



# SCHOLARS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

*PROFESSIONAL TRACK - Mentee*

## Session 6: Enhancing Professional Skills

Welcome to Session 6! Congratulations on reaching the final session of this mentorship program! This session focuses on thriving in your new role and building habits that lead to long-term career success.

### Recap

- Reflect on your journey through previous sessions, especially Interview Preparation and Mock Interviews.
  - Transition to setting professional goals, improving communication, and managing time effectively.
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## Activity 1: Setting SMART professional goals

### Why Set Goals?

Now that you've secured a job, it's crucial to set SMART goals to help you grow in your career. Setting goals ensures that you maintain focus, motivation, and progress in your career. SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—serve as a roadmap to success.

### Key areas for goal-setting

1. Skill development - Learn new technologies or processes relevant to your role.
2. Performance metrics - Improve productivity or reduce errors in tasks.
3. Networking and visibility - Build relationships with colleagues and industry professionals.
4. Leadership and collaboration - Lead initiatives or mentor newer employees.
5. Certifications and credentials - Earn certifications to strengthen your qualifications.



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### Steps to setting SMART goals

#### 1. Specific

- Define clear and specific goals. Avoid ambiguous goals to prevent 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

- Make sure your goals can be measured to track progress.
- Example: "Increase sales by 15% in the next quarter."

#### 3. Achievable

- Set realistic and attainable goals based on your skills and resources.
- Example: "Learn basic coding to automate daily tasks."

#### 4. Relevant

- Align your goals with your career aspirations and current job responsibilities.
- Example: "Develop project management skills by leading a small team project."

#### 5. Time-bound

- Include a deadline to create urgency and help prioritize tasks.
- Example: "Earn a certification in digital marketing within six months."

### Examples of professional goals

#### Short-term goals

- Skill Development - Complete a certification course related to your job within three months.
- Networking - Attend at least one industry conference or networking event each quarter.
- Performance - Improve efficiency in a specific task or process by 20% within six months.

#### Long-term goals

- Career advancement - Aim for a promotion to a higher position within two years.
- Leadership skills - Develop leadership skills by leading a cross-functional project within a year.
- Specialization - Become a subject matter expert in your field within three years.



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### **Importance of setting professional goals**

1. Direction and focus - Provides clarity and focus for career progression.
2. Motivation - Achievable goals boost motivation and drive improvement.
3. Career growth - Facilitates continuous learning and professional development.
4. Performance improvement - Identifies key areas to enhance job performance.
5. Accountability - Encourages follow-through and achieving objectives.

### **Additional tips for goal-setting**

- Track progress - Use tools like Trello, Notion, or Google Sheets to monitor tasks and milestones.
  - Break down big goals - Divide long-term goals into smaller steps for easy execution.
  - Seek mentorship - Continue engaging with mentors or industry leaders for guidance.
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## **Activity 2: Building effective communication skills**

### **Communication in the workplace**

Effective communication builds trust, enhances collaboration, and improves efficiency.

### **Tips for effective communication**

1. Storytelling in communication
  - Frame your points as stories to make them relatable and memorable.
2. Handling difficult conversations
  - Stay calm, listen actively, and focus on solutions.
3. Email etiquette
  - Use clear subject lines, professional greetings, and concise messages.
4. Presentations and public speaking
  - Use visual aids (slides) and rehearse beforehand to boost confidence.
5. Cross-cultural communication
  - Be mindful of cultural differences when working with global teams.
6. Feedback conversations
  - Focus on constructive language—start with strengths, then discuss areas for improvement.



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7. Active listening
  - Pay attention without interrupting.
  - Show you're listening through nodding or affirmations.
  - Reflect back what was said to ensure understanding.
8. Clear and concise messaging
  - Be clear about the purpose of your communication.
  - Avoid jargon and keep messages concise.
9. Non-verbal Communication
  - Maintain eye contact and use positive body language.
  - Be mindful of tone and facial expressions.
10. Adaptability
  - Adjust your communication style for your audience.
  - Consider cultural differences in communication.
11. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence
  - Acknowledge others' feelings and perspectives.
  - Manage your emotions and respond thoughtfully.
12. Feedback
  - Give constructive feedback focused on improvement.
  - Be open to receiving feedback and use it to improve.
13. Preparation
  - Plan your thoughts before important conversations.
  - Anticipate potential questions and concerns.
14. Respect and politeness
  - Use positive language and be polite, even in disagreements.
15. Effective written communication
  - Proofread for clarity and tone.
  - Use headings and bullet points for readability.
16. Conflict resolution
  - Approach conflicts calmly and seek solutions.
17. Continuous improvement
  - Regularly practice and seek feedback to enhance communication skills.

### **Importance of effective communication**

- Collaboration - Enhances teamwork and productivity.
- Professional relationships - Builds strong relationships with colleagues and clients.
- Conflict resolution - Essential for resolving conflicts constructively.



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### Key communication tools and practices

- **Apps** - Slack, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams for virtual communication.
  - **Practice Tools** - Record yourself presenting and use tools like Toastmasters for practice.
  - **Resource Library** - TED Talks and podcasts like *The Art of Communication* for insights.
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## Activity 3: Time Management and Productivity

### Time management techniques

1. Time blocking
  - Allocate specific time slots for tasks to avoid interruptions.
2. Pomodoro technique
  - Work in focused 25-minute intervals, followed by 5-minute breaks.
3. Break Tasks into Smaller Steps
  - Divide large tasks into manageable parts and set milestones.
4. Batching tasks
  - Group similar tasks to minimize context-switching.
5. Weekly reviews
  - Reflect on your achievements and adjust priorities for the upcoming week.
6. Digital decluttering
  - Organize files and emails to improve efficiency.
7. Prioritize tasks
  - Use tools like the Eisenhower Matrix to categorize tasks by urgency and importance.
8. Plan and schedule
  - Create daily to-do lists and allocate time for each task.
9. Avoid multitasking
  - Focus on one task at a time for better efficiency.
10. Eliminate distractions
  - Turn off notifications and use productivity apps to stay focused.
11. Delegate and outsource
  - Assign tasks that others can handle to save time.
12. Use technology
  - Utilize tools like Trello and Google Calendar for organization.
13. Practice self-care
  - Maintain a healthy work-life balance to stay energized.



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### **Importance of time management**

- Efficiency - Complete tasks effectively and reduce stress.
- Work-life balance - Maintain balance for well-being and job satisfaction.
- Meeting deadlines - Ensure consistency and high-quality results.

### **Pro tools for productivity**

- **Todoist** - Task management.
- **Trello or Asana** - Project tracking.
- **Google Calendar** - Scheduling tasks and reminders.
- **RescueTime** - Tracking productivity and time usage.

### **Overcoming procrastination**

- **Identify barriers** - Understand what's delaying your work—fear of failure, lack of clarity, or distractions.
  - **Break tasks down** - Simplify complex projects into smaller, manageable parts.
  - **Reward yourself** - Use incentives to stay motivated.
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## **Activity 4: Seeking feedback and continuous improvement**

### **How to make the most of feedback**

1. Create feedback loops
  - Schedule regular check-ins with your manager or team members.
2. Ask for actionable insights
  - Request specific suggestions for improvement rather than general opinions.
3. Document feedback
  - Maintain a feedback log to track patterns and progress.
4. Turn feedback into actionable goals
  - Apply learnings to improve performance immediately.
5. Embrace constructive criticism
  - Focus on the lessons rather than taking criticism personally.
6. Be proactive



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- Regularly ask for feedback and focus on specific questions.
- 7. Choose the right people
  - Seek feedback from diverse sources like supervisors and peers.
- 8. Be receptive
  - Listen actively and show appreciation for feedback.
- 9. Analyze and reflect
  - Identify patterns and create action plans based on feedback.
- 10. Implement changes
  - Take action and monitor progress continuously.
- 11. Learn from mistakes
  - View failures as learning opportunities.
- 12. Develop a growth mindset
  - Embrace challenges and continuously seek knowledge.
- 13. Stay updated
  - Follow industry trends and thought leaders for insights.

### **Importance of feedback**

- Self-awareness - Improves understanding of strengths and areas for growth.
- Professional growth - Provides insights for skill enhancement.
- Trust building - Demonstrates commitment to improvement.

### **Continuous learning resources**

- **Online courses** - Coursera, Udemy, and LinkedIn Learning.
  - **Webinars and conferences** - Stay updated with industry trends.
  - **Books** - *Mindset* by Carol Dweck and *Atomic Habits* by James Clear.
  - **Podcasts** - *The Ed Mylett Show* and *Career Tools Podcast*.
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## **Activity 5: Career advancement strategies**

### **Networking and relationship building**

- Internal networking - Get to know colleagues and leaders within your organization.
- External networking - Attend industry events, webinars, and LinkedIn groups.



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- Personal branding - Maintain a professional LinkedIn profile and share achievements.

### **Mentorship and sponsorship**

- Seek mentors - Continue engaging with mentors who provide career guidance.
- Find sponsors - Build relationships with leaders who can advocate for your growth.

### **Professional development opportunities**

- Volunteering for projects - Show initiative by taking on new tasks or cross-team collaborations.
  - Leading teams - Offer to lead small projects to develop leadership skills.
  - Performance reviews - Use performance evaluations to set the foundation for promotions or raises.
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## **Closing the mentorship program**

### **Reflection and gratitude**

- Celebrate achievements - Acknowledge milestones achieved during the program.
- Express gratitude - Thank your mentor, peers, and program organizers for their support.
- Stay connected - Exchange contact information with your mentor to maintain relationships for ongoing guidance.

### **Next steps**

1. Create a career development plan - Document your goals and outline steps to achieve them.
2. Schedule regular check-ins - Continue seeking mentorship and feedback post-program.
3. Commit to lifelong learning - Stay curious and keep upgrading your skills.

### **Closing Ceremony Details**

**Date:** TBA

**Time:** TBA

**Location:** Virtually via Zoom, link will be shared





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## Final Message

Congratulations on completing this mentorship program! You've taken significant steps toward building a **successful career** by mastering essential skills like goal-setting, communication, and time management. Keep applying what you've learned, continue growing, and **embrace every opportunity to excel!**