



# Mentoring conversation guide - *Mentor*

Welcome to your mentoring guide. Mentoring can be a rewarding experience for mentor as well as mentee. Here's how to make it work for both of you.

Mentoring is a confidential partnership built on trust, in which you as the mentor offer ongoing and objective guidance, support and advice. Most mentors describe it as being a positive experience. It provides intellectual challenge, the opportunity to enhance your leadership skills, insightful exchanges of ideas and the satisfaction of developing others.

## The purpose of mentoring

Mentoring can be described as 'helping another person to make significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking'\*. The process involves primarily listening with empathy, sharing experience (usually mutually), professional friendship, developing insight through reflection, being a sounding board and encouraging.  
(\*Source: David Clutterbuck)



## Types of mentoring

### Traditional mentoring

**A more senior, experienced person** acting as a trusted advisor.

**Often used** for mentees wishing to improve performance, prepare for a new role or break into a new business area.

### Group mentoring

**A more experienced mentor** working with a group of employees.

**Often used** to focus upon specific topics, such as leadership skills, or to expand and develop internal networks.

### Peer mentoring

**An individual** at the same level with more experience in role.

**Often used** for mentees newly placed in a department or organisation.

### Reverse mentoring

**Interns or graduates** tutoring (usually older) executives.

**Often used** to bring employees up to speed with the latest technical skills or new communication methods.

## Communications channels

Make sure you choose the right communication method to suit the stage in the mentoring relationship, as well as your immediate objective.

Face to face	Skype/ telephone	Email	Internet
Helps build a strong relationship quickly. Good for in-depth conversations.	Flexible and effective, especially if you have already met	Can work well for skills-based mentoring; provides time for reflection between responses. E.g. to ask for advice on how to prepare for an interview, or review an important meeting	Online communities of practice, networks and discussion forums allow immediate connections for sharing knowledge or advice.  Social media ( <b>Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, LinkedIn</b> ) can be useful for building relationships or communicating about practical issues but are less suitable for in-depth conversations.

## Mentor's responsibilities

Your role as a mentor is about listening as much as talking, so you can:

- understand your mentee's goal/issue
- agree the terms under which the relationship will operate
- help your mentee to develop specific actions to address development needs
- support your mentee in establishing meaningful learning opportunities
- act as a sounding board
- share relevant personal experience and knowledge
- help your mentee understand the organisation – its culture, structure, processes, politics and potential career options.

Whatever type of mentoring or communication method you choose, the following guidelines will help you to make the most of your mentoring relationships. Remember that the ability to **listen well** and **seek full understanding** are the foundations for a successful partnership with your mentee.

# 1. How to prepare for a successful mentoring conversation

## *Understand the issues*

### Agree what needs to be achieved

Before you meet you and your mentee will have had a phone call or email exchange to introduce each other. Use this time to make sure you are both agreed about the purpose of the mentoring and confirm this in writing. A mismatch of expectations can cause confusion and damage the effectiveness of the relationship.

- Your mentee needs to provide you with a brief written personal introduction outlining the issues they hope to work on during this mentoring relationship, together with information on their background, experience, personal goals, values and current issues.
- You should provide your mentee with a similar introduction. You may wish to include your reasons for becoming a mentor, your expectations and what you personally can bring to the mentoring relationship.

#### Introducing yourself



It is important to get to know your mentee, and make sure they feel at ease with you. Sharing personal and professional information can help. Note down what you would like them to know about you:

- Your values and motivations
- Your professional skills, interests and passion
- Reasons for becoming a mentor
- Your expectations of the mentoring relationship
- What you personally can bring to the mentoring relationship

Record your answers to these questions and any notes or reminders in the box below.

Motivated by achieving results and at the same time ensuring people have a great experience. My expertise is in change management and how to engage people. Mentoring gives me a chance to work at an individual rather than organisational level and to help and encourage someone else to achieve their dreams. I expect to learn from my mentee and to be challenged in my own thinking as well as, I hope, ask good questions to help my mentee think clearly. I hope I can draw on my experience of working in different parts of the organisation to help my mentee. I would like to make a positive difference to my mentee in their career journey.

### Decide on a communication method

This is a crucial part of preparing for success and should take account of personal preference, logistics, time commitments and common sense! Agreeing communication methods should always be undertaken on an individual basis and may differ from relationship to relationship.

### Prepare the ground rules for working together


Whilst the mentee will be responsible for driving the relationship, there are a number of issues that you will both have to agree on. It is worth spending time up front to share your expectations and agree ground rules for the relationship. This will help you be honest and open with each other.

- How often and where shall we meet?
- How long will the meetings last?
- How will we review progress?
- What are our confidentiality boundaries?
- What are we prepared to tell others?
- How will we review if this relationship is 'right' for us?
- How will we raise and resolve concerns?

## Be 'mindful' and create the conditions for a good conversation

Being a mentor is a voluntary role which is undertaken in addition to other work responsibilities and pressures. When working with your mentee, it is vital that you divorce yourself from other distractions and focus upon their needs. The checklist below may help.

The following questions will help you to prepare to be 'mindful' and at your most effective during your conversations with your mentee:



**Body language:**  
Are you physically relaxed and displaying open body language?

**Mindfulness:**  
Are you mentally present - giving your undivided attention?

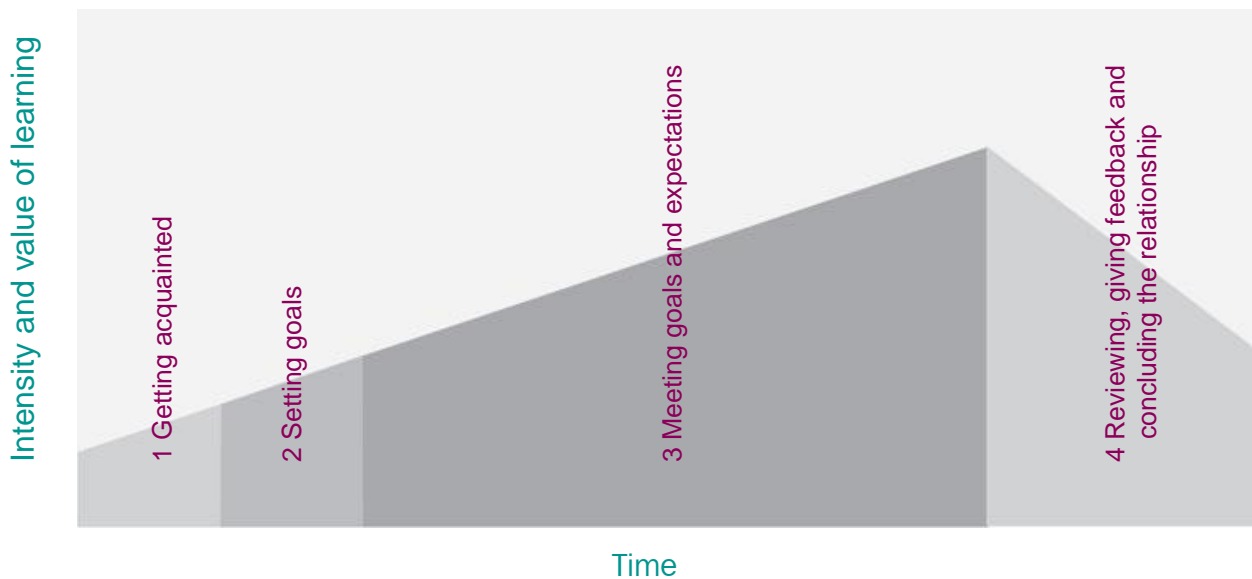
**Your mood:**  
Is your mood a positive one?

**Don't judge:**  
Have you set aside any assumptions or pre-conceptions you may have?

**Understand:**  
Are you ready to listen, explore and understand your mentee's point of view?

## 2. Using the mentoring process to create good conversations

The phases of the mentoring process



### 1. Getting acquainted

To help build rapport and develop trust from the outset, you might like to ask each other the following questions:

- What is your biggest career/personal accomplishment?
- What are your hobbies/interests outside work?
- How do you maintain your work-life balance?
- Do you have a favourite book/film/show/poem?
- What currently keeps you awake at night

### 2. Setting goals

Having a clear end goal will determine the success of the relationship. The following questions will help your mentee to clarify their needs:

- What is the goal/issue you would like to work on?
- Why is this your chosen goal/issue and how feasible is it?
- What will happen when you are successful in achieving your goal?
- What makes it important to do now?
- Who else is involved?

### 3. Meeting goals and expectations

Having discussed your mentee's needs and overall goals, you're now in a position to work out an action plan. Regular contact with your mentor, and focussed activity on your part, will help you develop and achieve SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) objectives that will contribute to your goals.

Ask them:

- What help do you need from me to define your action plan?
- What inspires you about achieving your goals? To what extent does doing this create anxiety or excite you?
- Have you considered all of the choices available to you? What is the priority?
- Have you considered what support/resources you may need?
- What are your next critical steps?
- What are the smallest tangible steps you could commit to today, tomorrow and next week towards your goals?

## 4. Reviewing, giving feedback and concluding the relationship

### Review

You'll need to review the effectiveness of your relationship and, if needed, share any concerns using the approach agreed when setting your ground rules. Consider the following questions:

- Are we making progress with the agreed goals?
- Am I the best person to mentor the needs of my mentee?
- What is working well and what is not working well?
- Is it time to re-define our relationship or bring it to a close? Be very honest at this stage and encourage your mentee to do the same.

### Feedback

One of the most important aspects of mentoring is the feedback provided by both parties. You will give thoughtful, constructive feedback challenging your mentee to think through problems and to arrive at their own conclusion. They in turn should offer feedback about the nature and quality of the help you are providing. Consider the following questions:

- Is my feedback thoughtful and constructive?
- Am I challenging you sufficiently?
- Am I giving you adequate time and space to think critically through your problems and arrive at your own solution?

### Conclude

Mentoring relationships should not be of long duration. If you have worked together for 12 months or more, then it is probably time to move on. Consider the following questions:

- Has my mentee achieved the agreed goals?
- Is it time for both of us to move on?
- What help does my mentee need to find a new mentor?

### 3. FAQs

The following frequently asked questions may help you to clarify the roles and responsibilities of mentoring.

#### What is the difference between mentoring and coaching?

Mentoring is a confidential partnership built on trust in which the mentor shares their own experience and offers ongoing and objective guidance, support and advice. It is distinct from coaching which relies upon the client having all of the answers themselves which the coach helps them to uncover.



#### How confidential are our discussions?

It is crucial that you agree the confidentiality around your relationship at the very beginning.

#### What will I bring to my mentee that they can't learn from their line manager?

The line manager will mainly be concerned with their current role providing feedback on job related performance. You will play a more informal role, discussing the mentee's career aspirations, future development and any concerns they may have.

#### What are the benefits for a mentor?

- Opportunity to share skills, knowledge and experience with a colleague
- Enhanced leadership skills and professional development
- Exchange of ideas and an alternative point of view
- Personal satisfaction in assisting the development of a colleague.

#### What are the responsibilities of the mentee?

- To clarify the expectations of both mentor and mentee
- To establish clear development goals and an activity plan to achieve them
- To schedule meetings and set the agenda
- To explore learning opportunities,
- To commit to personal development
- To solicit feedback to ensure progress.

#### What are the benefits to the business?

- Development and retention of high-potential employees
- Increased engagement
- Increased organisational communication
- Succession planning.