

MENTOR GUIDELINES

Below are PushFar's guidelines for career mentoring. These are recommendations collated together with review, insight and advice from some of the world's leading HR directors, organisations and mentoring programmes. They are designed to help you to make the most of your mentoring experience.

Whilst there may be some variation in your mentoring relationship, these guidelines are a great place to start if you have not mentored anyone before. Equally, for those more experienced mentors out there, re-reviewing guidelines from time-to-time can be a valuable way of ensuring you are staying on track with your mentoring.



FINDING THE RIGHT MENTORING MATCH

Finding a mentee is the first step to mentoring and it is important to get it right. Typically, we would recommend a mentoring relationship that does not overlap with management responsibilities. We would recommend finding a mentee in a slightly removed role from yours, who less experience (typically between 3-5 years less experience) and is looking to progress their career in a similar way to the way you have developed your own career.

If you receive a mentoring request from someone who you do not feel able to support, or who's goals you feel are not aligned with your experience, then it is okay to decline the request. It is far better to have a discussion at the start and agree that it is not right, rather than reluctantly accepting a request and regretting it later. Whilst declining a request can sometimes feel uncomfortable, you will have the opportunity to give a reason for declining that request and here you can simply explain to the mentee that you do not feel you are the right individual to help them in their career development.

Typically, as the mentor you should wait to be requested by a mentee. However, there are some exceptions and if you feel you have come across a mentee whose profile and objectives look aligned with your experience, it is fine to request them as a mentee. Be aware that, just like you, they can decline a request and will give a reason as to why. Whilst receiving a declined notice to a request can feel disappointing, it is important not to take it personally and to understand that it is simply their decision. Whilst you may have felt the right mentor for them, that individual may not be declaring everything they are looking for from a mentor publicly. They may have more private objectives for which they know the right mentor already.



THE INTRODUCTORY MEETING

Once you have found the right mentee, it is time to have the first meeting with them. Whether over a phone call, video call or in-person meeting, an introductory meeting is an essential first step for mentoring. The introductory meeting should cover off the following points and it is important to discuss these openly and honestly, straight away:

- How often should you both meet or speak?
- How long should the mentoring relationship last?
- What can the mentor offer?
- What is the mentee looking for?

Do not be afraid to set the expectations at this stage – it makes the entire mentoring process a lot easier and you will be starting off on the right foot. The meeting can last however long both parties wish for it to. We would recommend at least 45 minutes in the first meeting, as this can help both parties to get to know one another and really discuss the objectives for the mentoring relationship. If you are conducting the mentoring relationship virtually, we would always recommend video calling, where possible. Video calling will add a more personal approach to the relationship and help you to begin to build rapport straight away.



SETTING THE EXPECTATIONS

Often referred to as 'contracting', this is something we reference a lot. It is important to set expectations at the start of a mentoring relationship, in order to ensure it thrives and is seen as a success for both the mentor and mentee. As a mentor, it is vital that your mentee knows about your background and experience but also that they know what level of support you are willing and able to offer them. Is this a call once a month or is it a meeting in person every quarter? Ensure, within the introductory meeting, you set expectations and be clear on what you can realistically help with. At the same time, ensure your mentee understands what you are there to support them with, as a mentor.



GUIDE, ADVISE, LISTEN, & ASK QUESTIONS

To be a good mentor, it is important to listen first and foremost, to the goals and objectives of a mentee, and then to provide guidance, advice and experience to help your mentee. Listen to your mentee's challenges and help to guide them through exactly what it is that they need in order to develop and grow. At the same time, make sure that you are asking the right questions of your mentee. Ask about the challenges and problems being faced, or what your mentee's goals are and ensure that you are both clear on exactly what the situation is. By asking questions you should ensure you are encouraging self-reflection and rather than providing mentees with answers, give them the tools and guidance to find the answers themselves.



OFFER EXPERIENCED-BASED GUIDANCE

We learn from our failures and from the mistakes we make, far more than we learn from our successes. Therefore, the more we encourage mentoring, the more we can grow and reduce the mistakes and failures we make. In mentoring, it is important to provide experience-based guidance and help your mentee to not repeat mistakes. You are primarily a mentor because you are in a position of experience and therefore if you can pass this experience, knowledge and insight onto your mentee, you will help them to develop and grow.

The guidance and advice you offer your mentee should be practical and concrete advice. If there are ever instances where you are unsure of the correct advice or guidance, then do not guess. Instead, be upfront and let your mentee know that you do not have the answers in these cases. It is okay not to have all the answers.



MEET AND CATCH UP AT REGULAR INTERVALS

During a mentoring relationship, it is worth meeting or speaking with your mentee once or twice a month. Some mentoring relationships work best when having a longer catch-up every quarter. However, most mentoring relationships and partnerships will see both parties meeting or speaking on a video call once a month. During these meetings, go through the things that the mentee has achieved and done in the previous month, where the sticking points and challenges have been and how goals are being met.

These meetings can be anywhere from 20 minutes to a couple of hours long. However, we would always advise at least 45 minutes for a call. Shorter meetings can be helpful if you're meeting more frequently but if you only have one meeting a month, it is important to give it significant time for you and your mentee to reflect and discuss goals.

Set time aside to really focus on these meetings and during the meeting also work out what the mentee would like to achieve in the month ahead, before the next meeting. Having clear, actionable objectives and goals is sometimes, but not always, the best way to do this. Your mentee should be responsible for scheduling meetings, in the first instance and should also take responsibility for creating a meeting agenda. Ask your mentee to send this through to you at least a week before your meeting, as this will give you the opportunity to reflect on it and plan how you can best help during your mentoring meeting.



ENDING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Knowing when to wind-down and end a mentoring relationship can often be tricky. Regularly what happens is that one or both parties simply stop meeting and arranging catch-up sessions. This is fine but is far from ideal. Instead, if you feel that your mentee is not engaged, or that you are beginning to feel unable to further support, it is best to have an upfront conversation and decide to end the mentoring relationship. If you had a successful introductory mentoring meeting, then you should have already discussed the length of time you are looking to mentor anyway, so do use this as a guide. Equally, PushFar's platform is designed to help you to stay on track with this. At the end, discuss the things you have covered off during the mentoring relationship and use it as a time to reflect on where your mentee was at in the beginning, and where they are now.



PROVIDING FEEDBACK

At the end of a mentoring relationship, we would advise taking a few minutes to think about and provide constructive feedback, both ways. As a mentor, you should provide feedback that your mentee can take with them, going forwards into their career and future mentoring relationships. Equally, encourage your mentee to think about how you could improve the way you mentor in future. Welcome feedback from your mentee and when providing feedback, you may want to consider the following:

- Was your mentee proactive in managing the relationship?
- Did they engage with their goals and targets, effectively?
- Were they punctual and efficient in scheduling regular meetings?
- Did they make the most of the opportunities to be mentored?
- What could they have improved upon?