



## **The International**

**System Safety Society** Organized 1962 Incorporated 1974

Professionals Dedicated to the Safety of Systems, Products & Services

P. O. Box 70, Unionville, VA 22567-0070 | [systemsafety@system-safety.org](mailto:systemsafety@system-safety.org)

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## **International System Safety Society Mentoring Program Roles and Tips**

### **Defining your roles**

There is no prototypical or “right” way to approach this mentoring process. Your skills, interests, personalities and needs will help to define your roles.

Mentors can help by serving as a teacher, coach, counselor, career advisor, or role model. A Mentor is not a superior, or a problem fixer.

Mentees’ interests lie in improving their ability to serve as a System Safety Professional and should view the relationship as a mutually beneficial partnership to achieve that end. Discuss your own successes, questions, uncertainties and fears about professional development openly. Be proactive in managing your professional development by articulating a plan and making systematic progress toward accomplishing elements of the plan. Remember that your Mentor is an experienced professional who will probably be able to help you and is interested in doing so.

### **Initiating a meeting**

If a member of the pair does not meet obligations for the initial meeting, it may be difficult to get the relationship rolling. The pair is not always sure who is supposed to take the initiative. We encourage the Mentee to make the initial contact and arrange the first meeting.

### **Selecting a meeting “place”**

Many, but not all, of the mentor pairs are matched whenever possible based on system safety career interests. If you cannot meet face-to-face, arrange a convenient time to talk when you will not be distracted and can devote full attention.

### **When the Mentee and Mentor do not have common career interests**

The Mentee and the Mentor need to be aware that career matches may not always be ideal. The Mentor can still serve as a resource by offering advice on generally applicable system safety approaches and professional development. The Mentor may also be able to introduce the Mentee to someone who is in the field that the Mentee is interested in pursuing.

### **Challenges**

Even with good processes in place, unexpected challenges may arise. Personality clashes, crossed signals, and communication problems may occur. In these situations, it is important to remain neutral and to contact Director of Education and Professional Development if necessary.

### **Ending the relationship**

Most mentoring relationships wane when the Mentee successfully accomplishes various professional development goals. However, this does not necessarily mean the end of the mentoring relationship as the interaction of the pair naturally changes over time. The International System Safety Society hopes it becomes a rewarding relationship for both the Mentor and the Mentee. Ideally, the Mentee will eventually develop in the domain of system safety to a level at which they are willing and able to be a Mentor for someone more junior along their journey as a System Safety Professional.



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### Roles

#### Mentor

- Listen to the Mentee's needs and expectations
- Work with the Mentee to help develop and establish realistic and obtainable professional development goals
- Offer suggestions and feedback
- Check in at agreed upon times to monitor progress
- Be committed to serve as a resource to the Mentee
- Encourage your Mentee to continue along their professional development journey
- Follow up on commitments made to the Mentee
- Contact the Director of Education and Professional Development if there is a concern with the mentoring relationship

#### Mentee

- Discuss your questions and expectations with your Mentor
- Be specific in what areas you are unsure about or need help in completing
- Work with your Mentor to develop and establish realistic and obtainable goals
- Be receptive to suggestions and feedback
- Keep your Mentor informed of progress
- Be committed to carry out agreed upon actions
- Work to get the most out of the mentor program
- Contact Director of Education and Professional Development if there is a concern with the mentoring relationship

#### For Both Mentors and Mentees

- Respect confidences and trust each other
- Discover common ground and respect your differences
- Be flexible enough to change the relationship and to change within the relationship
- Be yourself
- Be a good listener
- Be available



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### **Tips for Effective Mentoring**

#### **1. Maintain regular contact.**

Mentors should assume they are the givers in the relationship. Consistent contact builds trust.

#### **2. Always be honest.**

Trust and respect are the foundations on which mentorship is built. “I don’t know but I will find out” and “I did not complete what we agreed upon” are honest statements that build a strong professional relationship

#### **3. Avoid being judgmental of the Mentees’ situation**

Acceptance without conditions communicates that your concern comes without strings attached.

The Mentee is anticipated to not know as much or have as much experience as the Mentor.

Simply accepting this is part of the Mentor’s role.

#### **4. Don't expect to have all the answers.**

Sometimes just listening attentively is all people need.

#### **5. Help your Mentee access resources and expand support networks.**

Discuss the importance of maintaining positive relationships. Review training and/or educational opportunities that could bridge to better career possibilities.

#### **6. Be clear about your expectations and your boundaries.**

Sets up ground rules and communicate them.

#### **7. Avoid being overwhelmed by your Mentee's problems.**

Remain calm and dispassionate to help Mentees solve problems along their journey within the System Safety domain.

#### **8. Respect confidentiality.**

Good friends do.

#### **9. If the relationship seems to stall, hang in there.**

Contact the Director of Education and Professional Development if problems or concerns arise.



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### **Facilitating the Initial Sessions**

Here are some suggested questions/topics for the Mentor to ask and for the Mentees to be prepared to answer/discuss at the first few meetings.

#### **Personal Goals / Development**

- Why is professional development important to you?
- What are your primary and secondary career goals?
- How will mentorship facilitated by the International System Safety Society contribute to these goals?
- Are there specific areas of concern in the professional development process?
- What role would you like me to take in this process?
- How can I contribute to your success?

Here are some suggested ways for the Mentee to prepare for the first few meetings with your Mentor. Remember, the more specific you are about your own needs and uncertainties, the better the chances your Mentor will be able to help you.

- What are your concerns, fears, or questions about developing as a system safety professional?
- If you have experiences being mentored or coached, what's the ideal role for your Mentor to take? To what kind of relationships do you respond well? To what kinds of relationships do you not respond well?
- How can your Mentor help you to realize success?