According to ancient teachings, a state of nirvana is only reached after a steady and committed practice. Well guess what, reaching counselor-counselee nirvana is achieved in exactly the same way. The counselor and counselee relationship is only successful when both parties have dedicated themselves to the relationship and taken time to actively develop it.

Our mentorship program is the foundation of our growth, and it is the basis of our Kalypso value, Passion for Personal Development. If we seek to develop as professionals and grow as a firm we must invest in ourselves by investing in this relationship.

As busy consultants, it is easy to let this relationship slip to the bottom of the to-do list. Why does this happen? People often tell us: ‘we don’t understand the purpose of a counselor’ and ‘we are busy.’ Well, these two excuses have simple answers. First, the definition of a counselor is an assigned mentor who serves as both an objective representative for you within the firm and conduit for your feedback.

Next, it’s true that finding time to maximize the value of a counselor-counselee relationship in the fast paced consulting world is not so simple. But the thing about achieving nirvana is that it is a steady and committed practice. Like anything else, benefits cannot be realized after your first meeting or your semi-annual call to catch up before performance reviews.

So where do you start? Start simple. Below are ten actionable and easy steps to reach counselor-counselee nirvana.

1. Get face time
   Seeing each other face to face once a year at KARMA is not enough. Meet up again, you are expected to! You can meet in a fun city, in your hometown, at the client site or even at the airport. It doesn’t matter, just do it!

2. Be consistent
   Plan to talk on a regular AND frequent basis. While talking on the phone before performance reviews is regular, it’s not frequent. Counselees should set up a reoccurring meeting for at least once a month. Start there.

3. Cultivate a Culture of Candor
   Part of the value of a counselor is having a confidant. First, get to know each other and find common ground. Learn from each other’s experiences. At Kalypso, we have a culture of candor; we believe we can only get better by being open and honest. This is what we expect of each other.

   Counselees, you must demand critical feedback, even if it is progressive in nature. Create a candid environment so your counselor will feel comfortable giving you this feedback.
4. Challenge each other

Now that you are talking, become students of innovation together. Talk about what is interesting to you. Get a journal subscription for the two of you. Heck, send each other your favorite books! Whatever it is, do more than complain and give status updates, make each other better!

5. Build your team

Counselees, you have a current project team, past project teams, internal project teams, peers and other mentors, right? Do they know your counselor? Do they share feedback? Does your counselor know who to reach out to for feedback? How can your counselor become your advocate and sing your praises if they don’t know your team? Advice: Bring them together. Be a consultant, set up a call!

Counselors, you should not look unprepared and bored at a counselee’s performance review because you don’t know anything about your counselee. This looks bad for them and doesn’t reflect well on you either. This is where the mutual benefit comes into play. Encourage your counselee to let you know who their team is, and set up a line of communication with them.

6. Focus on the performance review

This relationship is about far more than being an objective representative during the performance review process, but as this is a formality, you might as well get it right!

Counselees, own your review. Paint a picture for your counselor and regale them with the true stories of your accomplishments and growth. Go as far as to script it out for them. Your counselor will feel prepared to represent you accurately and confidently. Make your counselor your advocate.

Counselors, put the onus on your counselees. Encourage them to take action rather than letting the reviews happen to them.

7. Speak up

Chemistry is more than George Young’s doctoral degree; you need it to build a relationship. Sometimes you have it naturally, sometimes you cultivate it by being consistent, and sometimes you just don’t have it. That’s ok. Let’s get serious. If this relationship is the basis of our growth as a firm and its not working, let’s try again!

Counselees, if you think you would learn more and build better confidence with another counselor, then you should have that discussion. People have many mentors in their career, so ending the formal counselor relationship doesn’t mean the mentorship or friendship will end. They will still be part of your team.

Counselors, if you both agree that it’s not quite the right fit, let someone know. The culture of candor starts here!
8. Be intentional

Being intentional about your relationship works. Write out roles and expectations for each other. Draft a mission statement, set goals and make a plan for the year like you would for your project.

9. Follow-up on feedback

You get Counseling Messages twice a year, but you get feedback constantly. Counselees, share feedback with your counselor and follow-up on it. If you need to work on a certain area in the next six months, don’t wait until before the next review period to talk about it again. At least your counselor can say that you are focused on improving on your development needs. That’s a good start.

Counselors should not be scared to discuss development needs. And certainly don’t be scared to talk about ways to get better. Brainstorm ideas and share your experiences, don’t ignore them; that would be a bad example.

10. Recognize each other

Shout it from the roof tops, write it in the newsletter, tell your project teams, tell your mom! If your counselor or counselee is the cream of the crop, spread the word. After completing the nine steps above, you both are well on your way to reaching counselor-counselee nirvana. You will want everyone to know what your counselee or counselor does to contribute to your growth, to Kalypso, to our clients, to our business partners and to the world! Let’s create a true culture of candor in that not only do we share the hard truth, but we share the easy truth too.

At Kalypso, we take a Passion for Personal Development seriously. Every Kalypsonian commits to continuous growth and development when they join the firm. By investing in counselor-counselee relationships we honor this commitment and achieve our vision to be the world’s premier innovation consulting firm.

K A L Y P S O  C O N T A C T

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