

Guide for mentees

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship, usually over a set period of time, in which an established business or professional person (mentor) provides consistent support, guidance and practical help for a less experienced person (mentee).

It is a voluntary relationship, which the mentee or mentor can end at any time.

Mentoring is a way of enabling the mentee to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to perform at a higher level, and of giving them access to impartial, non-judgmental guidance and support.

During the mentoring-process the mentor shares their personal skills, knowledge and experience with the mentee to enable him or her to explore their personal and professional situation. It is a two-way process in which the mentor and mentee work together to set and achieve predetermined goals and objectives.

The benefits of mentoring

Whether you are starting out on your career path or contemplating retirement, or you are at any of the stages in between, you will constantly be coming across career challenges. However, the chances are that there is someone out there who has been through similar challenges and can help by providing you with sound guidance and inspiration on how to move forward.

Reach your true potential

You can look for a mentor that will be able to provide you with advice:

- on how to enter industries and professions
- on how to progress within industries and professions
- on specific job challenges
- on specific industry challenges
- on how to move job roles and industries

Challenges a mentor can help with

- Choosing a career
 - Changing career
 - Career progression
 - Progressing in a new role
 - Developing Leadership skills
 - Dealing with conflict
 - Managing people
 - Developing new skills
 - Communication & influencing skills
 - Creativity & innovation
 - Stress management & work-life balance
 - Plus lots more...
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What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who will encourage and support you to make the most of your career, yourself and/or your business. The role of a mentor is to be a trusted confidante, helping the mentee to make informed choices and to encourage a journey of self-discovery.

Although the final decisions are always in your hands, a mentor can be invaluable in guiding you to consider all your options, get new information and identify the support you need.

What a mentor should do

- Provide an outside perspective on you, your career and/or business
- Listen, in confidence to the things that are worrying you about your business or career
- Help you by sharing their own experience of failures and successes
- Give you friendly, unbiased support and guidance
- Provide honest and constructive feedback
- Be a sounding board for your ideas
- Facilitate your decision-making by suggesting alternatives based on personal experience.
- Provide ongoing support and encouragement

A mentor is there to

- Guide you to look at a wide variety of options and consider alternative courses of action in order to solve problems for yourself, rather than to give answers or provide solutions.
 - Help you gain new personal skills, experiences and knowledge.
 - Help you to develop new attitudes and behaviour, and therefore improve your career performance.
 - Release and develop your own resourcefulness – it is up to you to decide whether to use the information you receive from your mentor.
 - Remember – it is NOT your mentor's responsibility to make your career a success; the ultimate responsibility for making your career successful is down to you.
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Mentor's pull - they don't push

A mentor never “pushes”, whether by telling, instructing or giving advice.

Mentor's PULL

- They listen to understand
- They ask questions
- They will paraphrase and summarise discussions
- They can suggest options
- They will give feedback
- They can offer guidance
- They help you to solve your problems – but they won't solve them for you.

The key skills of a mentee

1. Active Listening – more on this later!
2. Questioning to clarify and make sure you have understood correctly
3. Questioning to explore additional options and consequences
4. Being prepared to act on what has been agreed with your mentor

The Mentoring Process – The Mentee's Role

1. To own and take responsibility for discussion content – don't expect the mentor to solve your problems or provide quick fixes. Remain aware that the purpose of mentoring is to work on your professional development.
2. Be open to developing your self-awareness and to making changes.
3. Be open to what the mentor has to say and to their advice; this doesn't mean you have to agree with it. It does mean you should receive it, reflect upon it and then decide whether you agree and wish to act on it.
4. Reflect between sessions on what has been discussed
5. Take the action agreed.

Establishing a Successful Relationship with your Mentor

Once you have been matched with your mentor we suggest that you:

- Draw up a timetable of regularly spaced meetings in advance
- Establish a set of ground rules to which you will both abide.
- Keep notes of your meetings and use these as the basis for ongoing discussion.
- Work towards developing a trusting relationship and establishing a good rapport with your mentor.
- Aim at maintaining the relationship for as long as is appropriate to your needs.

Effective mentoring meetings provide a sense of purpose and achievement.

Making a mentoring relationship work

First conversation preparation

In preparation for the initial meeting it is worth considering the following so that you can both be clear about expectations:

- What do you hope to get from the process? – sharing your mentor's knowledge, experience and expertise, skills development, personal development, direction or something else?
- What do you hope or expect to get from your mentor in relation to your objectives?
- How will you know/measure whether objectives have been achieved?
- Is there anything you don't want to discuss as part of the mentoring?

Logistics

At the start of the mentoring process you should have an initial discussion around:

- **How often and how long to meet for.** An hour is generally considered to be the normal arrangement, but this can be adjusted to suit individual needs. Time restrictions of both parties do need to be considered.
 - **How many meetings/how long should the process last.** The usual cycle is about 6 meetings over 6 months, but this can vary depending on the complexity of the mentoring goals and individual's needs. Dates and times for future meetings can be set at the initial meeting.
 - **Scheduling** - At the outset of your relationship it is worthwhile scheduling your meetings and getting them in the diary, ideally 3-6 months in advance.
 - **Where to meet.** Somewhere neutral is usually preferable and should be a place where you will feel confident and secure enough to discuss concerns openly. You might want to consider "meeting" by phone or virtually using something like Skype, which can be just as effective as meeting face to face.
 - **Communication between meetings.** Agree how much communication is acceptable between meetings and how this communication can be done, email, telephone, messaging etc.
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- **Record keeping** – agree who will be responsible for note taking and actions agreed at each meeting.
- **Confidentiality** – discuss your individual understanding of what confidentiality means and check that your ideas align.
- **Prematurely ending the relationship** – Discuss how you will manage things if either of you wishes to end the mentoring relationship before the agreed time.
- **Boundaries** – Clarify with the mentee how much (if any) “work” you are happy to do between meetings and any other boundaries you may want to set.

Goals/objectives

The most effective mentoring conversation needs to focus on setting and achieving goals, exploring issues and making informed decisions. A good place to start the process is by reflecting on your experience and defining your key challenge(s).

Define the challenge

Mentoring needs to have a purpose, so discuss broad aims from the outset and clearly identify the scope of the issues that you need to work on. At the heart of the mentoring conversation are 2 key questions:

1. **Where are you now?**
2. **Where do you want to be?**

There are a number of tools that you can use to help you answer these questions – these tools can also be found in the relationship section of the mentoring platform.

Where you are now

SWOT – This will help you to understand your mentee's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. A copy can be found at the end of this guide and found in the relationship section of the mentoring platform.

The G-Star Model – This looks at goals, current situation, thinking, actions and results. A copy can be found at the end of this guide and found in the relationship section of the mentoring platform.

Where your mentee wants to be

Setting SMART goals

Once you have clearly identified the issues and challenges that your mentee is facing, the next step is to set goals and milestones that you can work towards. This will give focus and ensure that the mentoring relationship doesn't stall or become side tracked.

A copy of the SMART goals template can be found at the end of this guide and found in the relationship section of the mentoring platform.

Maintaining momentum

To prevent inertia in the mentoring relationship the mentor needs to take initial responsibility, but after two or three meetings the mentee should take the lead.

- **Meetings** – Even if you think you have no goals, issues or projects to discuss, it is still worth keeping to planned meetings as it helps build and nurture the relationship and ensures it lasts.
- **Agenda** – Have an agenda, it doesn't have to be formal but it will prepare you for your meetings and help you get the most out of them by being more focussed and productive.
- **Agree Actions** – At the end of each meeting ensure you discuss actions and give some commitment to complete agreed actions, otherwise your meetings just become chats and you will lose momentum.
- **Reviewing** – Each meeting should review actions and review progress towards the main goals.

Mentoring techniques

Listening

Mentees need good listening skills, but this can be easier said than done. The brain capacity to process information is four times the speed we can speak. This means that the mind can easily wander off during conversations, when we are supposed to be listening.

This is compounded by the fact that our ears never close, they are constantly taking in and interpreting sound, whilst filtering out 99% of sensory input to prevent overload. This means that what the speaker is really saying can be missed if the listener is not fully present in the conversation.

Being present means stilling the mind, suspending judgement, postponing analysis, being able to concentrate and attend all the messages; what they say, how they are saying it, what they are not saying.

Effective listening involves feeding back what you think are the relevant points to the speaker and checking that what you heard is what they meant.

Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

Mentoring is about getting you to open up and talk more, not about a Mentor doing all the talking and providing you with all the answers. Your mentor may ask some probing questions to unlock your thoughts, feelings, aspirations, goals, values and priorities. Often this results in you finding your own solutions.

Receiving Feedback

A Mentor's feedback can help you discover your talents and potential strengths.

Feedback is information that can influence future actions, it is empowering. We can choose to modify what we do to get better outcomes if we get feedback at the right time and in the right way.

Feedback provides a systematic approach to developing better relationships, learning and improving performance and staying on track and achieving goals.

There are three types of feedback

1. **Affirming** – Behaviours you should continue
2. **Correcting** – Behaviours you need to do differently
3. **Reviewing** – A collaborative approach which reflects on an experience or activity to create a better outcome.

If you receive corrective feedback be aware your automatic response will be defensive – fight/flight. If this happens you may just need to take a deep breath and listen. Try to get clarity around what is the concern, what is the impact and what should you do instead

Feedback Evaluation.

- Why are they giving you this feedback?
- How will it assist you?
- Will you get better outcomes if you make a change?

You decide if you feel the feedback is important.

The feedback may be the result of a perception issue, so consider what have you done or are doing to create this perception of you? What do you need to do to alter this?

Create an action plan of steps you are going to take based on this feedback.

Ending the relationship

There will come a time when the mentoring relationship will begin to draw to an end. At this point you must both “let go” so you can maintain your independence. It will then become your responsibility to put what you have learnt into practice.

Although the two of you will probably continue to have some form of interaction, it should be on a more casual basis, where you consider each other as equals.

Here are some tips to help you end your relationship successfully.

- Fix a date for your final discussion, have a chat and decide on a date.
 - Remind each other of the date of the final session in your penultimate discussion so that you can prepare for it.
 - You might want to look at ways you can continue your learning.
 - As part of the final meeting you might want to reflect on what you feel has been of value, what did you enjoy, what could have been done differently.
 - Say Goodbye
 - Think about how you can end the session on a positive note.
 - Have a look at the goals you set when you first met then congratulate yourselves when you see how far you have come.
 - You could also talk about the thing you most enjoyed, what you’ll remember most or the most important thing you’ve both learned.
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SWOT analysis

Strengths

- **What are your strengths?** - for example, educational qualifications, professional certification/affiliation, work experience, technical knowledge of your field, personal characteristics, specific transferable skills.

Weaknesses

- **What are your weaknesses?** - for example, poor interview skills, weak job hunting skills, lack of work experience.
- **What could you improve?**
- **Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your career?**

Opportunities

- **What good opportunities can you spot?**
- **What interesting trends are you aware of?** For example, changes in technology, markets, government policy, social patterns, population profiles and lifestyle changes.

Threats

- **What obstacles do you face?**
 - **What is the competition doing?**
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The G-STAR model

What are your GOALS?

- What will give you the most value from today's session?
- What are your goals for today's discussion?
- Do you have control over the goal you are discussing?
- When do you need to achieve this goal by?

What SITUATION are you facing?

- What do you know about the current situation and can you describe it?
- What do you not know about the current situation?
- How do you feel about the situation?

What is your THINKING at this time?

- What options have you considered about the situation?
- What underlying assumptions are you making?
- How do you think others would solve this problem?
- How will you measure your success?

What ACTIONS are you considering?

- What do you need to do first?
- By when do you need to have this done?
- In what sequence will you do these tasks?
- Can you think of anything that may disrupt your actions?

What RESULTS do you expect?

- Are the results realistic?
 - Have you considered other outcomes?
 - What contingencies can you put in place?
 - What are the consequences of not achieving these results?
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Creating SMART goals

Specific

What needs to be achieved. Be specific, think about how you could clearly demonstrate you have achieved the goal (e.g. “Respond to 100% of IT support enquiries within 24 hours of receipt” – **specific**, respond to IT support calls – **not specific**).

Measurable

How will you measure if it has been achieved? (e.g. “Respond to 100% of IT support calls” – 100% can be measured)

Achievable

Whilst your goal needs to stretch and challenge you, it must be something that is within your control and ability to be able to achieve.

Realistic

It is reasonable to expect you to set goals only in areas in which you have some influence and not ones that can be derailed completely by factors beyond your control.

Timebound

A goal should always include a time frame so that you can track progress and ensure it is completed within a realistic timeframe.
