



A Mentor's Manual

by Ted Wallace, 2006

So you are thinking about becoming a Manhattan Sailing Club Mentor.

That's great! You'll find that mentoring can be one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences you'll ever have. You may be uncertain about what mentoring involves or whether you have the background and experience to succeed at mentoring. These are normal questions to be asking.

For the purposes of the manual we will hereafter refer to the persons who wish to progress along the Skipper's course with the help of the Mentoring program as the "**protégé**".

This guide is designed to give you most of the information and tools you will need to become a Manhattan Sail Club mentor. The goal of the Mentor Program is to assist Manhattan Sailing Club members in evaluating/validating their sailing skills, to train sailors for the Skipper Certification Test, to fully understand MSC Club procedures, and the conditions of the Skipper Agreement.

Acquiring Skipper Privileges entails a higher level of responsibility as the actions of you and your boat can affect the well being of the club and the enjoyment of all members, both current and future. Safety is first and foremost with the club. Safety dictates our decisions and directions.

What is an MSC Mentor?

Club Mentors involved in this program are volunteer skippers who offer their time and expertise to help other members gain knowledge and improve.

By working together, we can all become better. A mentor is a leader. Mentors are good listeners, people who care, people who want to help others realize their potential and capitalize on their strengths.

Mentoring is a shared opportunity for learning and growth. Most of us can remember a teacher, coach, neighbor or supervisor who believed in us and helped us to get started. That person helped us become who we are today. Many mentors see mentoring as a way of repaying the debt to that person – and a way of making the members, the Club, and the New York Harbor a better place to sail.

Manhattan Sailing Club boats are a shared-use fleet. All members have an opportunity to sail on the club fleet as crew, or if they have been granted Skipper Privileges, as a Skipper. Normal

seasonal use of the fleet by our membership involves both cruising and racing activities, seven days a week, three shifts a day; from opening in May until late October.

There are certain steps that should be followed to establish a successful mentoring partnership:

We encourage protégés to work with mentors and align their schedules to increase skill development and review on a regular, agreed upon basis. However, protégés are also encouraged to work with multiple mentors. This combination allows many of the club members, fleet captains, and mentors to, “get a look”, at a candidate before testing.

In discussing the protégé’s sailing goals, you will want to help the protégé set some specific goals and to develop a personal plan for improvement/attainment. These guidelines can help the protégé establish and achieve effective goals:

- Set goals that are specific.
- Make sure the goals are measurable
- Set a reasonable time frame for achieving goals
- Make a plan for reaching goals
- Monitor progress and make adjustments as necessary
- Celebrate successes

The mentoring relationship is premised on skills refinement and evaluation / validation, as well as local knowledge development - **it should not used as a "private lesson"**.

However, should a mentor wish to accept a protégé who is clearly under-qualified for the program; that alliance is okay too, the understanding being that the lesser skilled student is there to learn at a primary level.

Either party can cancel or terminate, without prejudice, the mentoring relationship at any time, but both parties should have a clear understanding of the "why(s)" for such a termination.

Having said all that, we should also state that this manual is available on line through the Manhattan Sailing Club website and available to all members and Skipper candidates as well.

Getting Started in a Mentoring Partnership

What do you do once you have connected with a mentor?

The first meeting, whether it’s face to face, on the phone, or by e-mail, should be a time of getting to know each other, building rapport, and setting up guidelines.

Talk about any expectations you may have, especially the level of confidentiality you will have. Discuss how often and for how long you will meet. It is suggested that in the initial stages partners meet once a week for an appropriate, agreed amount of time. It may need to be more often when working on a specific goal, such as preparing for the actual Skipper rating exam.

Decide how you will communicate. Decide how long you expect your formal partnership to last: it can take a while to establish the trust where both feel open to sharing honest thoughts.

Set up a checkpoint date at some point "down the road", when you will determine if the partnership is working for both of you, if the goals are being reached, or if perhaps a different partnership might be more beneficial at that point.

As soon as possible, begin to define the protégé's immediate strengths and weaknesses. ...and you're on your way to a successful mentoring relationship.

Readiness assessment:

While each mentor's assessment of a candidate shall be up to his/her own discretion, some mentors in the past have asked for referrals from two or more Fleet Captain skippers with whom the protégé has sailed. Others know that the readiness of a potential Skipper can be recognized in very short order, and simply accept all comers, subject to an evaluation sail.

Allowing new people to become Skippers inherently generates more risk for the club as a whole. Therefore, we hope to provide an environment which emphasizes responsibility and safety while also providing the opportunity and experience which allows members to increase their sailing skill and their appreciation of safe boating.

The goal of the mentoring program is to enable people to perform up to their full potential, and to lead members through a training program at a learning pace suitable for each individual. The purpose of the mentoring program is to qualify and certify as many interested persons as possible, without compromising integrity and safety.

Some of the responsibilities of a Protégé.

It is important that the protégé understand what is expected from his/her side of the equation. Close attention must be paid to the mentors on-the-water actions and communications.

- The protégé will need his/her mentor to define the skills which need improvement.
- The protégé should respond in a regular and timely fashion.
- The protégé must take an active role in working with his/her mentor.

Some of the expectations of a Protégé

- Help you assess your mentoring developmental needs.
- Help you establish mentoring goals and expectations.
- Help you create a mentoring agreement.
- Enable you to make adjustments to mentoring agreements.
- Help you monitor the progress of your mentoring relationships.
- Help you bring positive closure to your mentoring relationships.
- Help you manage multiple mentoring relationships at one time.
- Positive and constructive feedback on skills/proficiencies development.
- Increased self-awareness, boat/crew awareness, and self-discipline.

Protégés should not Expect:

- To have a mentor chosen for you;

- To be guaranteed results without effort.
- A Mentor to be your private tutor.

Expectations for Mentors

- Greatly increased sailing time (as much as you like!)
- You will learn a great deal through guiding the skill set.
- Help you connect with protégés who are seeking your expertise.
- A structure within which you can define your commitment;
- Help you negotiate expectations of the mentoring relationship.
- Help you manage mentoring activities and focus.
- Help you manage accountability with protégés.
- Help you invest your legacy of experience in others.

How does a mentor benefit from a mentoring connection?

Personal satisfaction—mentors report a sense of pride at helping another succeed. They also often state they feel they are "giving back" some of what they feel they have received in the past.

Sharpened leadership and interpersonal skills—mentors sharpen their own skills as they challenge and coach their protégés. Mentoring is generally considered one of the leadership competencies in many organizations.

Source of recognition—good mentors are well respected at all levels in the organization.

Expanded professional contacts—mentors develop professional contacts by interacting with other mentors and with contacts they make while developing their protégés.

Some Qualities of Successful Mentors

You do not have to be brilliant or perfect to be a good mentor! While the specifics of each mentoring relationship vary, the qualities of an effective mentor remain the same. Some of these qualities are:

- Supportive
- Patient
- Respectful of others
- People-oriented
- Good motivators
- Capable trainers – teachers
- Self confident.

Some things to do.

- Be interested in your protégé.
- Pay close attention to the actions of your protégé
- Appreciate even the smallest sign of growth.
- Be honest.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with your protégé.
- Try to be a good MSC sailing role model.

Some things you shouldn't do...

- Don't think you can change the world overnight.
- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Don't be judgmental.
- Don't forget that listening is an important part of communication.
- Don't use poor or profane language.
- Don't settle for rudeness or foul language.
- Don't forget how important you are to your protégé.
- Don't be overwhelmed.

A Quick Note Concerning Sailing Skills & Required Knowledge

The Skipper's Certification and rating process is a collection of tasks which must be learned, practiced, and performed by the protege. These tasks represent the MINIMUM elements of skill and knowledge necessary for safe and effective performance as a Manhattan Sailing Club skipper member.

Standards:

Standards describe the expected outcome of the task. Successful task completion is a function of how well a protege is able to complete the task without assistance. Generally, the task performance standards are as follows:

Knowledge tasks: Protege must be able to cite, from memory, the required information. Mentors may wish to ask questions concerning particular steps for accomplishment in order to measure the protege's total comprehension of the subject matter.

Skill tasks: Protege must be able to perform all performance tasks without prompting or assistance from the mentor. Each task demonstration must follow the correct sequence with little or no hesitation between the steps for accomplishment.

Performance criteria: Some steps for task accomplishment follow exact procedures which are required for performing a particular operation or using a specific piece of equipment, while others serve as general guidelines for task completion.

Frequently Asked Questions About Mentoring

What is MYC mentoring?

Mentoring links Members with experienced Skippers for skill evaluation, proficiency development and testing, as well as local knowledge and Club specific knowledge transfer.

It can be very simple and natural or very sophisticated.

What does a mentor do?

A mentor oversees the sailing skills development of another member with the specific goal of attaining his/her Skipper Certification.

He or she helps the protégé clarify weaknesses and carry out a plan to remedy them by sharing the insights and knowledge they have gained through their experiences.

The roles of the mentor include coach, teacher, motivator, counselor, guide, door opener, advisor, role model, and sponsor.

A mentor:

- Coaches the protégé in enhancing skills and proficiency development.
- Passes along organizational information (How does the Manhattan Sailing Club operate?)
- Provides candid feedback to the protégé about perceived strengths and developmental needs.
- Points out opportunities for the protégé to develop and demonstrate capabilities (as well as pointing out pitfalls to avoid)
- Advises the protégé on how to deal with real or perceived roadblocks
- Serves as a sounding board
- Encourages and motivates the protégé
- Builds the protégé's self-confidence and sense of self
- Links the protégé with others who can enhance the protégé's learning.

How does someone find a mentor?

A protégé should spend reasonable time thinking about their needs before looking for a mentor.

Look for someone whom you can respect; has the specific knowledge and skills you seek; and, has the time to help you. The mentoring skippers are on the web site (www.myc.org).

What do protégés typically want from their mentors?

Typical responses include the following: Encouragement, support, honesty, candid information and advice, a "big picture" view, guidance, suggestions, an honest appraisal of their abilities, help with their "vision," assistance in making good choices, information on opportunities available, help in defining and reaching goals, the benefit of the mentor's experiences, availability without interruptions, non-attribution, honest discussions about tough issues, and assistance in formulating a cohesive plan.

What is the time commitment?

The amount of time varies depending on the needs, expectations, and desires of the Skipper candidate and the mentor.

We highly recommend that both parties discuss their expectations at the beginning, and one of the most important factors is time. How often and for how long will you meet? Does one have a commitment at certain times that would make them unavailable? When is it okay to call?

The greatest time commitment will generally be at the beginning of the connection, as the focus is on getting to know each other and on building the relationship.

How long does a mentoring connection last?

First, it depends on the protégé's needs, remembering that successful connections are protégé-driven.

Mentoring relationships may end when the protégé has outgrown the need for his or her mentor's guidance. Sometimes, the relationship evolves into a strong friendship in which the two see each other as peers. We know of successful partnerships that lasted for only one meeting.

On the other hand, we also know of some relationships that continue far longer than a season.

However, we recommend an initial commitment of 2 - 4 months (one-third to two-thirds of one sailing season).

At that time, the mentor and protégé should discuss what they have accomplished, whether it would be beneficial to continue, when to test and / or what to work on in the future.

Can someone have more than one mentor?

Yes, especially when a protégé has needs in more than one area.

Forming relationships with several respected individuals that you can turn to for assistance is wise. It can be difficult to find the time and energy for multiple mentoring connections, so it is recommended that protégé develop one mentoring relationship before seeking additional mentors. In fact we recommend that more than one Mentor yields contrast. And the more input the better.

How many people can one person mentor?

There is no rule as to how many one can mentor, as each mentor must decide how much time they can commit to mentoring.

Because of the time and energy needed to mentor effectively, we suggest that the mentor develop one connection before deciding to take on another.

Many mentors like to take a primary and a secondary candidate, similar to a first and second mate rating.

What if I find myself in over my head as a mentor?

One of the roles of a mentor is that of "referral agent." A protégé's developmental needs may require more (or specialized) skills than you have, so it's best to learn about other available resources. If your protégé who trusts you comes to you with a problem more personal than professional (for example, their spouse has left them and the dog died), be supportive, but refer. In other words, know your limitations. Never try to professionally counsel someone having personal problems.

When should the protégés stand for the Skipper's rating?

When either the protégé or the mentor see the required skills listed by the club test.

Most of these skills are well defined and can be observed in an objective manner.

Communication skills, response time, consistency and clarity of direction being among the most important in safety first situations such as sailing..

How does the Mentor Program interface with the Fleet Captain Program?

The interface is quite simple. As soon as the Skipper's exam is passed and the agreement with the club is signed, new Skippers are automatically listed with the Fleet Captain program as First Mates.

After sailing and obtaining the recommendation of at least three Fleet Captains the new Skipper may interview with the head of Fleet Captain's program in order to be listed as such with the club.

What do we do if we find the protégé unqualified for the Skipper's rating?

First and foremost we are honest with the candidate.

Secondly we ask another Mentor and or a Fleet Captain to re-evaluate.

Thirdly we should request that the candidate take the Skipper's exam privately, marking the things they do and do not know the correct answers to, and then recommend this absent knowledge as a study guide.

In the case of deficient sailing skills, we can recommend formal instruction with the sailing school, or recommend private instruction with one of the certified instructors associated with the club or school.

What We Look for in a Mentor

Research reveals that the best mentoring connections are those in which protégés select their mentors themselves.

In the Manhattan Sailing Club, the community of Crew, Skippers, Fleet Captains and Mentors is small enough that a mentoring relationship can be learned of by word of mouth, the club web site on the internet, as well as simply participating in a Fleet Captain or evaluation sail with a potential Mentor.

The most important consideration is someone is respected. We want mentors who have accomplished things in the world of sailing that are admired and skills sought after by others.

Patience and someone who has the time to work closely with protégés to achieve Skipper Certification are high priorities.

We look for persons who are responsible and supportive of aspiring Skippers, and who will encourage candidates to accept challenges and overcome difficulties, and who will motivate and inspire sailors to reach their full potential.

The Mentoring Program of the Manhattan Sailing Club looks for those who are genuinely interested in people have a desire to help others, know how to effectively communicate and actively listen, and are able to resolve conflict and give appropriate feedback.

Self-confidence and appreciation of learning are also characteristics important to a potential mentor.

A Mentor must take pride in the Manhattan Sailing Club, and relish challenges, understand the mission, support the vision, and values of the organization.

About the Manual

This manual was the suggestion of Jon Overton, who at the time of his passing was the head of the Mentoring Program of the Manhattan Sailing Club.

Jon foresaw the day when the numbers of membership would outgrow the club's informal, less structured, "grass roots" background.

During a two year period after we lost Jon, many people began to volunteer more time to fill the void left by losing one of the club's best volunteer sailing instructors.

When Commodore Michael Fortenbaugh asked if I would help out with the program, I consulted with our Head Sailing instructor Zander Lassen about how he saw the Mentoring program in relation to the sailing school. I also asked Michael to forward any documents created by Mentors in the past. I found that Joan Lappin and Jon Overton had jointly and separately created some documentation and recommendations. Also David Morales had contributed many ideas during his time as coordinator of the Mentors.

After the 2005 season began and I was in the thick of things, I shared the data I had with fellow Mentor & Fleet Captain, Wesley Freeburg and asked for his assistance in defining an outline for a Mentor's Manual. Wesley and I have spent the past months collecting experiences, comparing insights and antidotes.

What you see here is the result of many dock side and onboard conversations, some cut and paste, and a lot of writing, edited and amended by yours truly.

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