10 Tips to Maximize Your Mentor/Mentee Relationship

1. **Take ownership of the relationship.** The responsibility is on the mentee to make the most out of the relationship and keep the “ball moving.” This is easier said than done, but practice will make this more comfortable for you. You should plan to take the lead on communication and not wait for the mentor to make the first move or follow-up with you.

2. **Be the first to reach out to your mentor.** Consider including the following in your outreach: (a) Thank her/him for his/her commitment to mentoring, (b) Briefly introduce yourself and explain your goals (see: “Me, as a Lawyer”), (c) Schedule an in-person meeting, (d) Be specific about a timeline. For example, "Do you have time for lunch in the next two weeks?” is better than "We should grab lunch sometime.”

3. **Do your research.** Spend your discretionary time learning as much as possible about your mentor and her/his career, professional affiliations, leadership roles, publications, and practice areas. By learning about your mentor, you will demonstrate your commitment to the relationship and learn how to ask specific questions.

4. **Ask specific questions.** You are responsible for ensuring that the conversation meets your needs. By asking questions that help you achieve your goals, you maximize your time with your mentor and benefit from the answers. Don’t know how to get started? Remember this: mentors love telling you about their careers and experiences. Ask about them.

5. **Listen.** Even if the advice is something you don't initially like. Valuing different perspectives and being open to new ideas shows maturity and grace. Mentors volunteer for lots of reasons, but many times, it is just to give back and share experiences.

6. **Write things down.** This shows your mentor that you value her/his advice and take the relationship and time-commitment seriously. It will also help you remember more details of the conversation to ensure a thoughtful follow-up (see tip 10 below). Remember: it is not real, if it is not written down!

7. **This is about the relationship, not the outcome.** Focus on building a meaningful and long-lasting friendship with your mentor. If you approach the relationship with the immediate goal of being a co-worker, you are missing many opportunities.

8. **Always be positive.** No matter what. There are no exceptions.

9. **Always respect your mentor’s boundaries.** Emailing several times a day (or week) is inappropriate unless prompted. When calling, always first ensure that your mentor has time to talk. Setting an appointment is always preferred. Always be sure you are on-time for appointments. Always say thank you.

10. **Follow up and share updates.** Mentors love hearing about your progress (especially if you followed some of their great advice) and your achievements. Hand-written notes are always a nice touch.