



Flash Mentoring Toolkit:

How to Plan a Flash Mentoring Event

Introduction

Mentoring can reach employees in all stages of their career. Whether you are a senior person being a mentor, an entry level person being a mentee, or the mid-level career person making a career change, mentoring is not only a tool, but a development and training opportunity that will help close skill gaps, build a pipeline of qualified professionals and retain the workforce. Mentoring is a key component in establishing a strategy for talent development.

This toolkit will provide a roadmap for developing an effective Flash Mentoring event. Each section contains tips, tools, techniques, and advice for successful execution. Additionally, samples are included in the Appendix.

What is Flash Mentoring?

Flash Mentoring is a one-time meeting or discussion featuring experts in their fields, mentors, and their staff, mentees. At each event, there is typically a keynote speaker who opens up the session. The participants then break out in their tables for two or three rounds of mentoring. Each table has one mentor to six or eight mentees for a 30 minute mentoring session. The intent is for an interactive engagement in which all participants at the table have an opportunity to share in the conversation. After the round, mentors move to the next table (clockwise) and round two begins. At the conclusion of the event, reserve time for the participants to network with their peers and mentors.

Planning and Design Phase

Below are step-by-step guidelines for designing and planning your Flash Mentoring event. Each step contains tips, tools, techniques, and advice.

I. Select a Team Leader

- a. *Role:* A team leader serves as event coordinator and project manager.
- b. *Responsibilities:* All administrative and planning activities prior to, during, and after the event. This includes drafting all marketing materials, securing the location, and coordinating RSVPs for both mentees and mentors. Developing all of the components necessary for the event. For example: Biography lists, Words of Wisdom, Name tags, Talking points for VIPs, Directions, Agenda, Questions for discussion, etc.
- c. *Essential Skills:* The lead shall possess excellent time and project management skills, excellent written and oral communication skills, and the ability to handle multiple competing tasks, as well as the ability to meet deadlines.

II. Develop an Event Theme

- a. *What:* Identify a theme for the proposed event. Begin by focusing on a specific set of competencies your organization is targeting. For example, the CHCO Council focuses on the OPM approved human resources competencies for the 201 (HR) series, which can be found at <http://www.hru.gov/HR/Competencies.aspx>
- b. *Recommendation:* Discuss the competencies and theme with interested leadership. Leadership may have strategic priority in mind.
- c. *Audience:* Based on the targeted competencies and theme, determine the appropriate grade level for mentees and mentors. For example, do not select GS-15 mentees for a beginner-level topic.
- d. *Mentors* should possess breadth and depth of experience on the specified topics to provide valuable guidance and advice to mentees.
- e. *Expected Attendance:* Attendance can be estimated based on the theme.

III. Select a Venue

- a. The venue should meet all logistics requirements, including acoustic quality, size, and location
- b. *Logistics:* Consider the following for your venue:
 - i. How many tables fit into the space?
 - ii. How many chairs per table?
 - iii. Is there room for a head table and a podium?

- iv. Where will the registration table go?
 - v. What kind of media is available? (e.g., projector, Wi-Fi, etc.)
 - vi. What is the quality of the acoustics?
 - vii. Is the venue easily accessible?
 - viii. Do participants need to bring ID? What kind?
 - ix. Provide driving/parking/metro directions.
- c. *Date*: Allow at least 6-8 weeks identifying your date due to room availability. If possible, avoid Mondays and Fridays. Midweek usually allows for greater attendance due to flex scheduling. Take into consideration planning around holiday weeks and vacation scheduling.

NOTE: Logistics and venue will dictate how many attendants you can have. Consider iterating between Step II. e. and Step III. Until you converge on a good solution. For example, if your venue fits 50 people comfortably, but your expected attendance is 100 you will have to limit the number of attendants, or change the venue.

IV. Design the Event

- a. *Event Structure*: This is the format of the main event. The scope will be limited by the confines and logistics of the venue. There are multiple ways to structure the event. Answering the following questions will give you an event format:
- i. How many mentors? (assign their table(s))
 - ii. How many mentees? (assign their table(s))
 - iii. How many tables? (number each table)
 - iv. How many mentoring rounds? (typically 3 rounds)
 - v. How long is each round? (typically 30 minutes)
 - vi. Who rotates to another table, mentees or mentors?
 1. In either case, it is advised that each moving person is given a specific table assignment per round. Make sure seat assignments are done so that groups are broken up (i.e., separate people from the same agency)
 2. Advantages of Mentors rotating: This is ideal for a small space since less people are moving around. Gives mentees more time with each other at the same table.
 3. Advantage of Mentees rotating: Mentees have the opportunity to interact with more participants and can broaden their network more.
 - vii. Will all mentors have different talking points each round, or will they focus on a specific topic and discuss it for each round?

1. Advantage of different topics: Mentors engage in a different conversation each round with different people.
 2. Advantage of a single topic: Mentors hone their message by discussing the same topic. Also, mentors have less to prepare for.
- viii. How much time between sessions? Is one minute enough for people to move, or do you want to afford them extra time to network between sessions or carry on their conversations from the previous round?

V. Registration System

- a. A registration system should be set up once the event design is complete. This will be needed to keep a list of all attendants and VIPs. It will also be useful on event day.
- b. Different methods exist to handle registration:
 - i. *Email and spreadsheet*: Handle all registration via email and keep track of attendants in a spreadsheet. The advantage of this method is that you organize the system the way you want to. For large events, consider an automated system.
 - ii. *On-line*: There are numerous free on-line event tools that may be used. These systems provide automated registration, messaging capabilities, reminder capability, and automated list generation. The advantage of this approach is that it allows the project manager to focus on the event.

VI. Recruit Speakers, Mentors, Mentees

- a. *Keynote Speaker*: Consider a keynote speaker who will convey a good message to the audience.
- b. *VIPs*: Contact mentors and speakers directly via email and phone. Different people prefer different methods of communication so try both. Seek recruiting guidance from leadership. Keep in mind that these people are busy and may not respond immediately.
- c. *Marketing*: Develop marketing material to attract people to your event.
 - i. A flyer with registration information, event date, time, and place, and the event theme.
 1. Post flyers in heavily visited locations.
 2. Send flyers to the targeted audience
 3. Send to senior leadership to disseminate to their staff
 - ii. Post a message on internal website/portal. Include information that you put on the flyer. The advantage of this is that your entire agency can see the message.

- iii. E-mail interested groups such as the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) Council or Learning Development Office.

VII. Program Documents

The following items will need to be generated during the planning and design phase in preparation for the event:

- a. *Agenda (Attachment A)*:
 - i. A one-page agenda outlines your speakers and event flow, including timing of mentor rounds. Work on this as you consider your VIPs and event theme.
 - ii. Develop detailed agenda based on theme, venue, and targeted audience
- b. *Mentee Invitation*: Invite should provide available event details as well as an explanation of Flash Mentoring. **(Attachment B)** Alternatively, use web-based invitation tools.
- c. *VIP Invitations*: These invitations should be personalized to the specific person. **(Attachment C)** Alternatively, place a phone call to the VIP(s) and follow up with an email message.
- d. *Registration Confirmation*: Include pertinent information regarding the event, such as address, directions, any special instructions, etc. **(Attachment D)**
- e. *Meet your mentors*: Request biographies and a JPG picture of the mentors. The biographies should be brief; no more than one to two paragraphs. The Meet Your Mentors handout is a great way for mentees to keep track of who the mentors are. **(Attachment E)**
- f. *Meet Your VIPs*: Similar to the Meet Your Mentors, but a shorter document with only the principals identified on the agenda. **(Attachment F)**
- g. *Mentor Discussion Topics*: For each round of mentoring, provide suggested topics to discuss. The topics should be based on the event theme and the direction you want the rounds to proceed in. **(Attachment G)**
- h. *Flyer*: Used for marketing the event. Distribute this flyer throughout your agency. **(Attachment H)**
- i. *Evaluation*: Create a short evaluation form that includes a few questions to gauge whether the event is well received or not. Ask participants for suggested topics as well as suggestions for improving. **(Attachment I)**
- j. *Information Packets*: These packets will help all participants to familiarize themselves with the program. Packets can be hard copies or electronic and should include:
 - i. Agenda
 - ii. Meet Your Mentors
 - iii. Mentor Contact List
 - iv. Discussion Topics (MENTORS ONLY)
 - v. Evaluations Forms

Event Day

Below is a list of tasks to be completed on Event Day.

1. Decorate tables (if applicable) and number each table.
2. Setup a table with containers of water and drinking cups for participants.
3. Test sound system to ensure it is working properly. Any issues should be solved before people attendants arrive.
4. Designate a registration team and start registration for mentees and mentors a half hour before the event starts. During registration:
 - a. Hand out seating assignments to all participants. See section IV.a.vi, page 3
 - b. Hand out Mentee and Mentor Information Packets
 - c. Alternatively, place materials at the table (see section VII for a list of documents)
5. Team leader to greet VIPs. Introduce the VIPs to each other and walk them to their seat.
6. Designate a team member to greet the Mentors and walk them to the registration table. Show them to their table.
7. Team leader to begin the event with opening remarks:
 - a. Thank everyone for attending
 - b. Introduce Keynote speaker or guest
8. After Keynote Speaker, Team leader to thank Keynote speaker transition to program overview.
9. Give the program overview (purpose of event; importance of time and other instructions).
 - a. Purpose of event
 - b. Describe Structure of event. For example, 3 rounds, 30 minutes each, at end of each round, rotate to new table.
 - c. Discuss event topic and discussion topics per round.
 - d. Remind people to keep the conversation flowing
10. Start mentoring!
11. Designate team members to observe, monitor and signal the mentees to change tables. Use a stop watch and/or auditory signal (bell/buzzer). For example, for each 30 minute round, give a 5 minute warning and then a signal at completion.
12. Upon completion of the event, the team leader addresses the audience. Make sure to:
 - a. Congratulate everyone for their participation
 - b. Encourage mentees to continue conversations
 - c. Ask all attendants to complete an evaluation.

Final Tasks:

1. Collect all evaluations: Evaluations are the only way to know whether the event was a success or not. Make sure you get everyone to submit one. Have extra copies on hand to have them complete it on their way out the door.
2. Clean-up the room, pack up supplies and thank hosting agency or office.

Post-Event Actions

Complete the following within a week of the event:

1. Follow-up with a thank you e-mail or letter (using agency letterhead) to all the participants: thank them for their participation and encourage further feedback in addition to the evaluations that were submitted. Make sure to tie in remarks made by the Keynote speaker as well as the topics of discussion.
2. Send an e-mail or letter (using agency letterhead) to all the mentors: thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to offer career advice to the mentees. Let them know that if another Flash Mentoring event is planned they may be asked to participate.
3. Review and analyze the evaluations:
 - Create a summary sheet of all the comments
 - Include averages for each question
 - Document all comments and submit Memo to leadership.