

The Seven Characteristics of a Mentor

Josh Phillips



Massaging

We poke and prod deep-seated misconceptions to help the mentee move better. Any gaps in our knowledge or wisdom are going to hinder our work. The mentor's job is to work these 'knots' out. This can best be done by listening carefully for assumptions and crafting questions to draw them out and replace them with something better. It can be a painful process, but the goal is to get the mentee moving without difficulty, to improve the mind-body connection, to put the prodigious knowledge of our mentees to work.

Opening

Over time we open up to our mentees about our own shortcomings. This is an invitation for honesty for both sides. These disclosures must be done with tact, wisdom, and purpose. We must be careful not to erode the mentee's confidence in us while also not pretending to perfection. We are all works in progress. The point is to encourage the mentee in their learning and to build rapport and trust by sharing our weaknesses.



A close-up photograph of four hands of different skin tones (light, medium, and dark) all giving a thumbs-up gesture. The hands are positioned in the lower-left and center of the frame, with the thumbs pointing upwards. The background is a soft-focus, bokeh-style image of what appears to be an office or indoor setting with some greenery and light sources.

Nurturing

Each of our mentees comes preloaded with different strengths, and it's our job to help mentees identify and develop their potential. Good mentors celebrate the successes of their mentees, and that encouragement will motivate them to press on.

Imaging

This quality is central. When we practice what we preach, we become our own proof of concept. We should model what we want to see in our mentees. This will lend authenticity and credibility to us as mentors. We should also cast vision for our mentees, instilling in them the values of our organization.





Teaching

An important part of our role as mentors is to pass on what we've learned in our experience. Frankly, we can't afford for everyone to learn the hard way. Fostering a community of learning can help us see our blind spots, especially when that community is cross-cultural and interdisciplinary. The Bible translation movement is a fascinating intersection of intercultural studies, project management, adult education, linguistics, biblical studies, theology, and more. We can and must learn from each other.

Orchestrating

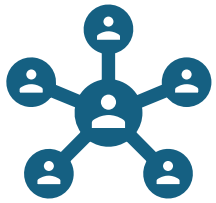
Especially in the early stages, mentees need a lot of guidance on their path to certification. Mentors are there to conduct a development plan and to track the mentee's progress. There is a sea of resources out there, and mentors can help mentees wade through it to find the most valuable ones.





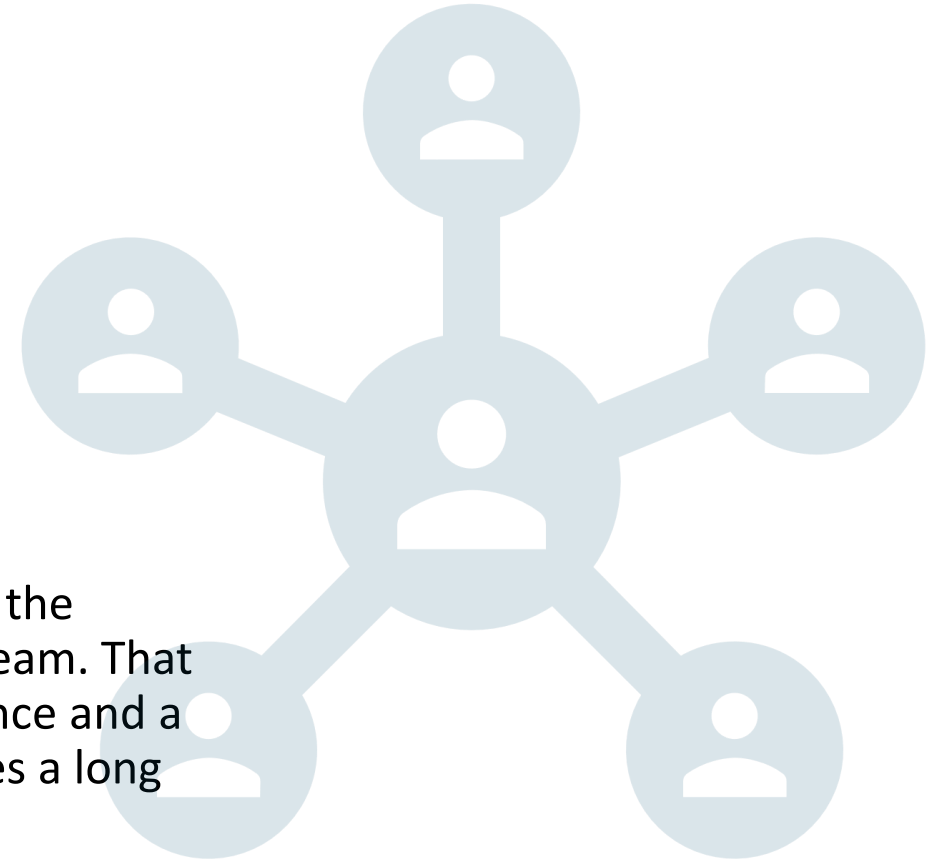
Rendering

Bible translation is a complex field. Our mentees need someone to translate its complexities into digestible portions. This can mean serving as a soundboard for their creative ideas or walking them through challenging concepts. In other words, mentors are mediators between the mentee and Bible translation. We help them negotiate that world.



To summarize

- No one excels in every one of these qualities; the mentoring role is best attempted by a small team. That said, a general pursuit of professional excellence and a commitment to sharing and collaboration goes a long way in realizing your potential as a mentor.
- Ask yourself, “How can I seek the best outcome for my mentees?” In a word, love them.





Massaging
Opening
Nurturing
Imaging
Teaching
Orchestrating
Rendering

Mentor, a professional monitor.
Someone who looks over your shoulder
to make sure you're on the right track.
In the old sense of the word, someone
who makes you think. An advisor.