

# MENTORING GUIDE

## *Guidelines for mentees and mentors*

Companies and organisations are constantly changing, and our people are expected to continue their learning in an environment where self-sufficiency, including self-managed learning, is encouraged – and is essential to success. Whilst your direct line manager can assist your development and provide elements of support, they too can be part of the pressurising environment and might not always be the best person to help you with your long term development goals.

Many companies and organisations are also facing pressure on their development budgets and as part of the development options for individuals, an opportunity to be mentored by someone independent may be relevant. The role of a mentor complements that of the line manager. The line manager addresses the day to day business needs and activities of the individual and development to fulfil a specific role and function. The mentor will predominantly support the longer-term goals and actions of their mentees. Mentors are able to offer objective but sympathetic guidance and a confidential, safe space to get things into perspective.

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring can be used in many different ways, sometimes informally; at other times in a structured and systematic way. The role of the mentor will also depend on what both the mentor and mentee bring to the relationship, different needs and situations and the organisational context. The relationship will develop – and change – over time and in response to changing circumstances.

Here are some definitions of what mentoring is:

- Off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking
- Mentoring is a 'protected' relationship in which learning and experimentation can occur without necessarily affecting the current job and relationships of the mentee
- A relationship, not just a procedure or an activity, where one person professionally assists the development of another, outside of the normal manager/subordinate relationship
- Nurturing potential for the whole person and can be a long-term relationship

## MENTORING VS COACHING

Whilst mentoring and coaching draw on similar skillsets (e.g. questioning and listening skills), there are some key differences between these two activities.

### *Mentoring*

- Medium to long term
- Broader scope
- The mentor is used for their business knowledge and experience
- The mentor shares experience, knowledge and their network

### *Coaching*

- Short to medium term
- Focused on specific outcomes
- The coach is employed for their coaching skills and not necessarily their knowledge of the business
- The coach engages an individual in a process to develop their potential and change behaviour

## SOME BENEFITS OF MENTORING

### *For the mentor*

Mentoring offers you the opportunity to:

- pass on your own experience, knowledge and skills;
- enjoy the stimulation and challenge of working with someone from a different background and perspective; and
- to give back, make a difference and have an impact. You will find that you learn as much from your mentee as they do from you as their mentor.

### *For the mentee*

Having a mentor will offer the opportunity for:

- access to different perspectives and experience;
- confidential dialogue;
- development of a wider network of people;
- practical assistance through discussions regarding issues or problems; and
- help in developing your long term career and development goals and plans

# WHO MAKES A GOOD MENTOR OR MENTEE?

Anyone can be a mentor. What distinguishes the really effective mentor is:

- genuine care for the development of others;
- readiness to spend time and thought on the mentoring activity;
- knowledge of how things really happen in organisations;
- desire to create and work in a relationship of trust and confidentiality on both sides;
- someone who can be trusted and respected as a role model;
- someone who will listen and challenge thinking and approach;
- someone who has the time to dedicate to the mentee; and
- a willingness to share all of these with your mentee.

Everyone can benefit from being mentored. As a mentee you need:

- a willingness to have your assumptions and ideas challenged;
- a passion for learning and self-development;
- to recognise that there are some things that you cannot do for yourself; and
- at the same time to take full responsibility for your own learning and development.

## KEY PHASES OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

The following is a summary of the key phases of any effective mentoring relationship. Details of each phase are given below.

### *Beginning the relationship – The mentoring agreement and long term goals*

The first step in this relationship, as with any other, is to establish the terms and conditions under which you will operate and agree on the purpose and goals of the relationship.

What you will be working on is probably the realisation of the long term aims and goals of the mentee although mentoring can also be short-term or project-based. It is likely that you will have to spend some time on developing realistic goals and objectives and then monitoring progress against these as the mentoring progresses.

The role of the mentor is mainly about supporting a process, that is providing feedback, facilitating action planning and evaluation of development. The mentoring role is not about coaching in the day to day skills of the specific job. This is the province of the mentee's line manager.

## Reviewing the mentoring process

The mentoring process needs to be reviewed at regular intervals. Reviews should form part of your regular agenda and will ensure that the mentoring activity is still meeting its goals and that the relationship is continuing to be productive.

## Ending the mentoring relationship

The mentoring relationship is a finite one, but the relationship can continue for several years. If the relationship is not working, then it may be better to end it. Ending it is not a sign of failure on the part of any individual. You must always bring mentoring partnerships to a proper close. This enables you to review what has happened over the duration of the partnership and celebrate achievements.

# MENTORING SKILLS

## Beginning the relationship - preparation

It's very important to begin as you mean to continue. You both come as individuals with your own styles and preferences, your own needs and your own responsibilities.

Before your first meeting with your mentor/mentee you must prepare and think about;

- What you need from the relationship
- What you bring to the relationship
- What issues you will need to tackle first
- How you will deal with difficulties in the relationship
- How you will stay open and honest

## Beginning the relationship - establishing rapport

The first stage of any relationship involves reaching out to each other, as human beings, to make connections and start to communicate.

Rapport is 'the ability to enter someone else's world, to make them feel that you understand them, that you have a common bond. It's the ability to go fully from your map of the world into their map of the world. This is the essence of successful communication...and the ultimate tool for producing results with other people' (Tony Robbins).

During the first meeting, the mentor and mentee need to get to know one another and build trust. Openly discuss your expectations, hopes and fears. Discuss any preconceived ideas you may have about the roles of mentor, mentee and your needs. This sort of openness will really help you in building your relationship.

## The "mentoring agreement"

You must have an open and honest 'agreement' to underpin your mentoring relationship. The agreement will be different for each mentoring partnership and will reflect the needs of both partners. Look on it rather like terms of reference which are always 'work in progress'. Your agreement will set out the expectations and the boundaries for both mentor and mentee so that there is a shared purpose and responsibility and less likelihood of a mismatch of expectations.

It is useful to consider this in three parts:

1. Purpose and objectives
2. How we work together
3. The ongoing mentoring relationship

### 1. Purpose and objectives

- What are the objectives of the mentoring relationship for the mentee and the mentor?
- What are the career aspirations or goals of the mentee?
- What are the areas/key issues to be worked on?
- What are the key competencies that are the focus for development?

The answers to these questions will usually be unclear at the start of the mentoring relationship and may change as time progresses. The mentoring process is all about working through these issues.

### 2. How we work together

Key topics you need to consider are:

- Confidentiality – this is two way
- Mentee's use of the mentor's experience and contacts
- Acceptable and unacceptable behaviour between the two parties
- Allocation of time to the relationship
- Boundaries – issues that are off-limits to the mentoring relationship.

### 3. The ongoing mentoring relationship

Your ongoing relationship will be sustained by regular meetings/calls and other contact as agreed.