

How to Mentor the SAS Bee

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ABSTRACT

There are a few good SAS Do's when mentoring young minds. They need growth without stumbling. Offering tips, training, and advice parallels closely with these young minds having an internship. Therefore, as a mentor, here within are Do's based on my experience along with a template to capture your own.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine standing in a classroom. Who guides the class? Now stand at a job site. Who guides the new employee? Been there as a new employee, looking for someone with the know to guide me. Nothing. Did school cover it all? For my first paying gig, it was stated in my college handbook that student teaching was an internship. There I was paired with a seasoned teacher who shared with me the frontline duties. Comparing that with a college job where there was no internship, internships and such make sense to build the best people. What does it look like when SAS jobs offer something akin to internships?

Focusing on my SAS journey, I began in a master's degree class. At first, I was weary. Is this Art History 101 again? If so, I need to run as that was the shortest class experience of my bachelor's time! However, for this class, I became a SAS Bee ready to keep the nectar. I learned data step basics from a bright statistician's mind. Required to take the PROC SQL course next, I realized that I had a favorite. I'll keep you in suspense. I took my two-course SAS self to my first statistical programming job knowing oh so much; not even close... I needed beyond the book help; through my time, I've had several mentors. From the learner's experience, here are a few things that worked to improve me.

COLLEGE

Classes that teach SAS. My classes required textbooks which often become a savings plan for many college students. After checking my finances, I opted to keep both of my SAS books; I encourage you to do likewise. These books have repeatedly been positive tools while in the industry. My textbooks were The Little SAS Book: A Primer by Lora D. Delwiche and Susan J. Slaughter and SAS Certification Prep Guide: Advanced Programming for SAS® 9 Third Edition by SAS Institute. My gloss notation from my college professor's comments help too, and the book quizzes are fun to look at again.

WORKFORCE

My next growth spurt was the interview process that I encountered twice. In conjunction with my learning that an interview is a two-way conversation, as the interviewee, I want to determine if the job is a good fit for me. My first interview, which led to a good job, had a dedicated SAS knowledge portion where the company offered SAS code and a few moments to study the code. The code and questions allowed me to know the level of SAS that was expected upon entry. My second SAS job had a similar element as they asked me to submit my SAS code with my

application. Both methods allow the interviewee to realize that the companies are serious in their use of SAS.

Thankful to find co-workers with a mentoring spirit at my first SAS job, I completed projects and submitted them to the customer. For me, having at least three co-workers with the willingness to be the mentor for a younger SAS coder was uplifting; they were the ones who offered advice on selecting the right data when data dictionaries were slim. These people helped me to keep coming back each day ready to produce the reports expected. One woman also shared a cool way to keep up with reoccurring code – clip and save in text. I changed the format to an Excel where each tab contains its own subject allowing me to easily find the most frequently used code.

I found myself with the opportunity to switch jobs such that I would be in a different data pool. Ergo, I had co-workers with more building methods. My direct supervisor would have me study, write, and sit with her to block code – constantly pushing me to be more than a beginner in SAS. Her constant correction was balanced with another co-worker who would seek me as a mentor on newer topics. Being on both ends brought me to the world of intermediate. Here I would sit and talk the other co-worker through the code while he typed. He seemed to prefer being the one to type as it was instrumental. While we were still in the same department, I enjoyed watching him grow in SAS. The learner became a mentor...

One worker paved the way for me to attend and present at my first Southeast SAS User Group (SESUG) conference. She secured my funding, drove me to a topic she knew would benefit the audience, and guided my edits. After drafting, editing, and code testing, I came away from the conference placing myself in the category of “I know a little more.” It is still a phenomenal way to build up SAS – attending and presenting at SESUG conferences.

SAS CERTIFICATION EXAMS

Accepting that I was now better than college-level SAS study, I went for the SAS Certification Exam and made it. Only you know if you are ready to apply. I smile remembering the prep time I used. Pulling all textbooks, I combed them for every detail. Worth it! They do cost and gleaned no additional pay; but, it is fun to own the pin.

CONFERENCES, etc.

What I find now to be my most beneficial tools, as COVID changed the face of share time, are basics provided by the industry: SAS Conferences, SAS webinars, SAS How to Tutorials, SAS Bowl, SAS Community, SESUG attendance, SESUG paper writing, and SAS papers/posters posted to the web at Lex Jansen. SAS Conferences, webinars, and tutorials allow you to sit and absorb content. SAS Bowl allows you to test your SAS skills by subject offering, with fun; player beware. SAS Community provides links to options at many levels. SESUG attendance is a time to learn content at the user's group level.

Once you have all the concepts of SAS, the next thing someone drops into your world is a new platform or version. I've used UNIX, base, and SAS Enterprise Guide. Each platform seems parallel in coding; but, the versions can prove to stump this SAS programmer. To me, one of the best ways to study a change in SAS or to learn a new topic is to write a paper on it for submission and presentation at your local user's group. That's a key part of SESUG for me. Time permitting, share your work with at least one co-worker before moving forward with a larger audience. They tend to give the best feedback as to how your research meets the need of the company.

PRESENTATION EXAMPLE

SESUG presentation would not be normal without a little SAS code offering. Below is something I studied from my previous lessons.

6. ASCII CHARACTERS – AVOID ISSUES DUE TO SPECIAL CHARACTERS

Special characters should be preserved to avoid issues with tasks such as matching. SAS® does allow the use of ASCII characters. The *ASCII Table, ASCII Codes: American Standard Code for Information Interchange* website provides the “Extended ASCII Characters” chart which provides the correct key sequence for special characters.

In table *eight*, ASCII characters are preserved. In table *nine*, they are not.

eight

Obs	English	Spanish	French
1	spring	la primavera	le printemps
2	summer	el verano	l'été
3	fall	el otoño	l'automne
4	winter	el invierno	l'hiver

nine

Obs	English	Spanish	French
1	spring	la primavera	le printemps
2	summer	el verano	fete
3	fall	el otono	l'automne
4	winter	el invierno	l'hiver

A PROC COMPARE indicates that values do not match if ASCII characters appear in one dataset but not the other.

```
PROC COMPARE base=eight compare=nine;  
run;
```

The COMPARE Procedure
Comparison of WORK.EIGHT with WORK.NINE
(Method=EXACT)

Value Comparison Results for Variables

Obs	Base Value	Compare Value
	Spanish	Spanish
3	el otoño	el otono

Obs	Base Value	Compare Value
	French	French
2	l'été	l'ete

TEMPLATE

My musing of steps to build SAS are, I hope, another tool for mentoring SAS. If you are new to SAS, seek a mentor. The template below will assist anyone interested.

Topic	Examples	Yours
Course work	Classes	
Books	<u>The Little SAS Book: A Primer</u> by Lora D. Delwiche and Susan J. Slaughter; <u>SAS Certification Prep Guide: Advanced Programming for SAS® 9 Third Edition</u> by SAS Institute	
Interview	Look for expectations	
Co-workers	Ask for assistance; Data dictionaries	
SnipSAS	Keep frequently used code clipped	
Assessment	SAS Certification	
SAS Conferences	Southeast SAS User Group (SESUG); SAS Innovate	
SAS Webinars	SAS On-Demand Webinar: <u>10 Tips for Simulating Data With SAS®</u>	
SAS Community	SAS	
SAS How To Tutorials	<u>Getting Started with SAS Windowing Environment</u>	
SESUG	Write a paper	
Lex Jansen	SESUG papers/posters	
Your Mentors	Co-workers	
Work / Group Meetings	Co-workers come together monthly to present different topics	

CONCLUSION

Thank you for attending my session. May your ideas support those learning SAS within your 1-degree.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Your comments and questions are valued and encouraged. Contact the author at:

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