

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM – GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

The RGD Mentorship Program connects students and recent graduates of graphic design programs – called protégés – with Registered Graphic Designers and Provisional RGDs – called mentors to help protégés develop the necessary skills to enter into or continue on a professional career path in graphic design.

Program Overview

As a mentor, you have much to offer a recent graduate entering the design industry. You can provide encouragement, guidance, and support that may not be available at school or in the workforce. You can help them “decode” the unwritten rules of the design industry and business community in your region.

Mentors

- Offer expert feedback on portfolios, résumés, etc.
- Enhance the self-esteem, self-confidence and maturity of protégés.
- Provide information on further training and job hunting techniques.
- Provide Encourage ethical and professional practice.

Mentor commitment

The structured mentoring program provides a framework to help you establish a successful mentoring relationship. Central to that framework is clarifying what is expected of those who participate. Before you may participate in this program, you must read over the conditions of your participation and fill out the online form at rgd.ca/events-and-programs/mentorship. Please read the expectations for mentor participation carefully and sign up only if you can commit to the following:

- Set the stage for open communication and maintain monthly contact with your protégé by e-mail.
- Participate in 4 to 6 meetings each about 1 hour in length with your protégé over a 6-month period.

Mentor eligibility

You are eligible to participate in RGD’s Mentorship Program if you are:

- A Registered Graphic Designer or Provisional RGD;
- Willing to mentor an emerging professional or student member in their final year;
- Available to participate for a minimum of 6 months.

Benefits of Mentoring

In addition to the obvious benefits of mentoring for the protégés, mentors also reap benefits. Being a mentor allows you the opportunity for self-reflection about your own career path. You will be networking with newly emerging professionals and have the opportunity to recruit colleagues and successors. Mentoring also develops supervisory and management skills. Here are some other reasons why you should be involved in this program.

1. You’ll learn. Protégés may teach you a new job specific skill or help you enhance your people development skills. You’ll also learn more about yourself.
2. This is a chance to give back. You may have benefited from a mentoring relationship or other assistance from a colleague. Help ensure that others receive this same support.
3. You’ll have the opportunity to review and validate what you know and what you’ve accomplished. Teaching another helps you reflect on the many things you’ve learned over the course of your career.
4. When you have a positive effect on your protégé, you will feel good about the influence you are having on a future generation of designers.
5. Mentoring could have future networking payoffs. Your protégé could end up working for a potential client or partner.
6. You’ll help your organization. Mentoring can help give your organization a recruitment edge and shorten learning curves.
7. You may get some extra work done! Within ethical limits, your protégé can do some research for you, help with a project or finish other work that remains undone.
8. You’ll increase professionalism in the industry. As a mentor you will have the opportunity to impress upon your protégé the importance of ethical and professional practice.
9. You’ll leave the world better than you found it. Taking the time to reach out to others and share your wisdom is probably the least expensive and most powerful way to change the world.

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Getting Involved

Becoming a mentor

If you are interested in becoming a mentor and you are eligible based on the requirements listed on page 2, please read this information so that you understand the commitment that is required for mentors. Then complete the online Mentor Agreement Contract and Mentor Preferences Form found at <http://www.rgd.ca/events-and-programs/mentorship.php>

Why aren't faculty members eligible to participate as mentors?

As recent graduates, protégés will have had the opportunity to be mentored by and receive the wisdom of their instructors. RGD would like to expose protégés to new role models, working in industry. If you are a part-time faculty member with a job in industry, then you are eligible to be a mentor. Or, if you are employed by a college or university as a designer but are not a faculty member, you are also eligible.

Does it cost anything to participate?

This program is free for mentors and protégés although all participants must be members of the Association.

Matching mentors and protégés

Selecting a protégé

Initially all participants – mentors and protégés – are asked to complete a form outlining professional interests and preferences for being matched with a mentoring partner. For example, you may prefer to mentor someone who attended your alma mater or someone who has a particular interest in the type of work that you do. We will review the information provided by prospective protégés in your area, consider your preferences and identify a preferable candidate.

Is everyone who applies matched with a mentoring partner?

Unfortunately no. While we will do all we can to find appropriate matches for everyone, the pool of available mentors and interested protégés will not always match. If we cannot identify an appropriate protégé immediately, we will keep your name on file and let you know when we identify a protege candidate who may interest you.

What if I am not interested in any of the prospective protégés in my area?

Initially, we plan to match participants primarily based on common location, but if there are no appropriate protégés available for you in your area, we will encourage mentors and protégés to participate in a virtual mentoring relationship. Or, as noted above, you can wait until additional protégé candidates apply for the program and a suitable match is found.

Confidentiality

We will not disclose your participation in the program without your prior consent.

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Contact and meetings

Introducing yourself

After you have confirmed mentorship of a given protégé, we will send your protégé your name and e-mail address. They will initiate contact so you might respond at your convenience, with an introduction. You've probably given us a fair amount of information about yourself when you agreed to participate in the program, but the only information we have passed onto your protégé is your name and e-mail address.

You may want to tell your protégé any of the following information:

- Your preferred name or nickname.
- Why you volunteered to be a mentor.
- Where you work, your title and how long you've been in your current position.
- Degrees you have earned and schools you've attended.
- A brief description of what you do in your job.
- Other jobs you've had.
- Any information about hobbies, interests and family that you feel comfortable sharing.
- The URL of your company's web site.

How often do mentors and protégés meet?

It is expected that mentors and protégés will meet a minimum of 4 to 6 times over a 6-month period, but it is the responsibility of the mentors and protégés to arrange and schedule these meetings. We will contact you to see if this is being done and find out how the relationship is proceeding. If you have the time to meet with your mentor more often over the 6 months or over a longer period, we encourage you to do so.

Establishing an initial meeting

If you hope to get to know your protégé better by e-mail first, or if you are not able to arrange a meeting within the first month of the program, we ask that you offer to correspond by e-mail once a week until your schedule opens up.

Scheduling regular meetings

If your schedule permits, you may find it helpful to establish a specific time for all of your meetings, such as the third Friday of every month. If you have a busy schedule, encourage your protégé to contact you by e-mail 2 to 3 days before the meeting to confirm that you are still available. If your schedule is not this flexible, use the time at the end of one meeting to schedule the next one. It's important to recognize the importance of these meetings to your protégé. Try to avoid cancelling them just to accommodate

your busy schedule. Make sure in the initial e-mail to identify a frequency of contact that is realistic and that you feel comfortable with.

Setting expectations

You may want to communicate with your protégé about your busy schedule, any times you will be out of town, and when you will have limited access to e-mail. As a mentor, you may be concerned that protégés are expecting the mentoring program to double as a job service. It doesn't. We are making this and the other limitations of the program very clear to the participants. On the other hand, you are free to provide internship and job opportunities to your protégé. If you would like to see a copy of the protégé guidelines, please contact RGD.

Preparing for meetings

We are encouraging protégés to prepare for meetings by developing questions that they would like to ask you and sending them to you in advance of the meeting. You may also wish to write a list of things you would like to discuss during your meetings. For the first meeting it might include what you would have wanted to know when you were in your protégé's situation, or about your expectations concerning the relationship. If you do receive a list of questions from your protégé, make sure to let him or her know of any areas that you do not feel comfortable discussing.

Maintaining contact

Maintain regular contact. Mentors should assume they are the givers in the relationship. Consistent contact models dependability and builds trust. At least monthly contact by e-mail is recommended.

Phone contact

We will not be providing your protégé with your phone number and in the guidelines distributed to protégés we insist that phone contact may only be initiated by the mentor. If you do not have time to meet in-person but would like to offer contact that is more personal than e-mail, you may wish to contact your protégé by phone. If so, it is wise to clarify the acceptable/desirable frequency of calls, and who will ordinarily call whom. Make sure to discuss what phone numbers to use (school, work, or home) and what times are acceptable for calling. To avoid mutual frustration, you may wish to schedule calls via e-mail.

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Contact and meetings – continued

Program duration

We anticipate that a mentoring relationship will continue for six months. Mentors and protégés will be matched on an on-going basis and meetings should occur over a 6-month period. Mentors may wish to continue these meetings over a longer period or initiate a new mentor partnership.

Tips for being a great mentor

The key is the mentor's ability to understand and accept what the protégé is experiencing. As a mentor, you may wish to see yourself as a resource, catalyst, facilitator, idea generator, networker or problem-solver, but you need not be the person with the answers. It is not your role to tell your protégé what to do or how to do it. We encourage you to share what you have done (or have learned) not as a prescription, but more as an example of something from which you gained wisdom. Feel free to contribute ideas or suggestions, not as a sage, but as a collaborator.

Ten keys to being a good mentor

1. Be honest. Trust and respect are the foundations on which successful mentorships are built.
2. Be clear about your expectations and your boundaries. Set up ground rules and communicate them.
3. Don't expect to have all the answers. Sometimes just listening attentively is all people need.
4. Help your protégé access resources and expand support networks. Discuss the importance of maintaining positive relationships.
5. Avoid being overwhelmed by your protégé's problems. Remain calm and dispassionate to help protégés solve problems.
6. Take the initiative. Great mentors are willing to initiate discussions. Prompt or encourage your protégé to contact you. A quick line, such as "I haven't heard from you lately, are you very busy?" may help bridge a lag in communication. In meetings, take the initiative to suggest discussion topics, share personal experiences, pose questions, and engage in "small talk" until a relevant topic for discussion emerges.
7. Avoid being judgmental of a protégé's situation. Acceptance without conditions communicates that your concern comes without strings attached. Respect confidentiality.
8. Avoid gift giving. And don't do for a protégé what he or she can do for him or herself. Your greatest gift is to help a person discover his or her own solutions to problems.
9. Put aside your own agenda to help your protégé express his or her unique talents – even if these talents will ultimately take them in a direction different from your own. Great mentors understand that they can't motivate or change protégés – only help them motivate themselves, and become more fully who they most want to be.
10. Be flexible. Respond to the needs of your protégé. Remember what it felt like when you had just graduated. Realize that your protégé may not understand the professional expectations associated with the industry. If you do not have the time to meet with your protégé, offer to discuss issues by e-mail in the interim.