

# About Mentoring

Extracts from this CIPD factsheet gives introductory guidance around: ~

- what mentoring is and how it differs from coaching
- some of the ways in which mentoring can be beneficial
- the qualities and characteristics required for a productive mentoring approach
- successful mentoring examples
- the role HR plays in managing mentoring activities

## What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a long standing form of training, learning and development and an increasingly popular tool for supporting personal development. Coaching and mentoring are often put together as related development methodologies. However, mentoring is a distinct activity.

Mentoring has become a widespread development tool, and we all know of famous mentoring relationships. Ian Botham, in cricket, for example was mentored by Brian Close. There are many business mentoring relationships, notably Chris Gent and Arun Sarin at Vodafone and there are many more examples from politics and other fields. You may well have your own examples.

There is some confusion about what exactly mentoring is and how it differs from coaching. Broadly speaking, the CIPD (Chartered Institute of People Development) defines coaching as 'developing a person's skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organisational objectives. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual's private life. Coaching usually lasts for a short period and focuses on specific skills and goals.'

Traditionally, mentoring is the long term passing on of support, guidance and advice. In the workplace it has tended to describe a relationship in which a more experienced colleague uses their greater knowledge and understanding of the work or workplace to support the development of a more junior or inexperienced member of staff. This comes from the Greek myth where Odysseus entrusts the education of his son to his friend Mentor. It's also a form of apprenticeship, whereby an inexperienced learner learns the tricks of the trade from an experienced colleague, backed-up as in modern apprenticeship by offsite training. Mentoring is used specifically and separately as a form of long term tailored development for the individual which brings benefits to the organisation. The characteristics of mentoring are:

- It is essentially a supportive form of development.
- It focuses on helping an individual manage their career and improve skills.
- Personal issues can be discussed more productively unlike in coaching where the emphasis is on performance at work.
- Mentoring activities have both organisational and individual goals.

The following table, adapted from Alred et al<sup>1</sup>, highlights the differences between mentoring and coaching. It is separate and distinct from coaching, but coaching and mentoring can often overlap.

Mentoring	Coaching
Ongoing relationship that can last for a long time	Relationship generally has a short duration
Can be more informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentored individual needs some guidance and or support	Generally more structured in nature and meetings scheduled on a regular basis
More long term and takes a broader view of the person. Often known as the 'mentee' but the term client or mentored person can be used	Short-term (sometimes time bounded) and focused on specific development areas/issues
Mentor usually passes on experience and is normally more senior in organisation	Not generally performed on basis that coach needs direct experience of clients formal occupational role
The focus is on career and personal development	Focus generally on development/issues at work
Agenda is set by the mentored person with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles	Agenda focused on achieving specific, immediate goals
Revolves more around developing the mentee professionally	Revolves more around specific development areas/issues

## Developing a mentoring approach

Benefits of mentoring to the organisation include:

- significant impact upon recruitment and retention (one study found that the loss of young graduates in the first expensive post training year was cut by two thirds).
- effective succession planning
- makes organisations adapt to change
- increased productivity through better engagement and job satisfaction.

Benefits to the mentored person (mentee) are:

- development outcomes which may include, knowledge, technical and behavioural improvements
- better management of career goals
- developing wider network of influence
- increased confidence and self awareness which helps build performance and contribution
- mentors also benefit from the satisfaction of developing their colleagues and of passing on their knowledge, skills and expertise
- line managers and HR also benefit from better employee focus and engagement.

## A simple three stage model

Alred et al<sup>1</sup> identify a simple model of mentoring which operates on a three stage basis:

- exploration – to explore issues which are identified by the mentored individual
- new understanding
- action planning.

In each stage there are responsibilities for both the mentor and the 'mentee'. The tables below focus on the main strategies and methods required of the mentor.

### *Exploration*

Strategies	Methods
Take the lead	Listen
Pay attention to relationship and develop it	Ask open questions
Clarify the aims and objectives of mentoring	Negotiate an agenda
Support and counsel	

### *New understanding*

Strategies	Methods
Support and counsel	Listen and challenge
Give constructive feedback	Ask open and closed questions
Coach and demonstrate skills	Recognise strengths and weaknesses
	Establish priorities
	Identify developmental needs
	Give information and advice
	Share experience and tell stories

## Action planning

Strategies	Methods
Examine options for action and their consequences	Encourage new and creative way of thinking
Attend to the mentoring process and the relationship	Help to make decision and solve problems
Negotiate an action plan	Agree action plans
	Monitor progress and evaluate outcomes

## Mentoring in organisations

Some examples of mentoring in practice in the workplace.

- The UK Civil Service Public Sector leader's scheme allows fast stream civil servants to pick a mentor to help in developing their leadership capability.
- Ericson the mobile phone company now owned by Sony uses mentoring from top executives to help grow its future leadership talent.
- Shell Exploration uses mentoring to develop local "indigenous" talent for its engineering and management activities in Brunei.

## Different types of mentoring activity

### 1. Developmental mentoring

This is based on helping someone to develop. The mentored employee sets the agenda based on their own development needs and the mentor provides insight and guidance helping achieve the desired goals.

### 2. Sponsorship mentoring

This is a form of mentoring where the mentor is protégé (literally 'one who is protected'). Here the mentor intervenes on the mentee's behalf and there is normally one way learning. The mentor is usually more senior. These relationships can break down when the power relationship changes and when the mentee stops taking advice.

## When is mentoring the best development intervention?

Many experts advise that mentoring should be independent from any other training and learning activity. Again it should not be confused with coaching. Mentoring can be the best intervention in areas where the development task relates to an employee requiring much specialist, knowledge and information. However there are other contexts where it is the best intervention. Specific areas where it can be used are given in the table below.

Context	Purpose
Induction	Helps people get up to speed
Support for development	Ensures effective learning
Career progression	Assist in identifying and supporting potential talent
On the job learning	To enhance job related knowledge and skills for the present
Equal opportunity programmes	To ensure proper integration and fairness of treatment
Redundancy and outplacement	To assist individual in managing the difficult transition
New projects	Help rapid assimilation and delivery
New job transition	Helps employee adjust
Within change programmes	To help people adjust to change

## Stakeholders and evaluation

The primary relationship in any mentoring activity is between the mentor and the individual, but this is not the only important relationship. Other key stakeholders include the person representing the organisation's interests (most frequently an HR practitioner) plus, the individual's manager. Both of these parties are interested in assessing the individual's progress and development and therefore looking both qualitatively and quantitatively at their contribution to the organisation.

Much mentoring is informal and as long as it leads to productive relationships it can continue. However, it is appropriate that other stakeholders are aware of any mentoring activities as there may be issues of propriety and ethics involved. An example might be a senior male manager mentoring a female member of staff in a less senior position who may have little experience of the boundaries and feel unable to challenge inappropriate requests or behaviour. It is best therefore that, as with other learning and development intervention, mentoring activities are recorded and evaluated.

However, the approach to evaluating should be light touch:

- open a record of mentoring activity brief paragraph and some key objectives of the activity are enough
- record occasions where mentoring took place
- brief record of discussion and action points
- report the formal ending of any mentoring session.

## The role of HR in managing mentoring activities

The HR department has a central role to play in designing and managing mentoring within an organisation. The quality of mentoring and the results it delivers depend on choosing appropriate mentors, managing relationships and evaluating success. HR practitioners need to:

- understand when mentoring is an appropriate and effective intervention in relation to other learning and development options
- oversee and if necessary train and develop a pool of appropriately qualified mentors
- consider how mentors can be matched appropriately to those who are in need of mentoring
- be clear about what the different types of mentoring and any diagnostic tools/models used
- take responsibility for setting up contractual arrangements, as well as developing mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring activities.

## CIPD viewpoint

Mentoring is primarily about developing capability and potential in the role rather than performance and skills. It is a specific learning and development intervention which can be used widely but in a specific context such as development, induction, or sponsorship. It should be delivered and evaluated through appropriately qualified mentors and overseen by the HR department. It often works together with coaching but should be seen as a distinct activity.

## Useful contacts

- [The Coaching and Mentoring Network](#)
- [European Mentoring and Coaching Council](#)

## References

1. ALRED, G., GARVEY, B. and SMITH, R (1998) *Mentoring pocketbook*. Alresford: Management Pocketbooks.

(excerpted from CIPD's 2008 Factsheet on Mentoring)

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