

ASCEND MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

2026

Mentee Handbook

Being selected for ASCEND means PSA sees something in you worth investing in. This handbook is your guide to making the most of that investment — not just by showing up to meetings, but by showing up with intention.

This relationship belongs to you

Your mentor is here to support your growth, but they cannot want it more than you do. The mentees who get the most from ASCEND are the ones who take ownership — who come prepared, ask honest questions, and act on what they learn.

Your mentor brings experience and perspective. You bring your goals, your challenges, and your willingness to grow. Both matter equally.

A note on mentoring in today's workplace

- We are living through a period of rapid change — AI, organizational shifts, and uncertainty are reshaping what leadership looks like. Your mentor has navigated change throughout their career. So have you.
- The most valuable conversations in this program will not just be about tactics and career moves. They will be about how to stay grounded, intentional, and human-first in the middle of all of it.

What great mentees do

Come prepared

- Review the monthly agenda before each meeting.
- Come with something specific — a challenge you are navigating, a question you have been sitting with, or a win you want to share.
- Follow through on commitments you make in sessions.

Be honest

- Tell your mentor what you actually need, not what you think they want to hear.
- If a conversation is not landing for you, say so — constructively. This helps your mentor support you better.
- Share the real challenges, not just the polished version.

Be open

- Approach feedback as information, not judgment. Your mentor's honest observations are one of the most valuable things they can offer.
- Consider perspectives that challenge your current thinking — even when it is uncomfortable.
- Check your ego at the door. The mentees who grow the most are the ones willing to be a learner, regardless of what they already know.

Take action

- Apply what you discuss. Insight without action is just a good conversation.
- Report back — let your mentor know what you tried, what worked, and what did not.
- Own your development. Your mentor is a guide, not a driver.

Invest in the relationship

- Show up on time and be fully present.
- Respect your mentor's time — they are giving it voluntarily.
- Let them know when their guidance has made a difference. Mentors grow from this relationship too.

Common mentee pitfalls

These patterns tend to limit how much mentees get from the program. They are easy to slip into — and easy to course-correct once you notice them.

| Avoid this | And this |
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| Waiting for your mentor to drive everything — great mentees bring energy and questions, not just availability. | Forgetting to follow through — nothing stalls a mentoring relationship faster than repeated broken commitments. |
| Being vague about what you need — "I just want to learn from you" is a starting point, not a goal. | Comparing your path to your mentor's — their journey is context, not a blueprint. |
| Dismissing feedback that stings — the feedback that is hardest to hear is often the most useful. | Only sharing the wins — your mentor's experience is most valuable when you are honest about the hard stuff. |
| Treating sessions as check-boxes — showing up without preparation means both of you leave with less. | Expecting immediate answers — some of the best mentoring happens in questions, not solutions. |
| Keeping challenges to yourself — your mentor cannot help with what they do not know about. | Waiting until November to reflect — growth is happening now. Notice it. |

Your commitments as a mentee

By participating in ASCEND, you are committing to:

- Meeting with your mentor monthly from April through November.
- Reviewing the monthly agenda and training module before each session.
- Completing the 360 assessment and attending your individual debrief (May 11–22).
- Finalizing your ASCEND goal worksheet in June.
- Attending your assigned group sessions — check the Program Calendar for your dates.
- Being present, honest, and engaged in every conversation.
- Reaching out to the Piercing Strategies team if you have concerns or need support.

How to get the most out of each session

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| Before | Review the agenda. Think about one challenge, one win, and one question you want to bring. |
| During | Be present. Take notes. Ask follow-up questions. Engage with the scenario — do not just observe it. |
| After | Apply at least one thing from the conversation before your next meeting. Come back ready to share what happened. |

Getting support

If something comes up — a concern about how the relationship is going, a question about the program, or something you need support navigating — reach out to the Piercing Strategies team. You do not have to figure everything out in your mentor sessions.

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| Monthly office hours | Available throughout the program — check the Participant Vault for scheduling. |
| Direct contact | arika@piercingstrategies.com |
| Participant Vault | piercingstrategies.com/psaascend |

A final word

ASCEND is an investment in you. PSA selected you because they believe you have the potential to lead at a higher level. Your mentor signed up because they want to help you get there.

The only thing standing between you and a transformational eight months is your own willingness to show up fully — for your mentor, for the program, and most importantly, for yourself.

You were chosen. Now choose to make the most of it.

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Developed by Piercing Strategies · piercingstrategies.com/psaascend