



# **SCHOLARS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

## *PROFESSIONAL TRACK*

## **Session 6: Enhancing Professional Skills**

Welcome to Session 6, which will be covered in weeks 11 and 12. This session focuses on helping your mentee develop and enhance their professional skills to excel in their new workplace. This is the last session.

### **Recap**

- Review progress from the previous session on Interview Part 2 and discuss any tasks your mentee has completed.
- Address any questions or challenges they faced.
- Celebrate their achievement of securing a job and transition to discussing how they can thrive in their new role

### **Activity 1: Setting SMART Professional Goals**

#### **Goal setting**

Now that the mentees have secured a job, it's crucial to guide them in setting SMART goals to help them grow in their careers. Setting these goals will provide direction, focus, and motivation, ensuring continuous professional development and career advancement. Encourage them to identify goals that align with their career aspirations and job responsibilities.

#### **Steps to setting SMART goals**

##### **1. Specific**

- Encourage mentees to define clear and specific goals. Ambiguous goals can lead to confusion and lack of direction.
- Example: Instead of "Improve my skills," a specific goal would be "Complete an advanced Excel course within the next three months."

##### **2. Measurable**

- Ensure that goals are measurable so mentees can track their progress and stay motivated.
- Example: "Increase sales by 15% in the next quarter" is a measurable goal.

##### **3. Achievable**

- Goals should be realistic and attainable given the mentee's current skills, resources, and constraints.
- Example: "Learn basic coding to automate daily tasks" is achievable if the mentee has some prior exposure to coding.

##### **4. Relevant**



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- Goals should align with the mentee's career aspirations and current job responsibilities. They should add value to their professional growth.
- Example: "Develop project management skills by leading a small team project" is relevant for someone aiming to move into management.

### 5. Time-bound

- Each goal should have a deadline to create a sense of urgency and help prioritize tasks.
- Example: "Earn a certification in digital marketing within six months" is time-bound.

## Examples of professional goals

### Short-term goals

1. **Skill development** - Complete a certification course related to their job within the next three months.
2. **Networking** - Attend at least one industry conference or networking event each quarter.
3. **Performance** - Improve efficiency in a specific task or process by 20% within the next six months.

### Long-term goals

1. **Career advancement** - Aim for a promotion to a higher position within the next two years.
2. **Leadership skills** - Develop leadership skills by leading a cross-functional project within the next year.
3. **Specialization** - Become a subject matter expert in a specific area of their field within the next three years.

## Importance of setting professional goals

**1. Direction and focus** - Setting goals provides clear direction and helps mentees focus their efforts on what truly matters for their career progression.

**2. Motivation** - Achievable goals can boost motivation as mentees experience progress and success, driving them to continue improving.

**3. Career growth** - Well-defined goals facilitate continuous learning and professional development, essential for career advancement.

**4. Performance improvement** - Clear goals help mentees identify key areas of their job to improve, leading to better performance and job satisfaction.

**5. Accountability** - Setting goals creates accountability. Mentees are more likely to follow through on their commitments and achieve their objectives.



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### **Activity 2: Building Effective Communication Skills**

#### **Tips for effective communication**

##### **1. Active listening**

- Pay full attention to the speaker without interrupting.
- Show that you are listening through nodding or verbal affirmations like "I see" or "I understand."
- Reflect back what the speaker has said to ensure understanding and show empathy.

##### **2. Clear and concise messaging**

- Be clear about the purpose of your communication.
- Avoid jargon and overly complex language unless it's appropriate for the audience.
- Keep your messages concise and to the point, focusing on the key information.

##### **3. Non-verbal communication**

- Maintain good eye contact to show engagement and confidence.
- Use appropriate facial expressions and body language to convey your message.
- Be mindful of your tone of voice, as it can significantly impact how your message is received.

##### **4. Adaptability**

- Adjust your communication style to suit your audience. Be more formal with senior professionals and more casual with peers, if appropriate.
- Be aware of cultural differences that may affect communication styles and preferences.

##### **5. Empathy and emotional intelligence**

- Show empathy by understanding and acknowledging the feelings and perspectives of others.
- Manage your emotions and respond to others' emotions effectively to maintain positive interactions.

##### **6. Feedback**

- Provide constructive feedback that is specific, focused on behavior, and offers suggestions for improvement.
- Be open to receiving feedback and use it to improve your communication skills.

##### **7. Open-ended questions**

- Use open-ended questions to encourage dialogue and gain deeper insights.
- Avoid yes/no questions if you want a more detailed response.



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### **8. Preparation**

- Plan and organize your thoughts before communicating, especially for important conversations or presentations.
- Anticipate questions or concerns that may arise and prepare your responses.

### **9. Consistency and reliability**

- Be consistent in your messaging and follow through on your commitments.
- Ensure that your verbal and non-verbal communications align to avoid mixed messages.

### **10. Respect and politeness**

- Show respect to others by being polite, even in disagreements.
- Use positive language and avoid negative or confrontational words.

### **11. Effective written communication**

- Proofread your emails and documents for clarity, grammar, and tone.
- Use bullet points and headings to make written communication easier to follow.
- Be mindful of your audience and tailor your writing style accordingly.

### **12. Use of technology**

- Utilize communication tools effectively, whether it's email, instant messaging, or video conferencing.
- Be aware of the appropriate use of each tool and the best practices for virtual communication.

### **13. Body language awareness**

- Be conscious of your body language and how it may be perceived by others.
- Avoid closed body language, such as crossed arms, which may be interpreted as defensive.

### **14. Conflict resolution**

- Approach conflicts calmly and seek to understand the other person's perspective.
- Focus on finding a solution rather than placing blame.

### **15. Continuous improvement**

- Regularly seek opportunities to improve your communication skills through training, practice, and feedback.
- Reflect on your communication experiences and identify areas for improvement.

### **Importance of effective communication**

- **Collaboration** - Effective communication fosters better teamwork and collaboration, leading to increased productivity and a positive work environment.



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- **Professional relationships** - Clear communication helps build strong professional relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and clients.
- **Conflict resolution** - Good communication skills are essential for resolving conflicts and addressing issues constructively.

## Activity 3: Time Management and Productivity

### Tips for Time Management and Productivity

#### 1. Prioritize tasks

- **Eisenhower Matrix** - Categorize tasks into four quadrants: urgent and important, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, and neither urgent nor important.
- **ABC Method** - Rank tasks as A (highest priority), B (medium priority), and C (lowest priority).

#### 2. Plan and schedule

- **Daily To-Do lists** - Write a list of tasks to accomplish each day.
- **Time blocking** - Allocate specific time slots for different activities.
- **Weekly reviews** - Assess your progress and plan for the upcoming week.

#### 3. Avoid multitasking

- Focus on one task at a time to improve efficiency and reduce errors.
- Use techniques like the **Pomodoro Technique** (25 minutes of focused work followed by a 5-minute break) to maintain concentration.

#### 5. Eliminate distractions

- Identify and remove sources of distraction, such as turning off notifications or finding a quiet workspace.
- Use apps or tools that block distracting websites during work hours.

#### 6. Delegate and outsource

- Identify tasks that can be delegated to others.
- Outsource tasks that are not within your core competencies or that can be done more efficiently by someone else.

#### 7. Use technology

- **Productivity apps** - Use apps like Trello, Asana, or Todoist to manage tasks and projects.
- **Calendar tools** - Use Google Calendar or Outlook to schedule meetings and deadlines.
- **Time tracking** - Use tools like Toggl or Clockify to monitor how you spend your time.

#### 8. Break tasks into smaller steps



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- Divide larger tasks into manageable sub-tasks to make them less overwhelming and easier to complete.
- Set milestones for long-term projects to track progress.

### **9. Take regular breaks**

- Schedule short breaks to rest and recharge, which can improve focus and productivity.
- Use techniques like the **Pomodoro Technique** to balance work and rest periods.

### **10. Practice self-care**

- Ensure you get adequate sleep, exercise, and maintain a healthy diet to keep your energy levels high.
- Manage stress through activities like meditation, yoga, or hobbies.

### **11. Learn to say No**

- Avoid overcommitting by assessing your current workload before agreeing to take on new tasks.
- Politely decline tasks that do not align with your priorities or goals.

### **12. Review and reflect**

- At the end of each day or week, review what you've accomplished.
- Reflect on what worked well and what could be improved to adjust your strategies accordingly.

### **13. Maintain an organized workspace**

- Keep your workspace tidy and free of clutter to minimize distractions.
- Use organizational tools like folders, trays, or digital tools to keep documents and materials in order.

### **14. Continuous improvement**

- Regularly assess your time management and productivity strategies to identify areas for improvement.
- Stay open to trying new techniques and tools that might enhance your efficiency.

### **15. Develop a routine**

- Establish daily routines for starting and ending your workday to create consistency and structure.
- Incorporate regular review sessions into your routine to keep track of your progress and adjust plans as needed.

## **Importance of time management**



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- **Efficiency** - Effective time management allows mentees to complete tasks efficiently, reducing stress and avoiding burnout.
- **Work-Life balance** - Managing time well helps maintain a healthy work-life balance, essential for overall well-being and job satisfaction.
- **Meeting deadlines** - Proper time management ensures that mentees meet deadlines and deliver high-quality work consistently.

## Activity 4: Seeking Feedback and Continuous Improvement

### Tips for Seeking Feedback and Continuous Improvement

#### 1. Be proactive in seeking feedback

- **Regularly request feedback** - Don't wait for performance reviews; seek feedback frequently to understand your progress and areas for improvement.
- **Ask specific questions** - When seeking feedback, ask specific questions to get detailed and actionable insights.

#### 2. Choose the right people

- **Select diverse sources** - Seek feedback from supervisors, peers, subordinates, and clients to get a well-rounded perspective.
- **Identify knowledgeable individuals** - Choose people who have observed your work closely and have the expertise to provide valuable insights.

#### 3. Create a safe environment

- **Encourage honest feedback** - Let people know that you value their honest opinions and won't react defensively.
- **Foster open communication** - Build a culture of trust and openness where feedback is freely exchanged.

#### 4. Be receptive to feedback

- **Listen actively** - Pay attention to the feedback without interrupting or defending yourself.
- **Show appreciation** - Thank the person for their feedback, showing that you value their input.

#### 5. Analyze and reflect

- **Reflect on feedback** - Take time to reflect on the feedback received and how it aligns with your own perceptions.
- **Identify patterns** - Look for recurring themes or issues in the feedback to understand areas that need significant improvement.



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### 6. Develop an Action Plan

- **Set SMART goals** - Based on the feedback, set Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals to address the areas of improvement.
- **Create a plan** - Outline the steps you will take to improve and set deadlines for achieving your goals.

### 7. Implement changes

- **Take immediate action** - Start working on the feedback immediately to show commitment to continuous improvement.
- **Monitor progress** - Regularly review your progress towards your goals and adjust your plan as needed.
- **Follow-up** - After implementing changes, seek feedback to gauge the effectiveness of your actions.
- **Continuous loop**: Make feedback a continuous part of your routine to keep improving and adapting.

### 8. Learn from mistakes

- **Embrace failures** - View mistakes as learning opportunities and use feedback to avoid repeating them.
- **Reflect and adjust** - After a setback, reflect on what went wrong and how you can improve in the future.

### 9. Develop a growth mindset

- **Embrace challenges** - View challenges as opportunities to grow rather than obstacles.
- **Be open to learning** - Stay open to new ideas and continuously seek knowledge to improve.

### 10. Network and learn from others

- **Join professional groups** - Participate in professional groups and forums to learn from peers and industry leaders.
- **Mentorship** - Seek mentorship from experienced professionals who can provide guidance and feedback.

### 11. Self-assessment

- **Regularly self-reflect** - Assess your own performance and identify areas for improvement.
- **Set personal benchmarks** - Set personal performance benchmarks and strive to exceed them.

### 12. Stay updated with industry trends





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- **Read industry publications** - Stay informed about the latest developments and best practices in your field.
- **Follow thought leaders** - Follow industry thought leaders on social media and professional networks to gain insights.

### **Importance of seeking feedback**

- **Self-awareness** - Feedback helps mentees become more self-aware of their strengths and areas needing improvement.
- **Professional growth** - Constructive feedback provides valuable insights that can guide professional development and enhance skills.
- **Building trust** - Actively seeking feedback demonstrates a commitment to improvement and builds trust with supervisors and colleagues.

### **Feedback Form**

Please fill out the feedback forms at the end of your meeting. Share the mentee feedback form with your mentee to fill out as well. Your input helps us improve the program, and we appreciate your assistance.

Mentor feedback form - <https://airtable.com/app9D3AZKrWuuIryo/shrEc8sDgcxbci9Wt>

Mentee feedback form - <https://airtable.com/app9D3AZKrWuuIryo/shrH0VAQT8he1C3kx>

### **Closing the Mentorship Program**

Since this is your final session with your mentee, you have the option of deciding how you'd like to close the mentorship program. If you'd like, please provide your mentee with a way to stay in touch with you after the program, should they want to ask questions or update you on their job or education progress.

Also, kindly remind them of the upcoming closing ceremony, tentatively scheduled for Friday, October 25th, where mentors, mentees, GAB members, and WMI staff will gather to mark the end of the program.