

## STEP 1- WHAT IS MENTORING?

### THE POWER OF MENTORING

#### 1. UNDERSTANDING THE MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP

There are many definitions of mentoring but essentially it is a reciprocal learning relationship between two people who work collaboratively toward the agreed-upon goal of developing the mentee's skills, knowledge and/or attitude.

One classic definition of a mentor is someone with more experience/skills who guides, teaches, and develops a mentee.

Within a business or organisation, this may be (although not exclusively) a relationship between an existing employee and a new hire. Some mentors are on-site (mentors for 'novices' are working closely with their new colleague); others are more at a distance, for example when mentoring 'existing employees' the mentor may be an outsider brought into bring an objective viewpoint to the relationship..

Mentees often benefit from multiple mentors to gain exposure to a variety of styles, opinions, and experiences.

Mentoring relationships can exist on a continuum from simply sharing information, teaching, coaching to develop specific skills or modelling, to sponsoring and guiding another in their growth and development.

Mentors may help their partner identify skills that could be developed, coach them and give them an opportunity to practice and receive constructive feedback. They may be sounding boards who listen to their mentees process a decision, help their

partners to consider various options to solve problems (although the mentor never solves their partner's problem for them!) or they may help the mentee to see things from another perspective. They may refer them to resources available, share their own experiences, or challenge the mentee's thinking. They may act as role models who provide inspiration. Or they may provide emotional and career support, facilitate insight and change, or, if asked, give advice.

Whatever the matter discussed with the mentor, it is the mentee who must make any decisions or take any actions required. The mentee is responsible for his or her own decisions and actions.

## 2. ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

The mentee is not an empty vessel receiving the mentor's advice and wisdom but, rather, an active participant, shaping the relationship. The ideal mentee shows eagerness to learn, aspires to self-assessment, receptivity, initiative, responsibility, honesty, and appreciation for his or her mentor.

- The mentee is an 'active partner' in the mentoring relationship (Adults learn best when they are involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing and evaluating their own learning)
- The mentee is 'self-directed and responsible for their own learning' (Adult learners have a need to be self-directing.)
- The mentee can have multiple mentors over a lifetime (Life's reservoir of experience is a primary learning resource: the life experiences of others add enrichment to the learning process)

- Critical reflection and application is important (Adult learners respond best to learning when they are internally motivated to learn, they have an inherent need for immediacy of application)

There does need to be a collaborative negotiation and joint accountability about:

- What is to be learned
- How the transfer of learning will take place
- How the learning will be monitored and evaluated.

When both partners keep agreements, this strengthens trust and helps keep the learning relationship focused and productive.

In addition, if both parties are able to express freely and honestly their strengths, weaknesses, goals and concerns, the learning will be greatly enhanced.

In order to be effective, the mentoring relationship needs to possess respect (mutual appreciation is core – both of the mentor’s knowledge and of the mentee’s investment of time and energy), responsiveness (as in any respectful collaboration, both participants need to be sensitive and responsive to the goals, needs and perspectives of the other) and confidentiality.

### 3. BENEFITS OF MENTORING FOR THE MENTEE

Benefits for mentees may be:

- Insight into organisational decisions and decision-making processes at other levels and parts of the organisation
- Introduction to the strategic operation and culture of other parts of the business
- Access to the mentor’s network

- Learning from someone with a different background and perspective
- Gaining knowledge, confidence and support to undertake new responsibilities and challenges
- Increased self-awareness and self-discipline
- Insight into various career options and paths
- Support in the transition to a new role or location
- Acquiring skills and knowledge
- A sounding board for testing ideas and plans
- Positive and constructive feedback on professional and personal development areas
- Improved promotion opportunities
- Increasing the visibility within the organisation
- Obtaining a role model

#### 4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role clarity is important for everyone involved in a mentoring program with the focus on growth.

Role and responsibilities of the mentee.

The mentee should:

- Be goal-oriented (effective mentees place a high value on setting and accomplishing goals)
- Accept responsibility for their own learning
- Drive the relationship with their mentor
  - o Have active involvement in selecting a mentor
  - o Set and communicate personal needs and goals to the mentor
  - o Initiate mentoring actions

- Request and act on feedback
  - Seek challenges
  - Hold themselves accountable for setting a contract with a mentor
  - Understand and follow the protocols of the mentoring relationship
  - Maintain confidentiality of mentoring conversations
  - Voluntary enter into and remain in the relationship
  - Evaluate the relationship at various points within the agreed upon time frame, considering what they've accomplished and what next steps to take.
  - Show appreciation for any help received from the mentor

## 5. HOW TO FIND A MENTOR?

A mentee who clearly assesses skill and knowledge deficits and sets goals can effectively seek mentoring and become responsible for his or her own growth.

There are different activities that you can use to attract a mentor:

- Show that you're worthy of consideration by presenting yourself to others with pride
- Establish rapport with people by having casual conversations about your job, their projects, sports .. anything that can lead to familiarity and comfort.
- Look for a personality match. It's easier to establish relationships with people who can understand your drive and determination.
- Ask. A legitimate question or a sincere appeal regarding an issue that's bothering you may just be the key that opens up a potential mentor.
- Listen. It shows respect and you just might learn something.
- Network.
- Accept failure, but not for long. Try again.
- Be open. Encourage people to contact you.



- Volunteer to solve some problem. A potential mentor will appreciate your willingness to help.
- Follow up on any received help (a sincere ‘thank you’ is always well received).

Some important qualities to look for in a mentor might be that he/she:

- Has experience in an area of work that interests the mentee.
- Possesses a strong network.
- Has a genuine interest in helping the mentee advance his/her career
- Has the ability and time to be supportive
- Is non-judgmental, trustworthy, ethical and self-confident
- Is a good listener.
- Observes confidentiality.
- Is well respected by peers and management.

## 6. REFLECTING ON PREVIOUS MENTORING EXPERIENCES

The Mentoring Relationship.

Take a moment and reflect on mentoring relationships you have experienced and then answer the following questions:

1. Who has served as a mentor for you in your life?

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2. What did that person do for you? *(for example: guide, teach, answer questions)*

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3. What worked well in that relationship?

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4. What did not work well in that relationship?

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5. What did you learn about being in a mentoring relationship?

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7. ASSUMPTION HUNTING EXERCISE

*In many ways, we are our assumptions. Assumptions give meaning and purpose to who we are and what we do. Becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act is one of the most challenging intellectual puzzles we face in our lives.*

Assumption hunting means engaging ourselves in thoughtful reflections about why we do what we do and say what we say (to ourselves and others) to justify our actions. Assumption hunting is an essential part of preparing for a mentoring relationship as this helps us stay

open minded and willing to listen to other peoples perspectives. What are your assumptions about:

- The mentor?
- The mentee?
- The mentoring relationship?

It is best to write down your first impressions and not to judge or analyse your responses.

In groups, each person shares his assumptions about the topic.

Discuss the following questions:

- What can be concluded based upon these assumptions?
- Is there consensus? If so, on what items?
- If there is no consensus, what can be concluded?
- What are the implications for the mentoring relationship?

Mentoring is not...

- A relationship in which the mentee passively receives instruction from the mentor.
- A relationship in which the mentor tries to mould the mentee into a version of him/herself.
- A relationship in which the mentor solves the mentee's problems for him/her or gives him/her all of the answers.

## 8. MENTORING MYTHS

- Mentoring only happens on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis
  - o Thanks to technology, mentoring is no longer bound by physical proximity.  
Advantages for the mentee of e-mentoring are: flexible conduction of mentoring sessions, no geographical and time constraints, cost-efficient – no transport costs.



- Peer mentoring is also used regularly to support individuals through bringing them together with peers/like-minded people to share and support each other in small groups, often supported by a trained facilitator.
- Mentoring is incredibly time-consuming
  - Mentoring does take time but it worth the investment! Build the necessary time into a plan and schedule meetings. Use the time more efficiently by integrating many of the mentoring activities into your regular work activities.
- Mentoring relationships should last a lifetime
  - Not at all! They are based on personal development goals and should last only as long as one still needs development in those specific areas.
- Mentoring is based on chemistry
  - Mentoring relationships are primarily functional and should be built on mutual respect, admiration and trust. However this should not be confused with a sense of chemistry or friendship.
- The mentor need to be older than the mentee
  - Innovations happen so rapidly and personal experience is such a great teacher that younger people often have opportunities to mentor older people, for example when working with technical, IT skills.
  - Mentors should be selected based on their understanding, skill, wisdom (regardless of their age), and capacity to share what they know. The key to finding the best mentor is based on the mentee's development needs and on the ability to match these needs with the skills/experience of a person willing to help.
- Mentoring is always initiated by the mentor.
  - Mentoring is a mutual process and can be initiated by either the mentee or mentor.