

Great Management is Great Mentoring

A Guide for Managers of Youth in the Workplace



MENTOR
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

Bank of America, in partnership with MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, has developed the following guide to support employees managing youth interns. This piece has been co-authored with Kerry Sullivan, President of the Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

Most of us can recount quite vividly our very first work experience. Some of us may remember it fondly while others found that first experience very difficult. Whatever the situation, it is clear that we all learned from that experience. It is also likely that our first experiences in the workplace helped form our work ethic and the career choices that we made along the way. We can recall the great managers throughout our career and the positive influence they provided. Outside of taking formal management classes, much of what we learn about management is through on the job experience and the coaching we receive from managers who were also trusted mentors in our lives.



Every year, thousands of youth interns are stepping into their first work experience. They are all hoping for the best. The fortunate ones have managers that focus on delivering results, but also care deeply about developing the individuals on their teams. Considering that 1 in 3 youth are growing up in America without a caring adult in their lives, managers have an incredible opportunity to change the trajectory of a young person's life by welcoming them onto their teams, providing clear direction, offering them opportunities to gain new skills and experiences, and coaching them on how to succeed at work and in life. In short, great management *is* great mentoring.

Phase 1: Onboarding Youth Interns

Focus on Building Relationships – Before jumping into delegating tasks on a to-do list, be intentional about building a relationship with your intern. Explore your commonalities as well as your differences. Discuss how your values and life experiences have influenced who you are, how you act and the choices you make. By showing genuine interest, you can develop trust and open the door for individuals to be authentic in the workplace leading to higher performance and job satisfaction. By modeling and engaging in an effective relationship, you are strengthening a young person's ability to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.



Provide Context – Be sure to provide context during the onboarding phase of a youth internship experience. Provide your intern with company history, prioritized business goals, primary divisions or departments, and key individuals that the youth will be interacting with during the internship. Also, when assigning projects to youth interns, explain how the project fits into the bigger picture for the company and your team. With larger projects, break the project down into phases so that a youth intern clearly understands the key milestones of a project. Clarity on a project's goals, timeline and connection to others helps set a youth intern up for success.

Clarify Goals and Expectations – At the very beginning of a youth internship experience, be sure to clarify your goals and expectations as their manager. Also, spend time discussing what the youth intern would like to get out of the experience on your team. Defining short and long-term career goals up front can help you delegate projects and engage the youth intern in opportunities that align with their career interests, aspirations and skill building needs.



Work Through Barriers – Many youth interns face several barriers that impact their work performance and their relationships with managers and colleagues. They may have limited transportation options from their home to the office. Many youth interns have a limited network of individuals to support them or to model appropriate workplace etiquette. Financial resources may be limited so they may be unable to purchase professional work attire. They may have limited soft skills or not have the technical skills to complete a task assigned to them. As managers and mentors, it is important to collaborate with youth interns to identify solutions to these barriers as well as strengthen their resiliency and ability to self-advocate. By collaboratively working through barriers, you build trust with youth interns and alter their trajectory for success in the workplace and in life.

Phase 2: Career Mentoring

Practice Empathy & Strengthen Cultural Competence – When managing youth interns, it is important to pause and put yourself in their shoes, at their age, and in the context of their life experiences. While you may not have experienced what they have, you can relate to the various feelings that they are expressing. They may be intimidated to speak up in team meetings which some may interpret as a sign of being disengaged – when you feel intimidated, how do you show up? They may feel overwhelmed and communicate more defensively – when you feel overwhelmed, how do you communicate effectively? Meeting youth where they are, seeking to understand their perspectives and feelings, and practicing both patience and empathy as you work together will set you both up for success in the management / mentoring relationship.

Modeling empathy and jointly working on strengthening your cultural competence will enhance your partnership with your youth intern while positively impacting your relations with others. Together, you can reflect on your own



culture while learning about and experiencing different cultures. Be conscious of using common labels and stereotypes, and consider how they influence us. Reflect on your values, the sources of those values (i.e. family, religion, media, and peer groups) and how we put our values into action.

Leverage Strengths – Think about when you are the happiest at work, the most engaged. It is likely that you are the happiest when the projects that you are working on are leveraging your strengths. When managing youth, align the tasks that you delegate to them with their strengths. If they are creative, identify opportunities to utilize their creativity. If they are detail-oriented, match them with projects that require attention to detail. If they have strong interpersonal skills, engage them in collaborative projects. Rather than spending more time trying to “fix” weaknesses, focus more on putting their strengths to work and further developing those skills with new experiences.



Challenge Growth – We often do not see our full potential until someone challenges us to take on a stretch assignment or a special project that moves us outside of our comfort zone. When managing youth, engage them in challenging assignments that help them discover what they are capable of achieving. Take time to reflect with them on how they are growing throughout the project, celebrate their success along the way, and collaboratively solve problems that surface. By strengthening their resiliency, you

are strengthening their ability to work through obstacles with a growth mindset. When we have someone in our corner who is championing us, we often feel more compelled to take on risks and are more motivated to succeed.

Give and Get Feedback – Provide youth with effective feedback that is timely, specific and action-oriented. Ensure that they understand the feedback and have clear direction on how to proceed in enhancing their performance. Create space where you solicit feedback from youth on their work experience and your management as well. Avoid being defensive and model an openness to receiving feedback, continually learning and growing. Open and transparent communication accelerates success.

Phase 3: Closing the Experience

Facilitate a Final Presentation – Invite youth interns to present an overview of their contributions to the team or the results of a special project that they managed to senior leadership. This culminating moment is a point of celebration for youth interns and an opportunity for you as the manager to provide them with public recognition. The celebratory nature of a final presentation boosts the confidence of youth interns and strengthens their critical thinking and presentation skills.

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Take Time to Reflect – As an internship experience ends, be intentional about reflecting on the experience one-on-one with youth interns. Engage youth interns in discussions on what they have learned, their favorite experiences, and how their skills have evolved through the internship. Identify areas for additional growth and consider how the internship experience has confirmed or altered their career interests and goals. Be sure to share your own reflections on how you have grown as a manager, what you have observed in their development, and what you appreciate about their contributions to the team.



Continue to Expand Their Possibilities – Following a youth internship experience, continue to open doors for youth interns so that they can meet and learn from diverse individuals within your organization and networks. Include interns in networking events, informational interviews, job shadowing and additional youth internship opportunities. By continuing to engage youth in diverse opportunities and networks, you further develop their skills, build their confidence and expand their possibilities.

Be sure to view a recorded webinar for managers of youth interns hosted by MENTOR and Bank of America - <https://youtu.be/OsE7pbmzI-c>.

About MENTOR

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. MENTOR's mission is to close the "mentoring gap" and ensure our nation's young people have the support they need through quality mentoring relationships to succeed at home, school, and ultimately, work. To achieve this, MENTOR collaborates with its network of affiliate Mentoring Partnerships and works to drive the investment of time and money into high impact mentoring programs and advance quality mentoring through the development and delivery of standards, cutting-edge research and state-of-the-art tools. Connect with MENTOR on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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