment, there should not be a request or expectation from the COMOMAGINST 1400.1

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Protégé for the Mentor to intervene. In such a case, the service member should discuss the matter with his or her supervisor, perhaps offering alternatives that would meet both the individual's and the organization's needs.

A Mentor clearly cannot guarantee promotions. Likewise, when providing assistance for developmental activities a Mentor must be careful not to give any unfair advantage to the Protégé(s) they mentor. As always, Mentors must keep in mind not only the procedures, but also the spirit of our Navy core values.

**Q21: What is the Chain of Command's Role?**

**A21.** Supervisors have a very important and challenging role. Like Mentors, they provide advice, feedback and support. They should work closely with their Sailor in putting together a Military Career Development Plan (MCDP) and identifying and supporting specific developmental skills and competencies. The supervisor should provide the Sailor with candid feedback about what he or she observes as their strengths and developmental needs and should help the member reflect upon and learn from on-the-job experiences.

Unlike Mentors, supervisors are faced with the immediate need of "getting the job done" when Sailors are participating in developmental activities, adhering to the resource constraints of their unit and ensuring equitable access to developmental opportunities for all. While a supervisor may very much want to support developmental activities, and is expected to do so, the supervisor must balance this with other considerations. The supervisor/chain of command is the authority responsible for approving participation in developmental activities, or denying participation for workload, budgetary or other appropriate considerations. It is very important for a Sailor and his or her supervisor to discuss each other's expectations in this regard.

**Q22: Should A Protégé's Mentor and Supervisor Talk?**

**A22.** It is a good idea for the Mentor and supervisor to communicate with each other. This can facilitate the identification of appropriate developmental activities and prevent problems associated with differing needs, perspectives and priorities.

**Q23: What If My Mentor Suggests a Particular Developmental Activity but My Supervisor Says "No"?**

**A23.** Your supervisor/immediate chain of command has the ultimate authority to approve or deny developmental activities.

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**Q24: Why Are Career Development Needs Reviewed at the Same Time As Mid-Term Counseling?**

**A24.** As you review your performance and discuss your objectives for the upcoming year, it is an appropriate and natural time to identify your developmental needs and activities for the upcoming year.

**Q25: When Does a Mentoring Relationship End?**

**A25.** Good mentoring relationships may end when the Protégé has outgrown the need for the Mentor's guidance and direction. At this point, the relationship generally evolves into a strong mutual respect for each other.

Other mentoring relationships end because they fail to become productive and comfortable. The Mentor and Protégé may never establish rapport, or one or both parties may not commit adequate time or effort. There may be a failure to communicate goals, needs, intentions or expectations. The likelihood of this happening is greatest when Protégés and Mentors are improperly "matched", or agree to the relationship without much consideration and discussion about needs and expectations. The relationship may also end if either the Mentor or Protégé relocates to another area or leaves the organization. While it is not necessary for the relationship to end in these instances, it sometimes becomes difficult to communicate regularly or for the Mentor to give knowledgeable advice about organizational issues.

Both Mentors and Protégés should feel free to end mentoring relationships that are not meeting expectations. In most cases, if one party feels it is not working, the other feels the same. At this point, the service member should be encouraged to contact the Command Master Chief immediately to prevent losing his/her momentum.

**Q26: How do Individuals Get Trained to be Mentors/Protégés?**

**A26.** Service members should talk with their department's Leading Chief Petty Officer and the Command Master Chief. These individuals can provide you with specific information about communication skills, command training programs, and resources available.

The goal of Mentoring is to help shipmates make the best use of

their time and energy. A welcome "helping hand" is seldom turned away. The high demand we place on our Sailors today often increases the "I'm in this alone" feeling that, if not tended too, may result in the Sailor quitting. Mentoring is not designed to  
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replace leadership, just compliment it. If properly executed, this program can be a natural path to bring Sailors on board and up to speed.

