

Guide for mentors

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.

What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who will encourage and support a mentee to make the most of their career or business. As a mentor, your role is to be a trusted confidante, helping the mentee to make informed choices.

Although the final decisions are always in the mentee's hands, a mentor can be invaluable in guiding the mentee to consider the options, get new information and identify the support they need.

Mentor characteristics

- Enthusiasm
- Passion
- A desire to make a difference
- Willingness to share experience
- The desire to inspire
- An approachable manner
- Good listening, questioning and feedback skills

What can you achieve from being a mentor?

- Personal fulfilment from investing in others
 - New mentoring skills
 - A feeling of being valued as a role model
 - The chance to enjoy a rewarding challenge
 - The chance to be inspired and enlightened
-

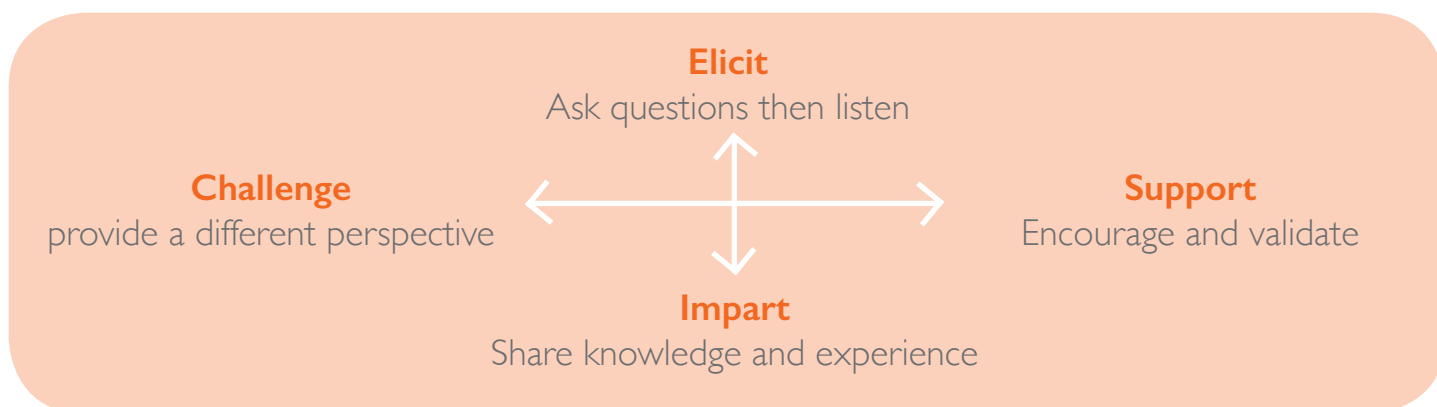
The mentor's role

The traditional view of a mentor is someone who shares experience and imparts knowledge. In contemporary mentoring a mentor does a lot more listening than talking.

A mentor's role isn't to tell a mentee what to do, it is to act as a guide. A mentor asks questions and draws out the mentee's own thoughts before offering advice and providing additional options.

A mentor also challenges, offers a different perspective, another point of view and provides support.

While no two mentoring relationships are the same, all mentoring relationships should start with the same solid foundations.



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.
-

A mentor should expect to:

- Encourage mentees to develop their own resourcefulness: mentoring does not mean giving advice – it is up to the mentee to decide whether to use the information they receive from their mentor.
- Guide the mentee to look at a wide variety of options and consider alternative courses of action in order to solve problems for themselves, rather than to give answers or provide solutions.
- Be a sounding-board and provide a link into other information and people who can help. The mentor doesn't need to have all the answers.
- Help the mentee gain new personal skills, experiences and knowledge.
- Provide an outside perspective on the mentee and their career.
- Help the mentee to develop new attitudes and behaviour, thereby improving both their personal and business performance.
- Listen, in confidence, to the things that are worrying the mentee about their career.
- Help the mentee by sharing their own experience of failures and successes.
- Give friendly, unbiased support and guidance.
- Facilitate decision-making by suggesting alternatives based on personal experience.
- Provide honest and constructive feedback.
- Provide ongoing support and encouragement.

Sometimes all a mentee needs is to talk to someone and this process in itself will make actions and solutions obvious. The mentoring process then becomes a catalyst for change.

Effective mentoring relationships

Based on the results of a number of studies on effective mentor/mentee relationships, the following are a number of pointers to help develop an effective mentoring relationship:

- **Develop trust.** Both mentor and mentee need to be patient to develop a relationship of trust. It may take time for a mentee to develop trust in their new mentor.
 - **Consider your purpose** in the relationship as one based upon giving. Understanding that, at least initially, the relationship could be one-directional.
 - **Offer reassurance and support.** Don't be afraid to tell your mentee that you believe in them, too few people ever hear these words.
 - **Suggest ways to solve problems.** Try to listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgement. Practical suggestions rather than criticism or instructions are usually most helpful for your mentee. Whenever possible, try to think together of ways to solve a problem, rather than telling your mentee what you think she/he should do.
 - **Identify the mentee's interests and take them seriously.** Try to include your mentee in determining both the activities you engage in and the areas in which you offer help.
 - **Do not force the mentee to talk about personal issues.** Delving into your mentee's personal or family life, particularly early in the relationship, is usually not productive. If your mentee resists sharing information, don't push. Silence does not necessarily mean rejection. It's important not to measure a relationship's success by the extent of the mentee's disclosure.
 - **Have realistic expectations.** Many mentors get discouraged when they feel their mentees aren't "turning their lives around" or making huge improvements. Although you certainly will have an impact on your mentee, it is unlikely that she / he will be totally transformed by this relationship. Gains may seem small, but they are nonetheless signs of progress. Adjusting your expectations and understanding that your mentee may not always express gratitude directly will help prevent mentor "burnout" and frustration.
 - **Try to relate to your mentee's personal experiences.** Although you may not have faced the same problems as your mentee, try to reference them to some of the difficulties you have had within your career.
 - **Attempt to understand** your mentee's family, social class and culture.
-

Making a mentoring relationship work

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.
 - 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 you reflecting on the mentee's experience and defining their 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 Is The Mentee Now?**
2. **Where Does The Mentee 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. The mentor's role at this stage is to:

- **Keep the process on track** in terms of maintaining an awareness of time, focus and boundaries and retaining a constructive tone.
- **Challenge** inconsistencies or assumptions in what you hear from the mentee or challenge the mentee to stretch themselves. However, challenging should be done sensitively and appropriately to help them open up possibilities rather than close them down.
- **Encourage** the mentee to explore a wide range of options and possibilities.
- **Share expertise** with your mentee
- **Encourage the setting of action points** that are specific, realistic and time bound.
- **Review action points** to ensure they are completed and that progress is being made to reaching goals and overcoming challenges.

Build rapport and trust

- View your purpose in the relationship as being available to give. Understanding that, at least initially, the relationship could be one-directional.
 - Offer reassurance and support.
 - Suggest ways to solve problems.
 - Try to listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgement. Practical suggestions rather than criticism are usually most helpful for your mentee.
 - Whenever possible, try to think together of ways to solve a problem, rather than tell your mentee what you think she/he should do.
-

Mentoring techniques

Listening

Mentors 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 a person to open up and talk more, not about the Mentor doing all the talking and providing the mentee with all the answers. You may need to probe to unlock thoughts, feelings, aspirations, goals, values and priorities. This often results in the mentee finding their own solutions.

Use questions like:

- “Can you expand more on that?”
 - “Tell me more about that”
 - Sometimes probing questions can be of a delicate nature and need “cushioning”
 - “Do you mind if I ask?”
 - Adding more and better questions adds value to the mentoring conversation.
-

Mind mapping

Mind maps, sometimes called radiant thinking, can be a useful tool in mentoring relationships.

Start with the issue or topic that needs exploring written and circled in the centre of a page, draw out the issues associated with the central theme and place them in the map as branches radiating from the central theme. Each of these associated issues can be explored and developed in the same way.

The resulting mind map can be used to evaluate which ideas are most important and worth pursuing first and which are less pertinent to the situation at hand. This can be a useful technique for a mentee having difficulty seeing his or her way forward.

Force field analysis

This can be a useful technique for considering the arguments for and against a course of action.

A plan or proposal is recorded in the central of three columns.

Favourable factors are listed in one adjacent column; unfavourable factors are listed in the final column.

By carrying out the analysis you can plan to strengthen the factors supporting a course of action, and to reduce the impact of opposing factors.

Use of line, colour and even drawings or doodles on the force field analysis can be helpful in uncovering hitherto unknown hopes and fears and unappreciated strengths.

Personal quality profile

This can help when a mentee appears to be suffering from low self-esteem.

Asking the mentee to list his or her personal qualities can boost confidence.

A follow up exercise might be to encourage the mentee to ask two friends to describe how they see him or her. If their opinions do not match the mentee's you might encourage them to work out why this is.

Appreciative inquiry

When a mentee is “stuck” or despondent you could ask them to recall a situation in which they felt successful or proud of an achievement. Then help the mentee to identify the factors which contributed to that achievement and feeling of well-being. Finally explore how some of those factors might be brought into play in the current situation.

Career scenarios

This is a longer-term strategy which could form the basis for a series of meetings. The mentee maps out in writing or diagrams up to three different career visions, taking into account his or her aims, abilities, constraints and knowledge of opportunities that might be available.

Encourage the mentee initially to add realistic timescales and to be prepared to move between differing versions rather than to stick rigidly to one so that failing at certain hurdles does not have such a big impact. In time one clear career path may emerge from this process. Identifying small steps towards bigger goals is likely to be important.

Mentor communication styles

To make the mentoring conversation work you need communication strategies. There are two complimentary communication styles that you can use:

- **Facilitative style** - this involves drawing out the thoughts and feelings of the other person, drawing out their ideas, evaluating and developing these and collaboratively evaluating ideas and options.
- **Authoritative style** - this is an assertive rather than an aggressive approach. It can involve providing objective feedback and challenging perceptions. Informing, explaining facts, assessing resources, sharing experiences and guiding are all part of this style. It may also involve describing likely consequences of specific actions, advising and recommending.

Feedback

Feedback is information that can influence future actions, it is empowering as 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:

- **Affirming** - the amount of positive, affirming feedback people need to flourish is roughly three times more than negative, corrective feedback.
- **Corrective** - feedback enables people to change course to achieve the outcomes they desire. However, if it sounds like criticism it can lead to defensiveness and a fight/flight reaction.
- **Reviewing** - this approach involves a collaborative approach which reflects on an experience or activity to create a better outcome.

Giving feedback

- Do as soon as possible after an outcome.
 - Be sincere
 - Be specific
 - State the benefit
 - Shape the feedback to the person
 - Stick to the point
-

Reviews

It is valuable to ensure that reviews are incorporated into the mentoring process, at the very least at the midpoint in the relationship.

- This should include a review of goals and milestones to check progress is being made.
- Also review if practical arrangements are working out well.
- Is the mentee able to identify progress as a result of the mentoring?
- Is your style and approach working well for the mentee?
- Does the mentees approach in preparing for meetings and completing tasks suit you?
- Has the partnership come to a natural end or is the end in sight?

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 the mentee can develop their independence. It will then become his/her 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 have to look at ways your mentee can continue his/her learning.
- As part of this 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.

Celebrate your success - have a look at the goals you set when you first met and congratulate yourselves when you see how far you have come.

Say Goodbye - think about how you can end the session on a positive note. You could talk about the thing you most enjoyed, what you'll remember most or the most important thing you've both learned.

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?**
-

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?
-

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.
