



Below are guidelines for being mentored in your career. 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 been mentored by anyone before. Equally, for those more experienced mentees 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 mentor is the first step to mentoring and it is important to get it right. In order to work out who the right mentor is for you, first consider what your goals and objectives over the next 6-12 months are. This will help to guide your decision as to who can be best suited to help you reach such goals, through mentoring support.

Typically, we would recommend a mentoring relationship that does not overlap with management responsibilities. We would recommend finding a mentor in a slightly removed role from yours, who has more experience (typically between 3-5 years more experience) and has progressed their career in a similar way to the way you wish to develop your own career.

As the mentee, you should be the one to reach out to a mentor and request them. There can be a tendency to request the most senior individual available. If you are tempted to do this, stop and consider why you are doing so and question whether they are really the most suited individual to help you in your career. Often the most senior professionals will not be the most helpful mentor as they will not be able to provide you with the most relevant and useful guidance. A mentor is not there to promote you or facilitate a pay increase. They are there to support you in career development and growth.

Once you have found a mentor who you think has the necessary experience to help you with your goals and objectives, request them and let them know where you are with your career and what your goals and objectives for the months ahead are. This will help your mentor to consider whether they feel truly able to help and be an effective mentor here.

Be aware that a mentor may 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 and may well be led by their feeling unable to support you effectively or feeling they do not have the necessary capacity in order to help.

Whilst, as the mentee, you are most likely to be the one making the mentoring requests, a mentor can request you as their mentee. If you receive a mentoring request from someone who you do not feel is able to support, or who's experience you feel are not aligned with your goals, 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 mentor that you do not feel they are the right individual to help you in your career development, given where you are currently at.



THE INTRODUCTORY MEETING

Once you have found the right mentor, 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 and other 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 mentee, it is vital that your mentor knows about your background, experience to-date and goals, but also that they disclose what level of support they are willing and able to offer to you. 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 are realistically looking for help with. At the same time, ensure your mentor understands what your objectives are for being mentored.



REFLECT AND SET ACTIONABLE GOALS

As a mentee, it is vital that you take time to reflect on what your mentor is telling you, the guidance they are providing you with and how you can use this to reach your goals and objectives. Remain curious throughout the mentoring relationship and ask your mentor questions about their career, the challenges they may have faced and how they might approach the goals and objectives that you have. The mentor's job is to share their experience and help guide you in your career development.

For your mentor to do this effectively, they may well encourage you to stop and reflect on what they are telling you, during the mentoring meetings. Be sure to listen carefully, take notes and take time to reflect, both in the meetings and afterwards. During mentoring meetings, there may be periods of silence between you and your mentor. That is okay. Whilst silence between you may feel uncomfortable at the start, it should be something you get used to over time and can help you to really consider how you can develop your career.

As well as listening to your mentor's advice and guidance, you should be responsible for setting actionable and realistic goals that you can work towards. Whilst an overarching objective for 6-12 months is a good starting point, you should also break down your goals into more manageable and 'bite-sized' goals, which you can complete on a weekly or monthly basis. These will help to give your mentoring meetings structure and can guide your meeting agendas with your mentor.



MEET AND CATCH-UP AT REGULAR INTERVALS

During a mentoring relationship, it is worth meeting or speaking with your mentor 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 and speaking on a video call once a month. During these meetings, go through the things that you have achieved and done in the previous month, where the sticking points and challenges have been and how your 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 mentor to reflect and discuss goals.

Set time aside to really focus on these meetings and during the meeting also work out what you 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.



As the mentee, you should be responsible for scheduling meetings, in the first instance and should also take responsibility for creating a meeting agenda and goals. Your mentor should not be defining your goals and objectives but can advise on how they might set them. Send through a meeting agenda to your mentor at least a week before your meeting, as this will give your mentor the opportunity to reflect on it and plan how they can best help you 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 mentor is not engaged, or that they are beginning to feel unable to further support you, 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 be mentored anyway, so do use this as a guide. Equally, our 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 you were in the beginning, and where you 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 mentee, you should provide feedback that your mentor can take with them, going forwards into their career and future mentoring relationships. Equally, encourage your mentor to think about how you could improve the way you have been mentored, for the future. Welcome feedback from your mentor and when providing feedback, you may want to consider the following:

- Did your mentor offer effective support?
- Was their experience valuable and aligned with your objectives?
- Were they punctual to meetings and invested in them?
- Did they engage with your objectives and targets, effectively?
- Did they make the most of the opportunities as a mentor?
- What could they have improved upon?