



Overview

This guide defines the general terms and the overall mentoring process of Lean Certification. It provides guidance for the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between the mentor and the protégé through a structured process. This document is designed to serve as a general guide for mentoring. Where necessary, other documents, forms and references provide additional details and information. The benefits of every relationship are maximized when both parties contribute toward agreed-upon goals. Therefore, while this guide is aimed primarily at the mentor, it provides guidance for the protégé, as well.

Mentoring Defined

Mentoring is a two-way relationship over an extended period of time, in which more-experienced individuals assist others through a development process that provides as-needed support, guidance and coaching. The primary objective of mentoring is to enhance the junior parties' knowledge and abilities so that they are better able to perform a function, in this case, to **deliver results using the tools and techniques of lean thinking**. An additional objective of mentoring is to refine the senior party's knowledge and abilities through the process of teaching. Through mentoring, the senior party also fulfills an important social role necessary in all professions: sharing acquired knowledge for the betterment of the professional society, as a whole.

Mentoring is an important component of the Lean Certification program. Creating change with lean thinking is both a science and an art. It is akin to painting, woodworking or other crafts. Many lean tools can be applied by novices in very basic ways to achieve reasonable results. To achieve their maximum effect however, lean tools must be applied with experienced judgment and skill. Such acquired knowledge need not be learned by each practitioner in isolation. Indeed, a protégés studying under more experienced mentors will get better results more quickly than they otherwise could by themselves.

The mentoring process is designed around the principle that, while it is every lean practitioner's responsibility to apply lean tools and techniques, the role of the junior practitioner, in this case, the protégé seeking Lean Certification, is to learn, while the role of the senior practitioner (the mentor) is to teach as well as to continue learning. As in any skill, some of us are more naturally gifted than others. Some protégés may benefit greatly from a formal system of mentoring, while others can rely more heavily on informal knowledge sharing and self-directed effort. The Lean Certification program, therefore, does not require a candidate to participate in the mentoring process. Through the mentoring process, the role of the junior lean practitioner is to acquire and apply lean knowledge. Mentoring support is available, but is not required. The process does, on the other hand, require those pursuing higher levels of certification to serve as mentors. The role of the senior lean practitioner is to apply lean knowledge, share that knowledge with others, and develop the community of professional lean practitioners.

Within the framework of the Lean Certification program, mentors are able to provide other support because of their higher degree of advancement through the certification process. Those at higher levels of certification have gone through the process in which their protégés now find themselves. If protégés have questions about filling out forms, preparing a portfolio, or how they should best prepare and conduct themselves in front of review panels, they can draw upon the experience of their mentors as a resource.



Professional certification requires demonstrable delivery of lean improvements. As the certification level increases, so also does the scale of lean improvements delivered. Certification beyond the Bronze Level not only requires lean improvements appropriate to the greater skill of the certification holder, but documented evidence of mentoring and coaching to assist those who desire mentoring or coaching to support their development. The process of development from one level to the next is supported by the process of mentoring. The role of mentoring is represented in the diagram.

The Development Waterfall and the Role of Mentoring



The overall vision of the Lean Certification mentoring process is to assist lean practitioners in their pursuit of Lean Certification, through a structured mentoring program, and to build shared knowledge throughout the lean community.

About the Mentor

Lean Certification mentors are trusted counselors, coaches or teachers who are valued for their wisdom and experience. Mentors provide technical advice regarding lean, guide others through their certification projects and the certification process, and accelerate individual growth. Mentors catalyze the dissemination of knowledge throughout the society of lean change professionals.

The role of the mentor is ultimately defined by the needs of the protégé. Some protégés may require broad and intensive support, while others will need assistance in only a few well-chosen areas. In each case, mentors should tailor their engagement style to the protégé’s needs. Typically, the scope of the mentor’s activities will involve the following:

- Provide assistance with the tools of lean thinking through the planning, execution and sustain phases of the protégé’s improvement project(s).
- Provide help and advice in navigating the Lean Certification process to achieve the next level of mastery.
- Advise the protégé in how to best deal with the softer issues of change, including interpersonal skills and relationships with supervisors, stakeholders, peers, and improvement team members.
- Support protégés’ professional development in their full-time or part-time role of lean change agent.
- Support the protégé’s overall development in the art and science of creating lean change.

Despite the fact that the focus of mentoring is on the development of the protégé, the mentoring process also builds the capabilities of the mentor. It does this in two important ways:

1. Teaching others requires that instructors thoroughly understand the topic; perhaps to a degree they did not have before. Students’ struggles and questions will often challenge teachers to consider aspects of a problem that they themselves had not dealt with before. Every activity in life has a lesson to teach. We expand our knowledge not only through personal experience, but through the experiences of others. As a protégé learns certain lessons about what works, what does not, and why, mentors benefit from this experience, as well.
2. Mentoring builds the mentor’s capacities for sharing knowledge and building the capabilities of others. In any society of professionals (doctors, engineers and the like) the skills of individuals are important, but raising the collective skills of all is what builds robustness and advances the society as a whole. Mentors are a crucial catalyst for sharing knowledge across the group of lean professionals. It is their responsibility to build strong skills in communicating and teaching.

“ If you would thoroughly know anything, teach it to others.”
— Tyron Edwards



In summary, mentoring benefits mentors by expanding their knowledge and by building their capacity to share knowledge. In general terms, a mentor offers three types of support:

1 Advice

- Offer the experience and expertise of someone at a more advanced stage of professional development.
- Provide a sounding board, a second opinion or a different perspective.

2 Access

- Give time and attention to protégés and their development needs.
- Provide a connection to people, opportunities and information that may be otherwise unknown or out of reach.

3 Advocacy

- Provide encouragement and moral support.
- Work to help create organizational recognition or access to resources needed to resolve issues or problems.

About the Protégé

The Lean Certification protégé is an individual whose knowledge, expertise or career is enhanced by the Lean Certification process and a mentor.

Not every protégé will desire or need mentoring to reach the next level of Lean Certification. Each protégé's mentoring needs will be unique. The best protégés are ones who strive to enhance the mentoring relationship and support their own learning. They:

- Project a genuine interest in professional development and a desire to learn.
- Keep an open mind, consider alternative points of view, and challenge their own paradigms and perceptions.
- Are open and honest with themselves and the mentor regarding the mentoring relationship, the mentoring process and their own progress.
- Invest the time and effort necessary to develop a professional and trustful mentor/protégé relationship.
- Strive toward visible improvement, knowing that the mentor's reward is ultimately the protégé's success.

The focus of the mentoring process is on the protégé's learning. The protégé should regard the mentor as a valuable resource upon which one should not become overly dependent. Use the mentor to develop the capability to function effectively and independently.

Mentoring Relationship Guidelines

DEVOTE ADEQUATE TIME AND ATTENTION TO THE MENTORING PROCESS

This is the number one reason for failure to effectively mentor. Both parties must realistically assess the amount of time they may need to devote for the mentoring relationship to achieve the desired results. This is one important reason why the protégé and the mentor must carefully assess the protégé's development needs, and realistically estimate the scope and depth of effort required to help meet those needs.

The mentor must acknowledge that not all "pull signals for support" will occur during scheduled protégé meetings. To be effective, guidance must frequently be given at some crisis point. When protégés call, can mentors be reasonably certain that they can make adequate time to help them at the critical time?

“ The wisest mind has something yet to learn.”
— George Santayana

“ He who learns but does not think is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger!”
— Confucius

“ If you have knowledge, let others light their candles at it.”
— Margaret Fuller



Both protégés and mentors should ensure that the frequency and duration of their time together is enough that the protégés effectively sustain progress toward their development goals. Monitor how time is spent, and watch for warning indicators. For example, spending an excessive amount of time each session reviewing prior work or covering the same ground again is a common warning indicator. Or perhaps the protégé has experienced significant events where mentor intervention could have provided benefit. These may be signs that the frequency or depth of time together is not what it needs to be.

AGREE TO A SET OF AGGRESSIVE BUT ACHIEVABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

What does a successful mentoring experience look like?

- The protégé and mentor should have a set of clearly defined, mutually agreed-upon goals that serve to describe the outcome of the mentoring relationship.
- The relationship is bounded not only by measurable goals, but also by a time limit as it relates to the project or goals set forth. Hopefully, mentors and protégés will forge lasting professional relationships that extend beyond Lean Certification pursuits. The Lean Certification mentoring process for a given level of certification, however, does not continue indefinitely.
- Understanding that the protégé/mentor relationship must be reasonably bounded, when you set development goals together you should aim for improvement, not perfection. Your skills as a lean practitioner should model lean improvement itself: the continuous pursuit of perfection!

CHOOSE THE RIGHT MENTORING COUNTERPART AND BUILD A SOUND RELATIONSHIP

People often gravitate toward others who are like themselves. This tendency should be held in check when deciding to enter a mentoring relationship. Mentoring is designed to grow capabilities needing development, not those that are already strengths. For example, protégés may be naturally strong analytical thinkers, but may need development in the interpersonal skills necessary to make their lean improvement initiatives more successful. It may be comfortable and validating to choose a mentor who has the same skill set. But will this create the greatest opportunity to have one's paradigms challenged and to grow in the required dimensions? It is natural to assess one's mentoring counterpart based on chemistry. Do you and your mentor/protégé click? Remember, though, that the aim of mentoring is development. The most rewarding mentoring relationship will be one that results in the most growth, not necessarily the one that is most comfortable. Pick a protégé/mentor based in part on the differences you share and the potential for learning.

“ Where all men think alike, no one thinks very much.”
— Walter Lippmann

Mentoring can sometimes be a challenging process. Protégés must openly confront shortcomings, which can often be very personal. Trust is mandatory in any relationship where you expose your own limitations and fears to another, and then work together on them openly and professionally.

Trust — the firm reliance on the integrity, ability or character of another person or thing — is not given away casually. It is earned in demonstrable ways over time. Throughout their relationship together, a protégé and mentor work toward an open relationship that builds trust over time.

BE GOOD LISTENERS

When mentors listen closely and empathetically to their protégés, they are showing that they value the protégés' thoughts and opinions. This expands the sense of trust upon which the relationship relies, it encourages further contribution, and it is one of the best ways to help protégés increase their confidence, and think more boldly and creatively. Learners must be good listeners, but coaches/teachers must listen even better. Listening gives the mentor insight into how the protégé perceives, communicates and thinks. Only by seeing how the protégé approaches and grapples with a problem can a mentor meaningfully diagnose the mental process and prescribe appropriate action.

“ We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”
— Epictetus



USE YOUR TIME TOGETHER WISELY

Time is a precious commodity, both for the mentor and the protégé. Both of you must work actively to get the most out of your time together. Schedule enough time that adequately covers all topics that you both need to discuss. Structure the meeting in the form of a loose agenda. Try to keep the agenda to ensure that all development areas get the attention they deserve.

Managing your time together begins with good planning and preparation.

- For protégés, think about the questions for the mentor. Have the assigned homework items or tasks been completed?
- For mentors, review the development needs of the protégé. Make available helpful articles or reference materials.
- Both the mentor and the protégé should refer frequently the agreed-upon areas for improvement.
- Maximizing time together also relies on diligent follow-up and other activities that will help prepare for the next session together.

Good mentoring, like good classroom teaching, does not simply happen — it is the result of good preparation and the homework done by both parties outside of the classroom.

MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS SHOULD CHECK THEIR EGOS AT THE DOOR

A firm rein on pride and ego by both the mentor and the protégé is essential for successful learning.

For protégés: Don't let ego get in the way of learning. A central part of the mentoring process is the mentor's observation of performance and provision of feedback. Keep in mind that the mentor is giving advice and counsel with the sole purpose of helping to improve skills. Feedback given with candor and professionalism should be received in the spirit in which it is given. Reciprocate with professionalism, as well. Part of the secret to getting the most out of the mentoring relationship and the learning process is to help the mentor be his or her best — by being a good student.

For mentors: Just as the protégés control their ego, do not let your ego get in the way of protégés' learning experiences, or your own. The best mentors speak from a position of broader experience, not from a position of superiority. The role of a mentor in the Lean Certification process is not based on total mastery of lean, but by virtue of being one step or more ahead of the protégé.

KEEP THE FOCUS ON BUILDING THE PROTÉGÉ'S ABILITIES

The ultimate measure of the value of the mentoring process is protégés' development over and above what they could otherwise achieve by simply learning on their own. In the end, each protégé must become a capable, independent lean practitioner at the next level of mastery. The types of problems the protégé will encounter in the future cannot be predicted. For the candidate to be successful, mentors should avoid giving away answers to problems and should instead focus on helping the protégé reason through situations. The reasoning process will help the protégé in the future when no mentor is available. True learning comes from the process of discovering the answers to problems, not in having all the answers. For this reason, mentors should strive to engage protégés in ways that build capacity for systematically solving problems and getting to appropriate answers. Some people refer to this as "the Socratic method."

What does the Socratic method sound like? In general, it is a method of engaging others that avoids the focus on having the answer, and instead compels people to examine their own thinking and focus on how to get the answer. It is language that does not push learners toward a door; instead, it leaves the door open to several possible answers, encouraging learners to explore for themselves.



Look for these indicators in the mentor’s language and behavior:

Avoid	Alternative
Ask questions merely about actions.	Ask questions that reveal thought processes and the understanding and application of theory.
Ask questions that suggest the answer.	Ask neutral questions that encourage independent thought.
Lecturing	Discuss, summarize and check for understanding.
“You should ...”	“Have you considered ...?”
“Here’s what I think ...”	“What do you think?”
“What works is this ...”	“What has worked for me in the past is ...”
“Here’s the answer, and why ...”	“What do you think the answer is? Why do you think this?”

The Mentoring Process: Step-by-Step

STEP 1 MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS: FINDING EACH OTHER

We highly encourage you to seek out a mentor in your organization, your professional network or your personal contacts. Our long-term plan for the Lean Certification program includes methods for connecting mentors and candidates, but we are still a ways away from making that a reality.

“It’s what you learn, after you know it all, that counts.”
— John Wooden

STEP 2 PERFORM SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PREPARATION

Mentors are encouraged to refer to the references at the end of this document to develop their best possible understanding of mentoring techniques. They should conduct a frank self-assessment of their personal attributes and compare them with the attributes of effective mentors, noting any gaps and planning for monitoring and development in those areas. Protégés should conduct their own self-assessment, as well. They should assess their knowledge and skill against the requirements of the certification level they are targeting.

STEP 3 DEFINE THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Once a match has been established, the crucial step of defining the goals and boundaries of the mentoring relationship can begin. Next, the mentor and protégé discuss and refine the projects and boundaries within their relationship. With a firm understanding of the protégé’s needs, the mentor should next prepare an A3 form that outlines the Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle for the mentoring relationship or project. The targets and constraints described on the A3 should include development objectives, frequency and duration of contact, types of support provided, frequency of checking, etc. It is used during the mentoring engagement as an interim check to ensure that the mentoring process is on track and meets the expectations of both the protégé and the mentor.

STEP 4 CONDUCT PROTÉGÉ PROJECTS AND MENTORING

As the protégé’s work progresses, the mentor and protégé meet at regular intervals. Additionally, the mentor responds to any unplanned pull signals for support the protégé may issue from time to time. The mentor monitors the protégé’s progress and provides coaching and performance feedback. To help further develop the mentoring relationship, mentors and protégés may refer to The Top 10 Accountability List at the end of this document.

STEP 5 CLOSE AND REVIEW THE MENTORING PROCESS

At the end of the mentoring period, the protégé and mentor review the mentoring process together. It is important that the protégé and mentor compare their viewpoints on the mentoring process, discuss and resolve any differences, and close out the A3 documents.

STEP 6 CLOSE AND REPORT

Mentors, Silver or Gold Level candidates, can then submit their mentoring experiences through their portfolios.



Troubleshooting the Mentoring Process and Relationship

Mentors and protégés should work by themselves in earnest to resolve any problems they may encounter with the mentoring process or with each other. If you are unable to find a mentoring partner, or if you encounter problems with your partner that you cannot resolve yourselves, you should refer the matter to SME. Keep in mind that participants in the mentoring program are responsible for making diligent, good faith efforts that jointly resolve issues in their mentoring relationship. However, should those efforts not resolve the problem, support is available on a pull basis through SME.

Recommended Mentoring Resources

Field, Anne. *No Time to Mentor? Do It Online*, Business Week. New York: Mar 3, 2003, Issue 3822, p. 126.

With e-mentoring, instead of getting together with someone in person, say, once a week, you meet electronically. Many companies participate in e-mentoring programs, according to the National Mentoring Partnership. Approaches to e-mentoring are described.

Heffernan, Margaret, and Joni, Saj-Nicole. *Of Protégés and Pitfalls*, Fast Company. Boston: Aug 2005, Issue 97, p. 81.

The authors present a short list of guidelines for conducting mentoring in a company setting, both for potential mentors and their students. Also covered in sidebar articles: two notes about finding mentors through the International Mentoring Network Organization (IMNO), a nonprofit group devoted to helping early- and mid-career professionals connect with A-list mentors, and mentor Scout, a Web-based mentor-matching tool created by Nobscot Corp. (SME/AME/Shingo Institute make no endorsements, explicit or implied, of these organizations). The full reprint of this article is available free of charge from the magazine's website, www.fastcompany.com.

Johnson, W. Brad, and Ridley, Charles R. (2008). *The Elements of Mentoring (Rev. ed.)*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 0-230-61364-0

This updated reference concisely summarizes the substantial existing research on the art and science of mentoring. The Elements of Mentoring reduces this wealth of published material on the topic to the 65 most important and pithy truths for supervisors in all fields. These explore what excellent mentors do, what makes an excellent mentor, how to set up a successful mentor-protégé relationship, how to work through problems that develop between mentor and protégé, what it means to mentor with integrity, and how to end the relationship when it has run its course. Succinct and comprehensive, this is a must-have for any mentor or mentor-to-be.

Klasen, Nadine, and Clutterbuck, David (2002). *Implementing Mentoring Schemes: A Practical Guide to Successful Programs*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann. ISBN 0-7506-5430-9

This book is written primarily for those responsible for designing and implementing a mentoring program, but contains a wealth of practical guidance and mentoring "best practices." The authors combine academic research and case studies with many years of practical experience to produce solid advice. It enables readers to understand mentoring and to create their own mentoring programs and approaches. In addition, it establishes a tenable case for mentoring that will greatly assist readers in promoting programs within their organization. It includes several real-world case studies, including British American Tobacco (BAT), British Telecom (BT) and Proctor and Gamble.

Murray, Margo (2001). *Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring: How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Process*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc. ISBN 0-7879-5675-9

Many managers believe that effective mentoring is most often the lucky result of personal chemistry between two people. But in this book, the author lays that myth to rest. Her guide provides expert advice, tools and case studies needed to mentor effectively. The book provides examples of mentoring from recent publications and the author's client experience. It describes how mentoring can maximize employee productivity, and gives the reader information on how to assess organizational needs and link them to the mentoring process. It includes information on how to evaluate the effectiveness of a mentoring program.



Mentor/Protégé Top 10 Accountability List

The objectives of both the mentor/protégé relationship and actual application are jointly measured and reviewed during the process. This is not a scorecard, but rather a mentoring process checklist to ensure that both parties are seeing eye to eye. Until both parties agree on each item, there should be root cause analysis and countermeasures acted on to gain agreement.

	1 = Disagree 2 = Agree	Rating	Metrics Rationale
1	The mentor is explaining the concepts for maximum understanding.		Maximum understanding is intentionally a relative term. The mentor needs to get the protégé thinking and understanding not only what to learn, but how to learn.
2	The protégé is doing the work to put the concepts into action.		The emphasis here is the protégé doing the work, rather than waiting for the mentor to do it.
3	The mentor is holding the protégé accountable to PDCA.		Continuous improvement depends on consistently using the PDCA methodology. This is the real proof that any lean concept is moving from thought to action.
4	The protégé is asking the right types of thoughtful questions.		The best mentors are those who get us asking the right questions, so we can learn to come up with the right answers. Mentors should never give us the answers.
5	The mentor is providing resources to make the protégé self-sufficient.		The goal of mentors is to make the protégé as knowledgeable as themselves.
6	The protégé is applying other resources to the work outlined in the project A3.		This validates that protégés are learning to fish on their own.
7	The mentor is holding the protégé accountable to standardized documents.		Without standardized documents, there can be no real quality or future improvements.
8	The protégé is creating and revising standardized documents, and they are in use.		This is proof that the PDCA worked and will continue to work.
9	The mentor understands that the requirements of the project A3 have been fulfilled.		From the mentor's perspective, the protégés have done everything that they wanted to accomplish as outlined in the project A3.
10	The protégé is satisfied that the requirements of the project A3 have been fulfilled in as much as the mentor can help.		From the protégé's perspective, the mentor has provided everything required to accomplish the work as outlined in the LMA.