

Ground Rules for Mentoring

Match. There are two ways to match with EPFL entrepreneurs. Come to the monthly A3 Angels diners to listen to start-up pitches. Or ask for a direct match through the mentoring service and answer yes or no. No questions asked.

Set Expectations. The first meeting is used to define the goals of the mentoring relation. Tell your entrepreneur what he can count on you for and what you will not do for him. Agree on a meeting frequency for the subsequent meetings and stick to it.

Be Prepared. The entrepreneur sends an agenda before the mentoring session. During the session, the mentor brings up the key points of the previous session and asks what follow up there has been. After the session, the entrepreneur is responsible for writing the session notes and sending them over to the mentors.

Be Humble. offer options and experience, suggest, don't judge. Surprise successes and surprise failures will pave the way. Don't dominate the conversation; be an engaged listener and respect what your protégé has to say.

Build Trust. Be very serious with confidentiality. Respect your mentee even when you disagree. Do not by-pass.

Use Feed-Back. Do a 2-way feed-back between the entrepreneur and the mentor after 3 months. fill up the a3 Angels mentoring evaluation form after 6 months. Talk to the mentoring ombudsman (mentoring.a3angels@a3.epfl.ch) if you have any doubt about the proper way to address an issue with your entrepreneur / with other mentors.

Set Objectives. Set some goals for the mentee. Assign him homework. The relationship must be more than just chewing the fat. The point is to help the mentee grow, personally and professionally. Give them a list of books to read. Recommend seminars they should attend. Have them outline their business goals in writing.

Distinguish Roles. The mentee must rely on his coach for project management milestones, ask his board for decisions, look to his mentor for inspiration and comfort. Exchange with coaches and board members but always mind confidentiality.

Exchange and Network - talk to other mentors. Involve them where they can help. Share your experiences every trimester at the A3 Angels mentoring diner. Network with your mentoring peers and bring out all the value of a network of technology companies.