

# Employee Mentoring Guide

## Which Mentoring Guide

- These suggestions are for **Jitu mentees**. Early in their careers, professionals.
- **Not for cohort (intern) participants**. For cohort students, see the Intern (12-week Cohort) Mentoring Guide.  
<https://teach2give.com/resources/>  
Look for mentors. PASSWORD: **mentor**
- If you are mentoring a Jitu mentee (employee) who is also a mentor to a cohort intern, that is a blend of this document AND the Intern (12-week cohort ) Mentorship guide

If that leaves you confused, check with Wilfred or Jay.

## Baseline Rules to Emphasize

Here are some basic ground rules to keep in mind. Most are obvious, but they are all important.

Americans are not better than Kenyans, and I'm not better than you.

It seems obvious but be very sensitive and emphasize your respect for them. Emphasize their worth. Emphasize that they were created in God's image just like yours. Confidence is a key goal. Some may feel inferior to Westerners. For example, some may not be comfortable communicating openly with a Westerner (but be very comfortable with a Kenyan). Being comfortable with Westerners will affect their job opportunities.

We are not trying to turn you into Americans.

Be sensitive; we are not colonizing Kenya. We are not taking Kenyan resources. We are not trying to make money through these relationships. Respect and honor their culture at every opportunity. Acknowledge American weaknesses.

Respect and compliment Kenyan culture at every opportunity. It is not our goal to develop and coach Kenyans simply to have them move to the US. Show humility about culture.

This isn't technical mentoring.

If their job description is data science, it doesn't matter if you can't spell data science. This is life or professional coaching. You're not here to teach them technical skills. Your life coaching is most valuable. Nevertheless, if technical problems or issues arise, simply reach out to one of the more technical mentors, and someone will help you.

## Operating Boundaries

There is no exchange of money.

Welcome them to share any concerns in their life, which might include financial challenges. However, do not allow them to ask for money. Nor should you ever feel guilty or compelled to give them money. Your time and coaching are extremely valuable; don't underestimate your contribution.

They are responsible for their careers (and mentoring), not you.

It is not your career or your future. ***It is theirs.*** They should schedule and follow up. You should be prepared for each session and they should also. If they fail to put in an effort, let us know, and we will reassign. Know that there are many young professionals asking to participate and willing to do the work. We have a shortage of mentors, *not mentees*. We will send evaluation surveys periodically. The intent is not grading, just making sure that we are deploying resources in the right places. The best mentees will have the opportunity to participate in an annual leadership conference, where they will be trained to become mentors of cohort students. (The best mentees were evaluated on initiative, progress, maturity, and communication skills.)

You are not their manager.

Don't tell them their goals; pull their goals from their job descriptions and evaluations or ask them to ask their manager. Don't tell them what to study: tell them to ask their manager. We don't want the Jitu leaders to think we are taking over their company. We are helping, not interfering. I don't want anyone to say, "Jay is telling my people what to do."

## Avoid specific advice.

Similar to not being their manager, present the questions, not the answers. e.g., when creating a budget, how much do you want to spend on \_\_\_\_? Don't tell them what the percentages should be. Don't tell them who to date, when to break up, etc. Guide them with what questions they should consider and let them answer.

## Recognize your limitations.

So far, we don't have any psychiatrists on the mentoring roster. You may encounter some mental health issues. Let leadership know, and we will make sure they get help, but we don't want any mentors to get in over their heads on mental health issues. We don't want to cause any harm, and we want to protect all involved.

## Suggested Mentoring Goals

You are unconsciously competent; you don't know what you know. It's automatic. They are unconsciously incompetent; they don't know what they don't know. They are beginners.

Thus, don't assume. Dig deep into your consciousness to identify the core values and competencies that are driving you. You need to identify them and begin with them. It starts with super basic stuff like,

- Patience
- working hard today because you think it will pay off in the future.
- saying no to instant gratification
- humility
- self-confidence
- understanding your "why"

## First Session

Get to know them. Your story, their story, etc. Most of you were born outside of the US, and that is a great opportunity to share how you came from a different culture and adapted.

Make them comfortable. Stress confidentiality. You will never tell anyone any of the details—definitely not Jitu Management.

Stress: this is a safe environment. They can talk to you about anything, and you are available anytime. ( It will take several sessions before they feel comfortable)

Praise and encourage them; again, confidence is a primary goal. If they feel inferior or feel it is their role to "serve" Americans, it's not going well.

They all want a successful career; pull the conversation up to a successful life. A successful career is part of a successful life. We want them to positively impact their family and community. This is much bigger than just getting to the next promotion and making more money. *Emphasize life.*

Have them write out in 1-3 sentences what **they** think a successful life looks like. e.g. They are 95 years old, near death, and they must answer the question, "Did I lead a good life?" The point is, **they** need to come up with it. Keep it simple; they can change this as often as they want. Common answers seem to have a career component, a spiritual component, and a financial component. Their answer to a successful life permits you to follow up in these areas with questions in the future.

A goal for the first year is to: a) get feedback; b) accept feedback; c) respond to feedback. To start, get their job description and evaluation. We learned this year that many do not have a good perspective on what an expert is, nor do they have a realistic concept of career progression. Exaggeratingly, many feel they are experts deserving of promotions. Help them to understand where they are, how to set goals, and what to expect. (This will take a year at least!)

## Second Session

Discuss life goals as much as they are comfortable. They don't have to share the "successful life" description. The first goal is that They have thought about it. (However, I think all have shared.) Praise them; don't alter a word of their vision. It's their vision, not yours—even if it's terrible.

Get them to think about roles in their lives: son or daughter, wife or husband, brother or sister, employee, community member, church member, etc. Have them begin to think about goals within these roles under the umbrella of their life mission. This will be an ongoing discussion. If their vision is terrible or limited, it will become obvious to them, and they can change it every day if they want.

Have them pick out 5 +/- competencies from their job descriptions. e.g. communication, QA testing, and agile methodologies. You do not need to know these yourself. Have them describe their understanding of the competencies. If they have an evaluation, great. If not, they need to get an evaluation. e.g., if the competency is Agile methodologies, what was their rating? 1 - 5 (good). Most are rated 1-2 by the way. You are trying to get five key competencies, and you'll be giving them goals to increase their skills in each.

You are starting with:

- What are the competencies?
- What is their baseline evaluation?

You are **NOT** expected to be a technical mentor. You can focus on competencies, not technical skills. If you think it would be helpful to understand a few technical concepts; contact another mentor, and we will share some basics. We don't involve Kenyan leaders. (For privacy, we don't want to have a dialogue with their managers.)

Have them identify learning goals. Something their manager assigned (SQL, Python, a programming language, etc.) Are there certifications they should be working on? (AWS, Databricks, etc.)

Financial questions and goals seem universal. Have them create a budget. E.g., 5 lines, super simple - tips:

- Many support their immediate family.
- Brian Orina and Aaron (at the Jitu) have information about saving internationally. Strong recommendation that they invest in international markets, not just Kenyan.

High inflation and a risky political environment make international investments a wise move, but it takes some work.

- Kenya has a retirement savings plan (NSSF); I am not sure of the details.

## Third Session

Subtly weave their life mission into every discussion, where possible. E.g., budget: Does their budget reflect their desire to honor God? ( You can challenge them to worship through giving, for example. You don't need to push tithing; have them start with a shilling.) Note, that you are asking, not telling them what to do.

You can start setting up small opportunities to improve your job competencies. E.g.

- 1) Communication
  - a) e-mails have no grammar or spelling mistakes.
  - b) identify opportunities to speak in front of others (all-hands meetings or present a project).
  - c) Have them tell you their life story or something small.
  - d) Have them practice speaking with you.
    - i) their story
    - ii) their hobbies
    - iii) their vacation
  - e) The Jitu has a Toastmasters club (or something like it); have them participate.
- 2) Agile Methodologies
  - a) Can they groom a user story (you don't even need to know what this means; have them describe it)? I lifted "groom user story" from their job description. In other words, have them step up to the next level.
  - b) Can they lead a retrospective meeting?
  - c) Can they ask for more complex programming assignments?
  - d) Can they mentor a new employee?

If they are a '1' in a competency, what are the activities that can help them get to a '2'?

If they have learning goals, e.g., AWS certification, SQL, Python, or scrum certification, how can they formally learn new skills and demonstrate new knowledge? For example, sign up for tutorials. seek certifications.

Budget discussion: praise them. Everyone concludes that they need more money. No one achieves the budget right away. Encourage them simply to track, measure, and learn. Discuss what they learned each month.

## Fourth Session

Introducing saving for retirement. Brian Orina is an expert on this subject. Brian can help people get international savings accounts set up. Help people get diversified. Kenyan currency decreased in value by 22% in 2023. Without insulting Kenya, the press the truth that international diversity in investing is good.

### *Toastmasters-type activities*

Once you and your mentee are more comfortable sharing at a deeper level, you can go deeper on optional subjects. E.g., if they say they want to honor God in their lives; ask them what they believe. Ask about their church experience. You may find a weak understanding of the gospel; if you do, you can ask them to research some simple terms like grace, mercy, and faith. Then you have something to talk about in the next session. Again, ask questions that lead them to think. Don't push them in one direction.

This is a good time to talk about what it means to be an expert. i.e.

- Are you (the mentor) an expert in anything? How long did it take? Describe what it means to be an expert. They do not have a good reference point for what it means to be an expert. Some may think they are experts after six months.
- Talk about career growth and promotions. Share your experience regarding promotions. When or why should people be promoted. They don't have good reference points.

## Overall

Monthly sessions are typically 30–60 minutes. I typically discuss their accomplishments (what they did on the action items), talk about new action items, and give them plenty of time to bring up new subjects or ask questions.

If you encounter good ideas, share them in the text channel. We are always looking for content for the monthly newsletter. If you can summarize it in a paragraph, we would be happy to share it in the next newsletter.

If you have questions, share them in the text channel.

## Annual Evaluation Cycle

The annual evaluation cycle changed for 2024. In 2023, the self-evaluation was in June and the manager assessment was in July. Note that 2024, self-evaluation is now in February.

### Feb - prepare for self-evaluation

Have your mentee prepare for their annual evaluation.

- Review their competencies; how have they demonstrated growth in each area? What are examples of improvements? (E.g. Scrum Master: wrote user stories, conducted retrospectives, etc.; Communication: demonstrated new functionality with the client)
- write out their career aspirations; many of them have not been specific about what position they want to pursue (e.g., Scrum Master, Data Scientist, Project Manager, Manager, Developer, QA Lead, etc. Have them think about it and write it out. It's They must communicate this with their manager. The annual review is a good time to discuss this.

Self-evaluations are due on February 15.

### March: Review Their Evaluation

I did not read any self-evaluations, nor did I read any evaluations. Just ask them questions. Have them tell you about their evaluation : what they learned and what they think they should work on. Help them deal with any mismatch in expectations. Share with them your experiences, feedback, and evaluations.

## Challenges

Questions or issues I've seen:



- Expertise: They may not have a good perspective on being an expert. e.g., after programming with React for 12 months, they may think they are masters, and should be promoted. Help them understand what it means to be an expert and how long it takes you to become an expert.
- Salary: Some may Google wages in the US and then wonder why they aren't paid similarly. Help them to understand some basic differences in productivity between nations. Help them to see their potential. No one is saying they can't reach similar levels in their career.
- Evaluation Ratings: Some get mixed messages; some people may tell them over and over they are "Rock Stars," but then they receive a mediocre rating. Help them understand the difference between encouragement and measured skills.
- Career Plans: They will be rated 1–5 on competencies (5 = good). Most have difficulty mapping out a career plan with SMART goals to achieve a higher rating. This is probably the most important area in which you can help.

## Questions

### Should I bring religion into the discussion?

Kenyan culture is very Christian. They will likely (60%) include Christian goals and values in their life goals. Discussing spiritual goals and asking about progress is completely acceptable. You are not obligated to discuss spiritual matters, nor are you prohibited. This is not a church-based program. **Some mentees are Muslims.** I don't tell them what to believe; I just ask them to articulate their own beliefs if it's part of their goals. You can encourage them to explore — just don't tell them what to believe.

That said, my mentors share that they read their Bible and go to church. Some ask me to explain passages each month. I do not assign any religious homework, but I might tell them where they can find reliable answers. I avoid telling them and try to teach them to learn on their own.)

### Improvements to this document

Jay (not an expert!) wrote this document after a few months of mentoring. If you have suggestions, please let me know. I'll incorporate them. This document is here to get you started and give you the benefit of some experience. It will continue to be a work in progress.

## EDIT HISTORY

20230525

20231101

20231122

20240131

20240226