

An Introduction to Mentoring

Why bother with Mentoring?

Research from across the business community has found that as a result of engaging in a mentoring relationship, the Mentee is often happier in the job, more likely to remain working with their existing employer and is more productive than an average employee.

Mentoring is not intended to replace line management, but instead to provide another 'touch point' for an individual as they find their way in the organisation and as they develop their professional career. Although often applied to graduate entrants, mentoring is equally relevant and applicable to colleagues at other stages of their career.

Introducing a Mentoring Scheme

An essential element of introducing a mentoring scheme is to consult and involve the target audience. The most effective mentoring programmes offer training and have a published statement of purpose that serves to align expectations. Without any training, less than 30% of schemes deliver significant value for both or one party. By training Mentors only, success rises to between 60-65%. Training Mentors and Mentees and educating other influencers such as line managers, pushes this figure to 90%.

Mentoring programmes have been successful in helping individuals to steer their way through:

- induction
- a return from maternity leave
- a new project or job
- a first management position and promotion outside of functional expertise
- change programmes

Mentoring has also been used to:

- provide encouragement and motivation for an individual to continue studies
- break through 'the glass ceiling'
- make better choices
- build networks
- aid (or open out) career progression and personal development discussions



Mentoring programmes help to create a link between the professional, experienced and knowledgeable individuals, who are prepared to offer themselves as a Mentor and a colleague who is open to being mentored. Mentors demand or coax the best from their Mentee, enabling a relationship that can provide:

- focused career development
- direction to best practice for excellence in professional or functional development
- increased staff retention

The mentoring relationship provides Mentee's with an independent, interested, and objective person with whom project issues, successes and ideas for development can be openly discussed.

So what is a Mentor?

"A Mentor is an individual with 'real world' and relevant experience – perhaps akin to a supervisor at a university – offering wise counsel to an individual, as they navigate unfamiliar waters. The Mentor may be internal or external to the Mentee's business and, although they may have experience as a line manager, they operate outside the traditional reporting structure."

"A Mentor is an experienced individual, outside of the reporting relationship, who through regular meetings and discussion, takes a personal interest in guiding and supporting the development of a less experienced person in progressing beyond his or her immediate role."

"Mentors are people who, through their actions and work, help others to achieve their potential."

An Introduction to Mentoring

What are the differences between Mentoring and Coaching?

Mentoring and coaching are very similar activities. However, there are likely to be three main differences from the recipient's perspective:

1. While a Coach may be the client's line manager, the Mentor usually sits outside of a direct line management structure is removed from the 'nitty gritty' and so is able to take a more strategic view.
2. Generally, the manager as Coach focuses on building the Coachee's ability to accomplish specific tasks, while the Mentor invariably has a wider perspective.
3. The Mentor typically has a longer-term relationship with the Mentee, or may be a counsellor on a broader range of issues at any given time. The relationship can span across the Mentee moving job roles or even on to a different employer.

GREAT MENTORS	ESSENTIAL TACTICS
<p>Great Mentors establish clear parameters. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ create trust and co-operation ■ focus on improvements – both potential and those already achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a clear contract to discuss issues ■ The conversation is 'whole-brained' and acknowledges both facts and feelings ■ The conversation is 'adult to adult' – avoiding confrontation or defensiveness
<p>Great Mentors focus on proactive actions. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ work with the Mentee to clarify clear steps that need to be taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The conversation is 'Mentee specific' and situational ■ The conversation addresses individual's needs and actions and is focused on a specific issue
<p>Great Mentors leave the Mentee feeling that they have 'made progress'. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ have been listened to and 'heard' ■ do not feel 'judged' 	<p>The Mentor invites the Mentee to assess their own performance first and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provides the Mentee with the opportunity to talk and reflect ■ offers the Mentee their support in the future
<p>Great Mentors improve the Mentee's confidence and self-esteem. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ focus on developing the Mentee's ability and on releasing their potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The conversation helps the Mentee to (re)gain perspective, balancing positives and negatives ■ Both parties work on achieving proactive next steps with deadlines and follow-up

One of the Mentor's key roles is to listen.

There are three kinds of listening:

Listening for Thinking, Listening for Feelings and Listening for Intentions

Thinking

- What sort of words are being used?
- What logic and analysis have been applied?
- What sort of data is being used?
- What judgements and opinions have been made?

Feelings

- How are they feeling right now?
- How did they feel at the time?

Intentions

- What do they intend to do about it?
- What is their level of commitment to this action?

This extract is taken from a series of 30 Hints & Tips, created by Mark Barnes of Step System.

Next Step

Step System creates and supplies coaching and training interventions, supported by blended learning and focused publications, delivering success in the areas of personal, team and organisational development.

For more information, visit our website or contact Mark direct at:

Step System International Limited / Gable End / Upper Brailles / Near Banbury / Oxon / OX15 5AX
Telephone: 0044 (0) 1608 685105 / Email: mark@stepssystem.co.uk / Website: www.stepssystem.co.uk