

# Are You Ready to Benefit from having a Mentor?

Whether you are starting out on your career path, contemplating retirement or at any of the stages in between you will constantly be coming across new challenges. However, the chances are that there is someone out there who has been through similar challenges and can help by providing you with sound guidance and inspiration on how to move forward.

## Mentoring is a chance to:

- Make time for personal learning with someone more experienced
- Work on career progression
- Gain impartial advice and an alternative perspective
- Have a non-judgemental sounding board for ideas
- Focus on overcoming challenges and developing new skills and knowledge

Before embarking on a mentoring relationship there are a number of key things to consider in order to determine if it is the right path for you.

### 1. Develop a vision of the future you desire

so that you can identify an appropriate mentor to help you along the way. You need to have a clear vision of what you want your mentoring relationship to help you achieve otherwise the relationship will drift and stall.

**2. Experience matters.** Mentoring relationships established with more experienced professionals usually allow the mentee to access an additional depth of knowledge which can be transformational. Be clear on what type of experience will be beneficial for you.

### 3. Be specific on why you have selected your mentor.

Explain why you have chosen a particular professional to be your mentor. The mentor is giving you their time and attention so it is good to be able to share with them tangible and specific reasons why you would like them to mentor you.

**4. Seek support, not direction.** A good mentor is someone that can support you in achieving your goals. Whilst a mentor can help you to set those goals, ultimately they are your goals, so you need to set them to ensure they take you in the direction you want to go. A good mentor can then help to lift you up and give you the tools you need to succeed regardless of your path.

**5. Communicate your goal.** What does a successful mentoring relationship outcome look like to you, and what specifically do you want to learn? Clearly communicate what your goal is for the partnership and why you are sure that your mentor can get you there.

**6. Define your idea of success.** Clearly define what your idea of success looks like for your career. A professional who has proven success in their career and the experience to impart knowledge will then be in a better position to aid you towards your goals.

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## Purpose

A good starting point is to consider **why** do you want to have a mentor and what specific skills do you need? The more carefully you consider what skills and experience you are looking for 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 looking for.

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 you consider what it is you are looking to achieve from the mentoring relationship.

Being clear on your purpose will help you to find a mentor who is best placed to help you. Once you have done that, the next stage is to more clearly define the challenge(s) you are facing.

## Where are you now

Within our mentoring platform we have inbuilt needs analysis tools that you can use at or ahead of your first meeting:

The **SWOT** tool will help you identify your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that you are facing

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

## Where do you want to be?

Once you have completed your needs analysis you can use the **Goals** tool to work with your mentor 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 open to receiving feedback and changing your behaviour?

In order for you to move forward you may need to develop new attitudes and behaviour in order to improve your career performance. You will need to be open to honest, constructive feedback and to take any agreed action.

## Are you prepared to commit the time to get there?

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

Having a mentor is a bit like having a satellite navigation system with you as you embark on your journey to achieve your goals. They will guide you along the way, help to correct you if you take a wrong turning and will help you find the quickest, easiest route to achieving your goals. But just like a satellite navigation system, they won't do the hard work for you. You still need to be in the driving seat and making the final decision.

Finally, mentors don't have all the answers you need. You may still make a few mistakes, but valuable experience can be gained when an answer is found by getting through a situation rather than by avoiding it.

## So are you ready to be mentored?