



Army Strategist Association

Mentee Workbook

Prepared for the Army Strategist Association by PROMOTE
Reviewed by Dr. W. Brad Johnson, PhD
Professor of Psychology
U.S. Naval Academy and Johns Hopkins University

All errors are the responsibility of PROMOTE & ASA
© 2018 PROMOTE, Inc.
A 501(c)(3) Organization



Mentoring Matters

People are the Army's most important resource and their development is the responsibility of every leader. However, superior-subordinate relationships are naturally constrained because evaluation requirements inherently limit what subordinates will share and the Army/Joint Force is too big for any individual to know everything. Outside mentors provide important, complementary feedback and development beyond what supervisors can provide.

Uniformed and civilian Army strategists have opportunities to serve an extremely broad range of activities at the operational and strategic levels. No one can be an expert at everything a strategist could do. Every job will develop some skills while neglecting others. Those serving as speechwriters will not develop the skills necessary to produce war plans and visa-versa. Becoming a well-rounded strategist requires identifying your own shortfalls and improving them. **This mentorship program's primary purpose is to help Army strategists develop the skills they need to meet their personal goals, which will ultimately help the Army and DoD succeed.**

Mentorship works best when it is voluntary on both sides. Mentors who want to give back and make the Army stronger. Mentees who want to develop themselves for future success. Good mentorship cannot be forced, which is why this program is entirely voluntary. We operate outside official channels to allow a broader range of mentors and a low-threat environment.

The Army Strategist Association and Army Strategist Proponent (DAMO-SSF) attempt to create opportunities for serendipitous mentoring through social events and other gatherings. These events provide opportunities for mentoring moments without long-term expectations. This program provides an opportunity to connect individuals who would not normally interact for a longer-term relationship. Some connections will fail, but many others will work. Mentees should have mentors outside this program and mentors will have other mentees as well.

Thank you for your service. We look forward to working with you.

Respectfully,



Benjamin J. Fernandes
President, Army Strategist Association

General Guidelines

Your decision to participate in the Army Strategist Association Mentorship Program designed by PROMOTE is a great step toward achieving your professional goals. You will get out of this professional connection what you put into it. This workbook provides some guidance and advice on making the most of your experience.

1. Be ready to work at the relationship

Initiate contact with your mentor at least once per month and provide him/her an update on your life and career progress.

Mentorship Point #1
Good mentorship relationships take time and effort.

You should get to know your mentor as a person – ask about interests and hobbies, motivations for joining the military, his/her branch, family, etc. The strongest and longest-lasting mentoring relationships occur based on frequent interaction, affinity, and trust built over time.

2. Use time wisely

Respond to your mentor's communication in a timely manner (we encourage within 24-48 hours, understanding that communication can be more difficult during pre-deployment training and deployments). It is helpful for your mentor to know ahead of time when these major evolutions occur. "Managing up" and communicating with seniors is an important skill this program will help you develop. Additionally, set aside time in your schedule to meet with your mentor (in person or through your pre-determined electronic medium) and defer to your mentor's schedule when possible. Your mentor is volunteering his/her time and all of them are incredibly busy.

3. Be prepared for your meetings

Take the time to craft thoughtful questions and don't hesitate to ask personal questions you think relate to work/life balance. We ask our mentors to share their challenges and successes. Although your life and career may not "mirror" your mentor's, many of them have sacrificed personally to achieve their goals and you can learn from their experiences and hopefully avoid some of their mistakes.

4. Be discreet

You and your mentor should be extremely transparent regarding your professional mentoring relationship and participation in this program. However, at times, both you and your mentor will likely share information about your experiences in the military that you will wish to remain private. It is excellent practice to ask your mentor what identifying information he or she is comfortable with you disclosing to your colleagues, family, and friends about his/her name, rank, and career field (i.e. you may have a mentor who is in a Special Mission Unit or politically sensitive position - only refer to them with the wording they provide). Likewise, we encourage you to be upfront and honest with your mentor when you share something you wish to remain confidential. Demonstrate prudence and professionalism. A betrayal of trust could undermine your connection and lead to either party dissolving the mentoring agreement.

5. Thank your mentor after each conversation

They have made a commitment to helping you. Army Strategist Association mentors have signed on to the program out of an intrinsic motivation to pay it forward. They have a deep love for the nation and our military and want to see the next generation of leaders like you succeed for the country's benefit.

Contact the Army Strategist Association with questions/concerns at any time. If you have any issues connecting with your mentor, please reach out to us at admin@armystrategist.org.

Mentorship Point #2 View feedback as a gift.

Leaders don't always receive honest feedback. It's important you genuinely ask for feedback and ways to improve, not just from your mentor but from other colleagues you respect. The more you ask for and graciously accept feedback, the faster you'll learn. Additionally, it's likely others will respect your openness and willingness to grow.

Preparing for the First Meeting

Once you have confirmation ASA has found a suitable mentor, you should send your mentor an email to set up your first meeting. Here is a sample note:

Rank/last name,

Sir/Ma'am, thank you for your commitment to mentoring me and participating in my leadership development. I look forward to learning from you. Please let me know your availability over the next two weeks for an initial in-person meeting or phone call. I am normally available on [SUNDAYS] and unavailable on [SATURDAYS] but will work around your schedule.

*I am most interested in better understanding how to develop strategy/work with non-DOD partners/balance work/family/etc. [**Just your top priority**]*

Also, please let me know if you would like me to send any additional information about myself or any items I should have available for our first meeting.

Respectfully,

Your rank/last name

You should spend time thinking about mentoring before you have your first discussion with your mentor. Below are some questions to get you started.

Have you ever had a formal or informal mentor (a coach, colleague, family member, friend, etc.) who took you “under their wing” and/or “showed you the ropes”? If yes, how did this individual help you achieve a goal or support you?

List at least three specific challenges you face or areas you want to improve. Be ready to discuss these with your Mentor.

1.)

2.)

3.)

What are some specific expectations you have of your Mentor? Please think back to your application. What were the key areas you wanted to develop (i.e. leading teams, your next positions, executive presence, conflict mitigation, etc.)? How could your Mentor assist you with those goals?

First Meeting

Mentorship Point #3

Be open-minded, teachable, and willing to learn.

You and your mentor may not have a lot in common on a personal level, but they want to develop the next generation of national security professionals. If you want to become a better and more influential strategist or more successful by your definition, remain open-minded and listen. There are a lot of lessons your mentor will share that may have a profound impact on your future choices.

Your first meeting's focus should be on you and your mentor getting to know one another. Be prepared to ask lots of questions and to share personal and professional challenges. As your mentor gets to know you, your aspirations, and your challenges, they will be better positioned to help you charge ahead.

- We encourage you to share your challenges, whether they're with specific individuals, organizations, or family matters. The more your mentor knows you, the better advice they can provide. Just as you should exercise discretion, we have asked your mentor to do the same. Remember – your mentor wants to see you succeed. The more honest you are, the more likely you are to receive constructive feedback.
- Sooner is better: Your first meeting should occur within 2-3 weeks of your connection.
- Face-to-face is best, but many of us are deployed at any given moment or you and your mentor may be stationed at different locations. With technology today, there are multiple ways you can video or phone conference. Determine what mediums work best for you and your mentor.
- Business is personal and built on trust, especially when working across organizations. Our success around the world often comes down to one word – relationships. You and your mentor may be from different services or career fields, but success in national security policy inherently depends on networks and relationships. Our increasingly joint and interagency operations require working alongside and learning from individuals who may be very different from you. Get to know your mentor, ask questions, listen, and share your own stories.
- Set expectations. What does your mentor expect from you and what do you expect from them? Will you meet in person or stick to phone calls? How often? Write the information down in your mentoring agreement at the end of this

packet. **One of the best things you can do as a rising star is to ensure leaders know you are paying attention.**

- Make it official. Use the separate mentorship agreement to codify your mentee/mentor relationship. Please inform the Army Strategist Association when the agreement is complete. You may share it with the ASA if you desire.

Getting to Know Your Mentor

Your conversations with your mentor should occur and evolve organically. If you're wondering how to get started or what's appropriate, below are some solid questions you could think about using to get started.

1. What is your mentor's role within their organization?

You may know a lot about strategy and policy but the field is so broad no one can know everything. As you try to determine the career path you want to take, it's helpful to gain a deep appreciation for all aspects of and opportunities in the strategy world, the options are more diverse than for most other career fields.

2. What were your mentor's most influential jobs?

What deployments or overseas experiences has your mentor completed? Are there any upcoming deployments or overseas moves expected in the coming year?

3. What are your mentor's major responsibilities?

How much of time do they spend on operations, admin, personnel issues, planning, etc.?

4. What does a typical day look like for your mentor?

One of PROMOTE's mentors (a Special Forces LTC, Battalion Commander) leaves his house at 0500 each morning and leaves the office NLT 1700 to spend time with his family. You can learn a great deal about your mentor by understanding their personal and professional battle rhythms.

5. What are the most satisfying aspects of your mentor's profession?

What are the least satisfying? Do their peers share those same sentiments? This will give you a sense of how leaders view their tasks and responsibilities. Along the same lines, what is one of the most difficult situations your mentor has had to resolve? What is the toughest decision your mentor made (personal or professional).

You may be able to commiserate with and ask your mentor how they deal with the aspects that are the most challenging.

6. What is the culture of your mentor's workplace?

Are individuals encouraged to have work/life balance or are they expected to work long hours? How does your mentor set the example or tone?

7. What experiences or opportunities did your mentor have?

Perhaps your mentor was pursuing a degree, other professional training, or part of a unique job when they were junior that had a significant impact on their life or career?

Be ready to share as much about yourself as you feel comfortable so your mentor can get to know you as a three-dimensional person.

Mentorship Point #4 Be forward-thinking.

Focus on building your network and foundation for the future. Work to define and clarify your short-term and long-term goals, both personal and professional. As both you and your mentor begin to get a clearer idea of where you want to go, your mentor will find it easier to open doors for you and help you chart a way forward. Ask your mentor if they recommend any specific skill sets, knowledge, or abilities you should acquire to achieve your goals.

Program Guidelines

Below are positive actions you should take to foster a strong mentoring relationship.

- Treat your mentor and this relationship with respect, responsibility, and commitment.
- Get the most of this experience by putting in time and effort.
- Ask a lot of questions, tactfully and respectfully.
- Use your mentor to build out your professional network. Your mentor is a recognized leader or subject matter expert for some aspect of strategy or national security policy, whether they have been a commander, speechwriter, director on the National Security Council, plans writer, academic, or civilian policy maker. Your mentor likely knows people who may be instrumental in your career development – ask your mentor for introductions so you can learn from multiple people with varying perspectives.
- Ask for regular feedback from your mentor and expect honesty. Share a scenario that proved difficult or where you feel you could have done better. Your mentor can shed light as an objective third party on how it could have been handled differently to create a better outcome.
- If your mentor asks you to read something or do something, do it and provide feedback.
- Challenge yourself and work on improving your leadership skills.
- Give your mentor feedback on how the mentoring relationship is helping you meet your goals.
- Exercise extreme discretion. Your mentor will likely share personal information about their own life and experiences. You should keep and honor their trust and confidence in the same way you expect your mentor to preserve your own privacy.

Below are negative actions you should not take as they may erode the efficacy of a mentoring relationship.

- Think you're "too busy" to stay in touch with your mentor. No matter how busy you are, you can and should make time to develop yourself.
- Expect your mentor to get you your dream job. You still have a chain of command and your ASA mentor is not here to help you "buck the system" they should help you improve the system for all and succeed within the system.
- Expect your mentor to have all the answers. Although your mentor will likely know about some strategy positions you've never been exposed to they will not know them all and their main purpose is to help you think about what success means to you and develop the skills you need to develop and achieve your goals.
- Let fear or feeling like you're a burden dissuade you from contacting your mentor. Senior leaders truly enjoy when junior personnel ask them for their guidance and advice. Plus, every mentor and mentee is in this program voluntarily because they want to be mentors.
- Judge your mentor based on their service, rank, career field, or overseas experiences.
- Discuss your mentorship conversations with others without permission from your mentor.
- Mistake your mentor for a peer that you can simply complain to about your problems. Although your mentor can often help you find a productive way forward in a challenging circumstance, use your peer network when you just need to vent a bit!
- Don't let emotions get the best of you. We're not telling you to be a robot, but you are a national security professional. If you are having a difficult time dealing with an acute experience, whether professional or personal, we encourage you to share those experiences with your mentor but in a composed manner and with a purpose (i.e. asking for advice or thoughts on how to handle the situation).

Mentorship Point #5

Always remain professional and courteous in all manners of communication with your mentor or members of their staff.

If it's a small world, the strategist community, even including national security professionals outside DoD is tiny. You will probably run into your mentor or people they know in the future.

Talking Points

Beyond your initial conversation, here are some additional areas for you to discuss with your mentor as your mentoring relationship progresses.

Career exploration

- Broadening assignments to enrich your career path.
- Units you should look to join or experiences you should seek.
- If you're in the same location, ask your mentor if you can shadow them for a half-day or during a major evolution (i.e. General Officer engagement) so you can learn how they lead and manage.
- What are your mentor's goals and values and how do they fit with the career path they have chosen?

Academics/Education

- Ask your mentor about their academic/professional education pipeline and what they learned from it. There are more educational options and opportunities than you can complete, you want to focus on those options right for your goals.
- Ask your mentor what they read and why – both substance and format. Websites/journals/books, etc.?
 - Do they read mostly blogs? Academic Journals?

Professional organizations

- What organizations or affiliations might be helpful to your professional development?

International Insight

- What regions/countries should you focus on to maximize your knowledge of international affairs?
- What are some effective ways for you to demonstrate what you've learned during your studies/training?

Applications and Evaluations

- How can you accentuate your best skills and experiences in evaluations? Applications for new jobs/academic programs? Does your mentor have any examples to share?

Being a team-player

- What are the qualities your mentor looks for in an outstanding service member?

- Ask your mentor how important body language and facial expression are in how they perceive a team player.
- Ask your mentor to share some experiences of positive and negative relationships with previous commanders / military personnel and what they attribute to the success or challenges in the relationship.
- How can you sell your capabilities effectively without seeming arrogant or agitating your peers?

Next position

- What organizations does your mentor think have positive morale, unit culture, and atmosphere?
- What markers should you look for or what questions should you ask to understand a unit's culture?
- What are some do's and don'ts when inquiring about a new position?

Networking

- What are some good ways to start a professional conversation with someone from a different service or civilians?
- What are the best ways to continue these conversations? How do I keep from looking over-eager but still interested in maintaining a professional dialogue?
- How often does your mentor contact their mentors?
- What professional networking events does your mentor attend?

Executive Communications

- How can you appear confident (speaking or writing) without seeming overconfident?
- Based on your communication so far, ask your mentor how you could improve. Are you too relaxed, too rigid, non-descriptive, etc.?
- What are some typical communication mistakes your mentor has seen?
- Ask your mentor how they lead dispersed/interdisciplinary teams and any lessons learned.
- Ask your mentor about “over communication” (successful leaders keep their chain informed, both superiors and subordinates).

Moving up the chain

- What are the best ways to distinguish yourself from your peers?
- How should you approach your career if you hope to be in a leadership position someday?

General Topics

- Which challenging situations in your mentor's life led to personal growth and clarity?
- How can you continue to learn every day, even outside of work or training?
- What are some strategies your mentor uses for time management?
- What suggestions does your mentor have for managing stress?
- What suggestions does your mentor have for managing work/life responsibilities?

Mentorship Point #6
Be proactive and take initiative.

Mentoring is an active and engaging experience for both you and your mentor. Any mentoring relationship means both parties are learning from one another. You may be junior, but you should take the lead in contacting your mentor. Let your mentor know when you need guidance or advice. Always follow through on the items you discuss.

Handling Tough Scenarios

The Army Strategist Association has impressive mentors, but not every connection may go smoothly. Below are some possible scenarios that may arise and our thoughts on how to handle them. You are always encouraged to contact the Army Strategist Association with any questions/concerns.

Any situation involving harassment, discrimination, or misconduct should be reported immediately. If you feel you have been subjected to any of the above, please contact the Army Strategist Association immediately. Both the mentor and mentee must maintain professionalism at all times. Any evidence of failure to abide by this requirement will result in immediate removal from the program.

Scenario: Communication with your mentor seems awkward or impersonal.

Thoughts: Try using a different method of communication. We highly encourage our participants to meet in person if in the same location or to use video teleconference to make the experience more personal than using a phone. Email is a last resort and more so for coordination or for a quick question. If you find that your conversations get stuck in small talk, make sure you have a detailed plan for your meetings. Use this guide and your peer network to brainstorm some possible questions and topics you could discuss with your mentor. Reach out to the Army Strategist Association if the relationship continues to be a challenge and we will discuss options.

Scenario: Your mentor is giving you advice that you don't agree with.

Thoughts: Regardless of whether you agree with your mentor or not, it's always worthwhile to acknowledge your mentor's advice when making a decision. At the very least you will have thought through your situation from a different perspective. If you decide not to take your mentor's advice, let your mentor know that you appreciate their perspective but that you made the decision based on certain variables/circumstances. Ignoring your mentor or arguing with them is never productive or helpful to either of you and could negatively impact the mentoring relationship.

Scenario: Your mentor didn't show up for a meeting that you had scheduled and didn't notify you.

Thoughts: First off, we highly encourage you to schedule your meetings in advance but also to confirm a day or two prior to ensure your mentor is still on track. Remember, your mentor is probably in a command position or has a lot of leadership

responsibilities that could impact his or her ability to make the meeting. Ask your mentor if you can communicate with their Executive Officer, Executive Assistant, Office Manager, etc. to ensure they have your contact information in case there is a last-minute change. If you have taken all the steps to ensure the meeting will take place on time and your mentor still doesn't show up, follow up with your mentor immediately. Ask your mentor to suggest upcoming dates and times for your next meeting and if there is anyone they recommend you work subsequent calendar issues through in the future. If the situation continues, please contact the Army Strategist Association.

Scenario: You're concerned that your mentor is out of your career field or service and their guidance and advice doesn't seem to be relevant.

Thoughts: Continuing the mentorship connection is up to you and your mentor. The diversity of issues strategists must deal with means almost all career fields are relevant even if they do not appear to be at first – interdisciplinary work is a strategist core competency. One mentee indicated greater comfort discussing challenges with a mentor in a different career field because of the reduced probability of retribution or negative impacts. A challenging and successful career as a strategist – in uniform or out – builds upon joint assignments and perspectives. Ideally, a cross-functional or cross-service (uniform to civilian or vice-versa) mentor can uniquely assist you as a mentee. Now more than ever, building a diverse network is imperative to your professional growth and advancement. However, if you find your conversations are not very productive or helpful, you are encouraged to contact the Army Strategist Association and identify the aspects of the mentoring relationship that are lacking. We will work to match you with a new mentor if the problem persists.

Scenario: Your mentor provides feedback about how you are "perceived by others" that sound more like rumors. It is upsetting and makes you feel uncomfortable or judged.

Thoughts: People across all sectors of society often lament they don't receive constructive and/or critical feedback because senior leaders are worried about a negative reaction and often want to take the easy way out. However, successful leaders know you grow from both positive reinforcement and critical feedback.

While you may be embarrassed or upset about the feedback your mentor has provided, ultimately you must remember that your mentor is looking out for your best interests to help you grow and develop as a leader. Your mentor wants to ensure you become or continue to be a successful strategist. If you have concerns or reservations about the feedback because it's off-putting or difficult to hear, don't be afraid to discuss them with your mentor. Having those difficult conversations, respectfully and tactfully, can often strengthen mentoring relationships. Additionally, reputation management is important (your reputation proceeds you in the national security community) and your mentor will likely provide guidance and support that ensures you continue to grow a positive network.

Participants Responsibility Statement and Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The purpose of the Army Strategist Association mentorship and leadership development program developed by PROMOTE is to give participants an opportunity to learn from leaders through a professional relationship outside the formal chain of command. The Army Strategist Association's limited role in the program is to collect and disseminate biographies of potential participants, facilitate communication between participants, and provide non-binding suggestions that may enhance a mentor/mentee relationship. The professional relationship is in effect from the time the matches made until a mentor/mentee terminates their involvement.

The participants are solely responsible for the worth and value they derive from the program. The Army Strategist Association encourages participants to initiate communication about once per month. Nonetheless, participants are solely responsible for maintaining and carrying out any communication and other activities as the participants deem appropriate in their discretion. The participants are solely responsible for their own actions and inactions related to the program, as well as accuracy and truthfulness of their representations to other participants. Neither the Army Strategist Association nor PROMOTE will provide supervision of any participants. The Army Strategist Association relies on communication and information from the participants and is not responsible for any false information provided by the participants.

The participants should communicate to the Army Strategist Association if there are any perceived or actual problems or issues related in any way to the program as immediately as possible. Participants should also notify the Army Strategist Association if their match participant is non-responsive or if the participant believes they are no longer able to adequately participate in the program. Any communication to the Army Strategist Association is not a substitute for the participant's responsibility to act in their own best interest and use independent judgment in making decisions, including but not limited to whether or not to continue with a particular match participant or participating in the program.

Any situation involving harassment, discrimination, or misconduct should be reported immediately. If you feel you have been subjected to any of the above, please contact the Army Strategist Association immediately. Both the mentor and mentee must maintain professionalism at all times. Any evidence of failure to abide by this requirement will result in immediate removal from the program.

It is the Army Strategist Association's policy that participants are free from discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment and sexual violence) and retaliation. Discrimination based on race, color, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion, age, ancestry, disability, genetic information, military status, or veteran status is prohibited. Participants who believe that they are victims or have been negatively impacted by such discrimination or harassment are encouraged to contact the Army Strategist Association immediately.

About the Army Strategist Association

Mission

The Army Strategist Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the study and practice of strategy and the role of the military element of power in achieving national strategic objectives. The goals of the Association are to:

- Support the U.S. Army proponent office for Functional Area 59 (FA59: Army Strategist) and Career Program 60 (CP60: Foreign Affairs/Strategic Planning Civilian) by advocating programs and activities in support of each.
- Preserve and foster a spirit of mentorship and fellowship among military and civilian persons whose past or current duties affiliate them with the strategic arts.
- Strengthen the community of strategists, enhance the study and practice of strategic art, and provide a forum to recognize excellence and the contributions of those in the community.



Please visit www.armystrategist.org to learn more. If you have any questions about this document or feedback on the Army Strategist Association (ASA), please contact us at admin@armystrategist.org.

PROMOTE

Mission

Strengthen the SOCOM enterprise by providing women a voluntary mentorship and leadership development program that retains and optimizes their talent.

PROMOTE Pillars

Educating Leaders

Provide executive leadership development training through partnerships with academic institutions, professors, and researchers

Connecting Leaders

Cultivate professional mentoring relationships between junior women and senior leaders, both *men and women*, who are committed to developing and retaining talent

Please visit www.promoteleadership.org to learn more. If you have any questions or feedback on PROMOTE, please contact us at founders@promoteleadership.org.



© 2017 PROMOTE, Inc.

PROMOTE and the Army Strategist Association are section 501(c)(3) organization that are in no way affiliated with the U.S. Government, U.S. Department of Defense, or the Department of Veteran Affairs. No U.S. Government agency or any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces has reviewed or approved the information presented. Participation in any PROMOTE or Army Strategist Association programs or activities or use of any materials cannot and will not influence promotion or retention by any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces or any other U.S. Government organization.