

Peer and Lateral Mentoring: A Roadmap

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Background

The benefits of mentoring have been well demonstrated (Being a Mentor: What's in it for me? Coates WC. PMID: 22221319), but traditional mentoring may not be available at all institutions and may not be appropriate in all circumstances. In these cases, peer mentoring can be a useful option.

Creating your PALM Group

Having the right people in your PALM group is critical to success. For this group to work, it should be comprised of people at roughly similar stages in their careers. Importantly, no one in the group should have direct oversight of another member - one benefit of a PALM group is talking openly without worrying about what an immediate superior might think.

Establishing Group Rules

Trust is integral to a functioning PALM group. Everything discussed in the group is confidential, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Group members must also be sensitive to insecurities that other members might have and provide suggestions to help others achieve their goals rather than tearing down ideas. All feedback should be respectful and honest - kind, but without unnecessary sugarcoating.

Meeting #1 - Thought download

At the initial meeting, group members provide a "brain dump" of ideas, goals, and obstacles to achieving these. Each member takes a turn, with others asking questions and helping to clarify some of these thoughts. Questions to consider include:

- What are some "blue sky" ideas that you have?
- What is happening in your life now?
- What are your priorities...in work and in life?

One group member can take notes on these meetings. For each major item, group members will develop a deliverable for the next meeting. Ideally, a date for the next meeting can be set at this time.

Between Meetings

Group members work on their deliverables, referring back to notes taken at the first meeting. Approximately 1 week before the next meeting, a reminder of the deliverables can be sent to provide encouragement.

Subsequent Meetings

At subsequent meetings, group members rotate who speaks first. Each member goes through their list of deliverables, providing updates and the current status of projects. New ideas and opportunities are added, and old ones may be archived. Group members help by asking questions and providing feedback. Additionally, group members can act as sponsors by bringing opportunities to the attention of other members and recommending members for projects.