

Mentoring: Tips for mentors



Reference Guide

What is mentor?

A mentor is a more experienced person who supports the professional development of another staff member through a series of time-limited, confidential, one-to-one conversations.

It is important to note that a mentor is not a manager, and thus a mentor does not replace the mentee's supervisor with regard to their day-to-day work.

What does a mentor do?

A mentor can assist a mentee for instance through:

- Being a sounding board
- Imparting knowledge and skills
- Sharing lessons learnt through personal anecdotes and experiences including mistakes and successes
- Asking thought-provoking questions to promote self-reflection and self-insight
- Helping another person acknowledge his or her accomplishments
- Offering support, understanding and encouragement in response to another's frustrations and challenges
- Introducing your mentee to new networks and contacts

How long does mentoring last?

There are no rules about how long a mentoring relationship lasts. Not all mentoring relationships are the same, so the time commitment varies. Depending on the goals you set with your mentee, the mentoring relationship may last 4 or 5 meetings or it may last up to 12 months or longer.

Deciding to be a mentor

If you are thinking of being a mentor, or have been approached to be a mentor, ask yourself:

- What is the mentee seeking to achieve through mentoring? What skills and experiences can I bring to this?
- What are my expectations of the mentoring commitment and do these match those of the mentee?

- Are there any obstacles that could impede this commitment, and am I able to manage these?
- Am I able to commit enough time to the mentoring relationship?
- Am I seen as an effective listener, a person who can create a positive accepting environment of open communication?
- Am I able to provide constructive insights as well as to provide positive feedback and encouragement to others?
- Do I keep my promises, following through on commitments?

Four Stages of Mentoring

Once you have agreed to be a mentor, there are typically four stages through which the mentoring relationship will progress.

STAGE 1: BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP

The first 1 or 2 meetings are about getting to know each other and discussing how the mentoring relationship will work. Discussion could include:

- Each person's background, experiences, interests and expectations of mentoring including frequency of contact, preference for communicating (in-person, phone, email) timeframes and confidentiality.
- The mentee's career aspirations and key work-related challenges
- Experience from previous mentoring, if any
- Preliminary focus of the mentoring relationship

STAGE 2: SET GOALS

The first few meetings also include setting specific goals. Mentoring goals help the mentee gain clarity, get the most out of the mentoring relationship and to focus their efforts. Through discussion, you can help your mentee clarify their goal(s). Goals can include improving skills in a specific area, finding ways progressing his or her career or perhaps seeking guidance on a major decision.

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STAGE 3: WORK TOWARDS GOALS

This stage is typically the longest. The focus is helping your mentee work towards achieving their goals including through conversations, sharing reference material, identifying professional development activities and introducing your mentee to colleagues.

During this stage, ways to add value as a mentor can include:

- Helping your mentee see alternative interpretations and approaches
- Sharing successful strategies that both you and your mentee have used in the past that could apply to new challenges
- Encouraging your mentee to see things more broadly or deeply. For example if he/she talks more about facts, help him/her to balance this with exploring feelings, or vice versa. Similarly, if he/she focuses on the details or the immediate problems, help him/her to see the bigger picture or longer term.

It is also important during this stage, take some time to reflect:

- How is the mentoring relationship progressing? What has been working well to date?
- What changes or adjustments are needed to the mentoring goals or the mentoring relationship?

STAGE 4: ENDING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This stage includes bringing the mentoring relationship to a close, reviewing the mentee's goals and exploring the support which may assist your mentee in the future. Your final discussion could include:

- What have we accomplished and what progress has been made towards your mentee's goals?

"I'm finding that our styles are so different that I am having difficulty following through on your suggestions. I think that it may work better for me to find a mentor with a style more like my own."

As a mentor you could say "I'm finding that I can't support you in the way I think you need and it

may be better for you to find somebody who has a similar style and approach to your own.

For further information

The following documents provide more specific information on the mentoring relationship:

- MQ Mentoring: reference guide
- MQ Tipsheet for mentees
- MQ Mentoring process

References

Clutterbuck, D. (2014). *Everyone Needs A Mentor*. 5th Edition. United Kingdom: Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development

McCarthy, W. (2008). *One 2 One The Guide for Mentees: How to Be a Valuable Mentee*. Woolloomooloo: Focus Publishing Interactive.

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[UK national standards for mentoring and coaching](#)