

# Are You Ready to be a Mentor?

The magic of mentoring is that it not only helps the mentee but it also aids the mentor and can be very rewarding.

## What Can You Achieve from Being a Mentor?

- **Personal fulfilment from investing in others**
- **New mentoring skills**
- **A feeling of being valued as a role model**
- **The chance to enjoy a rewarding challenge**
- **The opportunity to be inspired and enlightened**

The primary role of a mentor is to use the experience and knowledge they have gained to help a mentee work towards their future career ambitions.

A good mentor should be unconnected with the mentee's day-to-day work in order to provide objectivity and a bring a focus on the future and the mentee's personal development.

As a mentor it is important to take the time to understand the building blocks to a mentee's personality, preferences and performance in order to be able to give and receive information constructively. Through this process you will both discover if the chemistry of the mentoring relationship is right.

A mentor can be expected to share information and knowledge gained in the course of their own career, to support the mentee's career goals and ambitions, exploring opportunities, setting goals, developing contacts and identifying resources.

In some mentoring relationships the mentor may be expected to provide motivation, guidance and emotional support, acting as a role model to the mentee.

Simply talking to someone about challenges faced can in itself go a long way to help a mentee get their thoughts in order and to identify the steps they might take to overcome the challenge.

Often mentoring isn't about finding solutions for the mentee, it is more about revealing hidden thoughts and assumptions that may be holding the mentee back. Very often the mentee will have the answers that they are looking for, they just need some probing questions to clarify their thoughts and to bring these answers to the surface.

The mentor acts primarily as a mirror for the mentee, probing their underlying assumptions, ideas and feelings.

The ability to be an attentive and thoughtful listener is a key skill of a mentor, as is having the discipline to keep to relevant timelines and respecting confidentiality. Mentors need to understand that the journey of self-discovery is often a very private experience.

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## Some key characteristics of an effective mentor:

- **Commitment.** Are you willing and able to dedicate the time and effort necessary to a mentoring relationship?
- **Courage.** Do you have the courage to take risks, admit mistakes and let others do the same? You may have to tolerate the occasional error and use it as a learning experience.
- **Curiosity.** Are you hungry for knowledge? If you're always asking questions, trying to find out how things work and why, you'll be a good mentor.
- **Compassion.** Are you patient with others when they make mistakes? Do you try to understand situations from another person's point of view? As a mentor, your job is to create opportunities for growth in other people, rather than to pass judgement.
- **Communication.** Telling a mentee what to do in a specific situation doesn't really teach him or her much. You'll be more effective if you can communicate what strategies and techniques have worked best for you and why you took the approach you did.

## Do you have:

- Enthusiasm
- Passion
- A desire to make a difference
- Willingness to share experience
- The ability to inspire
- An approachable manner
- Good listening, questioning and feedback skills
- Patience - A good mentor will not show frustration if it takes some time for the mentee to make changes and to reach their goals.

Before embarking on a mentoring relationship there are a number of key things to consider:

## Purpose

The first thing to consider is **why** do you want to be a mentor and what specific skills can you offer? The more carefully you consider what skills and experience you can offer then the better the mentoring match will be.

During the first stage of the mentoring process, you will be asked to complete a profile that will be used for matching and as part of this you will need to be clear on what skills, knowledge and expertise you are able to offer.

Mentoring is like any journey, if you don't know where you want to end up when you start the journey how will you ever know if you have arrived? For this reason, it is important that the starting point with any mentee is to get them to consider what it is they are looking to achieve from the mentoring relationship.

Being clear on their purpose, the challenges they are facing and their goals will help you to help them. With that in mind we have created a number of tools that you can use with your mentee at the start of the relationship.

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## Where Are They Now – Needs Analysis

The **SWOT** tool will help identify the mentee's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that they are facing.

The **GSTAR** tool will help you identify their goals, the situation they are currently facing, their current thinking, actions they are considering and the results they are expecting.

## Where Do They Want To Be – GOALS

Once you have completed the needs analysis you can use the Goals tool to work with your mentee to set Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound (SMART) goals, which will help you to give a real purpose to your mentoring relationship and help you get real results.

## Are you happy to give constructive feedback?

In order for your mentee to move forward they may need to develop new attitudes and behaviours in order to improve their career performance. To enable them to do this you will need to be prepared to give open, honest and constructive feedback.

## Are you prepared to commit time?

The final consideration you need to make before committing to becoming a mentor is whether you have the time to commit to regular meetings and to doing any actions in between meetings that may be required to move the mentee towards achieving their goal(s).

Being a mentor is a bit like being a satellite navigation system for the mentee as they embark on their journey to achieve their goals. You will guide them along the way, help to correct them if they take a wrong turning and will help them find the quickest, easiest route to achieving their goals. But just like a satellite navigation system, you won't do the hard work for them. The mentee still needs to be in the driving seat and make the final decision.

## So, are you ready to be a mentor?