

## **Mentorship Program**

### Guidelines for Protégés

#### **Table of Contents**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Program Overview</b>                        | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Matching mentors and protégés</b>           | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Contact and meetings</b>                    | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Preparing for meetings</b>                  | <b>5</b> |
| <b>What does it take to be a good protégé?</b> | <b>6</b> |
| <b>Protege Agreement Contract</b>              | <b>8</b> |
| <b>Protégé Profile</b>                         | <b>9</b> |

## Program Overview

This Program matches protégés (final year Student Members or Provisional RGDs) with mentors (Provisional RGDs or R.G.D.s) to help protégés develop the necessary skills to enter or continue on a professional career path in graphic design. As a protégé, you will receive encouragement, guidance and support from a professional active in the industry.

### Protégés receive:

- Expert feedback on portfolios, résumés, etc.
- Advice on further training and job hunting techniques.
- Information on ethical and professional practice.

### Protégé commitment

The structured mentoring program provides a framework to help you establish a successful mentoring relationship. Part of 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 print out and sign the formal agreement which appears on page 8 of this document.

### Protégé eligibility

You are eligible to participate in RGD Ontario's Mentorship Program if:

- You are a Provisional RGD in good standing of RGD Ontario.
- You are a Student Member of RGD Ontario in the final year of a 3 or 4 year graphic design program.
- You have access to the Internet and e-mail.
- You are available to participate in the program for a minimum of 6 months.

## Matching mentors and protégés

Initially all participants are asked to complete a form outlining professional interests and preferences for being matched with a mentoring partner. For example, you may prefer to be mentored by someone who attended your alma mater or someone who wants to discuss issues of particular interest to you (such as, job search techniques or balancing your work and personal life). We will review the information provided by you and identify mentors who have indicated similar preferences. Your information, along with information about any similar candidates, will be sent to prospective mentors who will make a final selection.

### Matching

Provisional RGDs participating as protégés are matched with Registered Graphic Designers. Student Members in their final year are matched with Provisional RGDs.

### 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 are not able to identify a mentor for you initially, we will keep your information on file, and let you know if and when a suitable mentor becomes available.

### What if there are no suitable mentoring partners in my area?

Initially, we plan to match participants based on common location, but if there are no appropriate protégés available for a mentor in a location, we will encourage mentors and protégés to participate in a mentoring relationship via e-mail.

## Contact and meetings

After you and your mentor have been matched, we will send your mentor an e-mail containing information about you, including your name and e-mail address; we will also send you your mentor's name and e-mail address.

### Initial contact

We recommend that the mentor establish the initial contact with you via e-mail. If you do not hear from them within a week of receiving the e-mail from RGD Ontario, you may try contacting your mentor directly or contact RGD Ontario to facilitate initial communication.

### How often do mentors and protégés meet?

It is hoped that mentors and protégés will meet 4 to 6 times over the 6-month period, but it is the responsibility of you to arrange and schedule these meetings. RGD Ontario cannot be held responsible if your mentor is unable to meet this guideline. Contact RGD Ontario if you are having difficulties with your mentor.

### Reasonable expectations

Mentors are busy professionals. Many of them are running small or medium-sized businesses. They have busy schedules which may include unexpected client meetings and extensive travel. Don't be discouraged if your mentor takes a while to respond to your e-mails or meetings are rescheduled. Your mentor is volunteering his or her time to assist you, but professional responsibilities must come first.

The RGD Ontario mentoring program is not a job service. Your mentor is not likely to offer you a position in his or her company. Don't ask him or her for a job or expect this. Instead use the experience to gain valuable insights that you will use in approaching other design professionals.

### Are there any boundaries that I should be aware of?

Gift-giving, acting as an advocate for career advancement, loaning money, or becoming involved in dispute resolution are all out-of-bounds in mentoring relationships.

### Phone contact

We are not providing you with your mentor's phone number and we insist that you not contact your mentor by phone unless this method of contact is requested of you by your mentor.

### Program duration

We anticipate that the program will run for six months but this is up to the discretion of the mentor. Mentors and protégés will be matched on an on-going basis, and meetings are expected to occur over a 6-month period.

### Questions and concerns

What if there are problems or misunderstandings between a mentor and a protégé?

RGD Ontario asks you to inform us if you have not heard from your mentor, if you have questions or comments about the mentoring relationship, or if you are uncomfortable with any aspect of your mentoring relationship. We will address your questions, help to reconnect you and your partner, or rematch you with a different partner, as appropriate.

## Preparing for meetings

You may wish to write a list of things that you would like to ask your mentor. Once you have written them down, you may wish to send them to your mentor before the meeting. Below is a list of suggested topics for discussion.

### Suggested topics for discussion

These topics are intended as suggestions; use them as you feel appropriate.

- What was your experience like as a college/university student? What do you know now that you wish you had known then?
  - Why did you become a mentor? What do you hope to gain professionally and personally from being a mentor?
  - What strategies would you recommend to ensure a long, fruitful career in this industry?
  - How did you first get started in the industry?
  - What is your most memorable experience as a professional working in the industry?
  - What do you like most about your current job? What would you change if you could?
  - What challenges have you faced in your career and in your life? How did you address or overcome these challenges? What have you learned in the process?
  - How do you balance your career with the rest of your life?
  - What did you do as a recent graduate that helped you be successful? What would you recommend that I do?
  - How do you spend your time at work?
  - What skills do you use most in your job? What skills did you learn in school and what skills did you need to learn outside of school?
- What was the most valuable lesson that a mentor or supervisor taught you?
  - If I wanted a job like yours, what would I have to do?
  - And, ask your mentor what they think you should ask them.

## What does it take to be a good protégé?

### 1. Be teachable.

Be willing to learn new things, obtain another perspective, and be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism.

### 2. Be considerate of your mentor's time.

Mentors are participating in this program because they are committed to mentoring but they have very demanding jobs and work schedules. They often spend considerable time in meetings, or are involved in work-related travel. It's not uncommon that a design professional, who typically receives 30 or more e-mail messages a day, return from a two-day meeting or business trip to discover more than 200 e-mail messages waiting, many of which urgently need a response! Be patient and understanding if your mentor is sometimes unable to respond to you in a timely fashion.

### 3. Be prepared.

It's up to you to make the most of the limited time you will have with your mentor. Come prepared with specific objectives. Before each meeting, select two or three critical issues you need help with. Develop specific questions that you would like your mentor to answer. Provide these to your mentor in advance of your meeting. Bring your resume and portfolio to a meeting to have your mentor review them.

### 4. Be professional.

Respond in a timely manner to your mentor's questions and comments. If you don't have the time to respond at the time, send a short message letting him or her know you will be in contact when you have the opportunity. Do your best to maintain and respect privacy, honesty and integrity. Be responsible about any meetings you schedule, don't cancel at the last minute, show up late or not show up at all.

Maintain your agreed-upon boundaries and level of confidentiality. Although it is unlikely that your mentor will hire you, you will be able to use him or her as a reference if you have behaved professionally during your mentoring relationship.

### 5. Be flexible to the needs of your mentor.

Although RGD Ontario has developed guidelines for its mentorship program, your mentor may have a specific way that he or she would like to maintain the mentoring relationship. Keep track and follow any special requirements that your mentor sets out for maintaining the relationship. For example, when your mentor tells you about a particularly busy period or a business trip, remember this so you aren't anticipating a response to an e-mail that may not come for some time.

### 6. Be receptive to your mentor's behaviour and manner.

You can learn from not only what your mentor tells you but how he or she behaves during your meetings or responds to your e-mails. Does your mentor write in a more formal tone than your friends do? If so, you may want to mirror the more formal tone during your e-mail exchanges.

### 7. Have realistic expectations.

Don't expect your mentor to solve all your problems for you. In particular, don't expect your mentor to get you a job. This program is not a job placement service. If you obtain a lead on an internship or job through the mentoring program, that is fine, but it is unlikely and should not be expected. Remember that your mentor is human and can make honest mistakes.

### 8. Communicate clearly.

Identify your needs and communicate them as

clearly as possible. Be a good listener and communicator. Accept and offer feedback. Re-read e-mails to your mentor for clarity, spelling and grammar.

#### **9. Honour your commitment**

Not all interested candidates will be lucky enough to be matched with a mentor right away. If you are one of the select few, make sure you maintain the relationship with your mentor over the six month period. If, for some reason, you do not wish to continue the relationship, let RGD Ontario know so that we can provide the opportunity to another.

#### **10. Respond to requests from RGD Ontario staff.**

Please respond to requests from the RGD Ontario staff (we will keep these to a minimum). Also, please let us know if you have not heard from your mentor so that we can help to get you reconnected, or if there are any issues with your mentoring relationship that we can help with.

## Protégé Agreement Contract

I \_\_\_\_\_  
name

understand that, if I am selected as a protégé, I have made a commitment to follow the guidelines established by RGD Ontario for its Mentorship Program, as outlined in this document.

In particular,

1. I will meet with my mentor over the course of six months, based on my mentor's schedule and availability.
2. I will maintain e-mail contact with my mentor, based on my mentor's initiation of contact.
3. I will report to RGD Ontario any problems or issues that arise that may be adversely affecting my relationship with my mentor.
4. I understand that I will refrain from phone contact with my mentor unless requested by him or her.
5. I understand that this mentor program is not a job placement program and is not intended to culminate with a job offer.
6. I understand that the mentor agreement is of six months duration after which time all commitments between mentor and protege are no longer in effect whether or not the minimum suggested number of meetings (4) has occurred between me and my mentor.
7. I will respect my mentor's privacy, and behave professionally in all my dealings with him or her.
8. I will give feedback to RGD Ontario which will be used to build a more effective program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Protégé Profile

The following characteristics describe me. (If, for any question you do not have a preference or more than one option would be acceptable, please mark all that apply.)

1. My gender is:

Male  Female

2. I would prefer a mentor in:

Toronto  London  
 Ottawa  Sudbury

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

No preference:  E-mail mentor

3. My employment status is:

Currently working as a designer  
 Working, but not directly in the design field  
 Doing freelance design work  
 Not currently working

4. I am especially interested in the following areas:

print design  
 book design  
 web site design  
 flash & presentation design  
 signage and wayfinding  
 information design  
 exhibits & tradeshow  
 packaging design  
 editorial design (magazines, newspapers)  
 branding & corporate identity  
 annual reports & corporate communications  
 typography  
 digital design (CD Roms, software)  
 advertising  
 broadcast design  
 film & digital video

design history  
 design education  
 entrepreneurship  
 marketing  
 print technology  
 web & programming technology  
 photography  
 illustration  
 project management  
 people management

5. I would like to discuss the following issues/subjects with a mentor:

mentor's day-to-day duties/responsibilities  
 future career prospects  
 my portfolio/work  
 emerging trends in the industry  
 skills necessary for a graphic design career  
 working with clients  
 skills necessary to operate a design firm  
 working with suppliers  
 working with other designers  
 professional development  
 issues of copyright and intellectual property  
 issues of professional practice  
 my resume  
 developing my skills  
 freelancing  
 ethical issues in design  
 design competitions  
 design conferences

6. Other important characteristics of my mentor (this might include employment status, types of clients, or alma mater)

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