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MENTORING @ CSU



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What is Mentoring?

“...the process by which an expert person facilitates learning in the mentee through the arrangement of specific learning experiences.”

Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002

“...has been defined in many different ways but it's basically a system of semi-structured guidance whereby one person shares their knowledge, skills and experience to assist others to progress in their own lives and careers. Mentors need to be readily accessible and prepared to offer help as the need arises - within agreed bounds.”

University of Cambridge, UK, 2012

“...is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.”

Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring, UK

“...is 'off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.’”

Meggison and Clutterbuck, 1995:13

Do I want a Mentor, a Coach or do I need to Shadow someone?

Shadowing enables employees to observe a more experienced member of staff and the content of their working day, skills and methods of decision making and leadership. Shadowing can help new staff awareness of the job role and also of the department as a whole. Whilst this is an important tool for new or returning staff, it is also just as productive for existing staff to see 'best practice' in action and see 'new things' or 'new ways of doing things'. It also prepares staff for promotional opportunities or assists to make career planning decisions.

Coaching is used to enhance or improve performance through reflection on how to apply a specific skill and / or knowledge. Coaching helps people reflect on their performance in a specific area, with an informed, objective helper. A coach doesn't have to be 'senior' to the employee.

Mentoring is widely used as a means of progressing and supporting employees during their career and life development. A mentor is more often someone who is senior to the mentee and is able to provide advice on suitable career paths, introductions within the industry and generally is a 'role model' to the junior colleague.

Would Mentoring benefit me?

Mentoring supports mentees in:

Developing Competence

Mentees can acquire tailored skills to meet their individual needs and acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that are directly relevant to their job and will improve job performance.

Goal setting

Mentees can be assisted to clarify their goals.

Motivation and satisfaction

Mentees can be motivated and supported when they have confidence in their own knowledge.

Employability

A mentee's employability can be enhanced with a new sense of life-long learning and development.

Psychosocial well-being

Being supported can off-load professional and personal worries such as feelings of low self-confidence and anxiety.

Creativity

The skill of bouncing ideas off the mentor, learning to view issues from multiple perspectives and acquiring new ways of problem solving all promote creativity.

Networking opportunities

A mentor can open doors to the mentee that would normally not be accessible.

Personal change

A positive role model can be instrumental in supporting major changes in mentees. Mentees can pick up new qualities and enhance their professional excellence.

Time-effectiveness

Mentees with one-on-one and customised support can meet objectives faster.

Source: CSU Training

Mentoring supports Mentors to:

- Develop new skills
- Enhance self-esteem through recognition of professional abilities
- Develop and demonstrate management skills
- Enhance leadership skills
- Gain a sense of satisfaction in assisting staff to develop
- Enhance interpersonal skills
- Increase job satisfaction

Role of a Mentor

The mentor's role is that of a trusted advisor and supportive guide, encouraging the mentee in developing effective strategies for accomplishing career objectives. A mentor may also act as a teacher or tutor, helping the mentee learn organisational and professional skills and providing insights about how to 'decode' the corporate culture. At times, the mentor may also perform the role of supporter, providing insights from experience to help the mentee manage difficult situations.

An effective mentor keeps in touch with the mentee, suggests appropriate resources and encourages the mentee to establish or seek out professional or supportive networks. A mentee must also feel free to approach the mentor for advice on specific problems and to speak openly about the work situation.

(CSU Training)

A mentor's responsibilities may include:

- To support mentees in managing their own learning
- To encourage self-directed reflection, analysis and problem solving
- To promote effective, high-quality decision making
- To be a sounding board – to challenge assumptions, ideas and behaviours
- To motivate the mentee to achieve objectives
- To inspire
- To 'open doors', for example, by introducing the mentee to the 'right' people or by creating opportunities
- To be there
- To provide a safe, objective, non-judgemental, and confidential space for the mentee
- To provide guidance and advice, particularly when the mentee has become "unstuck" or is about to make a mistake that will do long term damage to his or her career
- To manage learning experiences in the workplace for the mentee
- To facilitate learning in the workplace
- To develop a relationship with the mentee
- To maintain regular contact and communication with the mentee
- To liaise with the mentee's manager
- To be a credible role model.

Source: Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) and Tovey (1999).

Have I got what it takes to be a Mentor?

You may already be a mentor to a colleague at CSU as part of a formal learning program, such as Leadership Development for Women Program, or you may be acting as a mentor to a more junior or less experienced staff member, or a member of staff may approach you and ask you to be their mentor.

Before committing to being a mentor, check to see if you have what it takes.

- A focus on the mentee
- Ability to build and manage relationships
- Willingness to share knowledge with the mentee
- Willingness to commit the time and effort required
- An understanding of the goals and objectives of the program and how these fit into the workplace
- A belief in, and a commitment to, mentoring and/or a proven track record in developing people
- Willingness to self-disclose and analyse personal attributes, knowledge and skills relevant to the needs of a mentee
- A commitment to facilitate learning rather than teaching what a mentee should know
- Acknowledged expertise in the field of study
- Organisational knowledge
- Willingness to undertake training for the role.

It is generally advised that a mentor should not be the mentee's immediate supervisor.

Source: Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) and Tovey (1999).

How to get started

There are three ways of obtaining a mentor at CSU

1. Organising it yourself

(Informal Mentoring)

If you have an idea or choice of who you wish to have as a mentor then it's possible to ask the person directly. You may have also just naturally developed a mentoring relationship.

2. Requesting a Mentor

(a more formal approach)

If you don't have a person in mind or don't know who to ask and want to explore your options then a process is in place to match mentees with the right mentor. This process will take a more structured formal approach to mentoring where you will be matched to an experienced mentor.

3. Formal Learning and Development Programs

If you are enrolled in a formal learning and development program organised by Division of Human Resources, such as the Leadership Development for Women program, Diploma of Management or the Graduate Certificate in University Leadership and Management, then a mentor will be arranged as part of the program.

1. Knowing who you want

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring occurs when a person, often more experienced, takes an interest in the well-being and advancement of another person. Sometimes it is a conscious decision on the part of the senior person to act as a mentor for a particular person, sometimes the relationship is initiated by the mentee. At other times the behaviour could be called mentoring although the term may not have occurred to the mentor.

The disadvantage of informal mentoring is that it may not happen. Informal mentoring has no clear and explicit guidelines and there are no quality standards in place. If you feel that you would benefit from informal mentoring or you desperately want a particular person to mentor you, then it is advisable to clarify some guidelines. Sit down with your mentor and discuss: Expectations, Logistics, Confidentiality, Goals and Objectives, Monitoring Progress and Potential Challenges and Solutions.



“Your Mentor does not need to be exactly like you to give good advice. He or she just needs to understand your situation”

Asking someone to mentor you

Don't make a list of important people and ask “will you mentor me?”. It's more likely to happen as any relationship might: through a process of getting to know each other. Mentoring can start with a simple chat over coffee, where you discuss just one issue or ask for general advice.

You don't have to set up weekly or monthly meetings right from the start; ease into your relationship. Try to form a relationship, and get to know their personalities even as you try to exhibit yours. Like so many other things, when you find the right mentor, you'll know it.

A mentor should be not only be someone that you respect but someone who will be concerned with your career and will have the time to invest in you. Identifying people like this in your work life is the first step to forging a good mentoring relationship.

Deakin University, Melbourne

2. Requesting a Mentor

If you want a mentor but don't know who you want or who is available, then the Division of Human Resources will assist you. A form for requesting a mentor is available under 'Career Development' at: www.csu.edu.au/division/hr/home

The matching process will take into consideration the mentee's:

- Identified areas of strength as a professional
- Identified areas for further growth and development
- Preferences for the kind of person they would like to have as a mentor
- Gender or culture considerations
- Office/work location
- Role/job description
- Any other factors which might influence matching with a prospective and appropriate mentor.

The ethics of the Mentoring relationship

It is important for mentors and mentees to fully understand the relationship. If either mentor or mentee has any concerns with the mentoring relationship, contact Division of Human Resources.

Code of Practice

- Confidentiality is to be observed at all times, including all personal contact details
- The relationship is a professional one and must not be exploited nor either person be taken advantage of to their detriment
- Professional standards of behaviour and safety are to be maintained at all times
- Mentors and mentees are to treat each other with courtesy and respect and to be non-judgemental
- Fulfil all agreed commitments
- Mentors have a responsibility to adhere to all relevant occupational health and safety requirements during mentee visits to their workplaces.

Important: Mentoring is not counselling and should not be used as such. CSU has an 'Employee Assistance Program' (EAP) which provides counselling for either work-related or personal issues, and is strictly confidential.

The Mentoring Agreement

The Mentoring Agreement is an important part of the early stages of a mentoring partnership. A Mentoring Agreement documents the personal and professional agreement that a mentee and mentor make about how they are going to conduct their mentoring partnership and the key areas of focus for the mentee.

The Mentoring Agreement should be used at three critical junction points of a mentoring partnership including:

1. At the beginning of a partnership

To ensure that both the mentee and mentor have agreed expectations of the mentoring partnership and that the mentee's goals have been identified and recorded.

2. During the middle of the partnership

As a way to monitor progress, refocus mentoring conversation or redirect mentoring goals. Using the agreement along the way is a good way to measure the progress of the partnership.

3. At the end of a mentoring partnership

As a way to look back at the original vision and to reflect upon and celebrate achievements. It's also a way to connect to what's coming up next in the mentee's career and professional development, and perhaps discuss any goals that were not achieved and how the mentee might take these forward in the future.

Australian Mentor Centre, 2008

How to be a good Mentee

Qualities of a successful Mentee

A successful mentee:

- Takes responsibility for the success of the mentoring relationship. They demonstrate initiative by taking ownership of their own development by thinking about what they want from the mentoring relationship and setting the agenda for meetings.
- Shows respect for the mentor's time and effort by keeping or rescheduling meetings and talking through issues rather than simply not turning up.
- Is responsive to help. They are willing to take onboard new ideas and perspectives and keen to take action to learn and develop their skills.
- Is reflective. They don't necessarily want to be given the answers, preferring to work things out for themselves. With a view to creating better understanding, they might challenge the mentor but ultimately see mentoring as a learning opportunity in self-awareness.

Wallace and Gravels, 2007

The not so good Mentee

The Scarlet Pimpernel

'They seek him here, they seek him there...' The elusive mentee.

The Jobsworth

The mentee who takes no responsibility in the mentoring relationship: 'It's not my problem to work out what I want from the meetings'.

The Know-it-all

The mentee who is convinced they have nothing to learn.

The Leech

Mentee who wants to be given all the answers and not work out answers for themselves.

The Victim

The mentee who always blames 'others' rather than acknowledge the part that they themselves play, refusing to confront what he/she can change and improve.

Wallace and Gravels, 2007

The first meeting

If you have been 'matched' to a mentor, then this may be your first ever meeting with them. Many people experience anxiety about their first meeting with a mentoring partner. Having a clear game plan will relieve this anxiety and make that first meeting more productive. A major purpose of this first meeting is to get your mentoring relationship off to a good start by candidly sharing your goals, experiences and expectations. Use the mentoring agreement during your first meeting to help you focus your discussion on these critical areas.

Prepare for your first meeting by generating a list of both general and specific questions you want to ask. To get off to a good start, you need to think about a place to meet where you would both feel comfortable, and plan out some things you might want to ask or say — for starters:

1. Where could I meet with my mentor where we both would feel comfortable — where we can sit and talk? List a few ideas to the side.
2. What are some things I could tell my mentor about myself that would help us get to know each other a little bit? What about me and my life story might be interesting to my mentor? What should s/he know about me in order to be a good mentor?
3. What are some questions I could ask my mentor to get to know him/her a little bit without prying? Write some possible open-ended questions below (Note: these are questions that your mentor cannot answer with a 'yes' or 'no')
4. Why do I want to have a mentor?

Common challenges

Mentoring relationships do not always succeed. Here are some common challenges to the mentee-mentor relationship:

- Providing inadequate direction
- Taking advantage of greater power
- Dealing with conflicting demands
- Dealing with conflicting advice
- Lacking commitment
- Neglecting the mentee or the mentor
- Crossing boundaries
- Discovering a mismatch between mentor and mentee
- Breaching confidentiality
- Unrealistic expectations.

Difficulties in Mentoring

Not all mentoring relationships are successful. This may be apparent early in the process e.g. because of communication problems or a bad match on objectives or you might just run out of steam half way through. If you feel that you are not able to assist a mentee for whatever reason, talk to them about it in a positive and constructive way. After all, you have volunteered to be a mentor and are committed to helping them get the best out of the arrangement. It may be a good time to discuss whether or not the match is going to be successful for both parties. If either party feels that the match is not going to be productive and satisfying, this is the time to discuss it.

It may be possible to clarify or resolve issues in some way (e.g. by re-examining expectations, reviewing the mentee's objectives, changing the meeting arrangements) as long as the arrangement is still going to meet the mentee's needs and achieve worthwhile outcomes.

Deakin University, Melbourne

What makes a good mentoring relationship?

A Charles Sturt University Mentoring Study, 2013

(Davidson, P, 2013)

Background

The Leadership Development for Women (LDW) program has been running since 2006. In 2013, the LDW steering committee undertook an inquiry into the mentor experiences. A total of 21 mentors were interviewed – six were from the professional sector and six from the academic sector. Mentors were asked to comment about their mentoring experiences.

Interpretation of priorities

The following points were repeated and made two things quite clear:

1. It seems critical for the mentee to be clear, or have some idea, about their goal and how the mentor might help them, however, frequently the mentee's lack of understanding of what mentoring can provide and possibly their lack of application to this topic, limits their clarity of purpose.
2. A formal and clear starting point might be useful.

Reasons the mentoring relationships didn't work or were just OK were:

- Mentor felt that the mentee didn't know how to make the most of the opportunity, they didn't have clear goals.
- Mentor had been an informal mentor to this person up to then, but then the mentee seemed too busy to meet.
- Mentee did not show up, or did not make an effort to establish the relationship.
- Mentee became unwell and dropped out of the program.
- Mentor felt the mentee didn't take the mentoring seriously.
- Mentor and mentee couldn't find common free time.
- Both the mentor and mentee were unclear about what they should be achieving.
- Mentor thought that the mentee wanted a buddy or counsellor, not a mentor.

Perspectives on Mentoring:

Some of the mentors offered their interpretation of what mentoring is:

- How much people get out of mentoring depends on the commitment from both, the partnership is 60:40 effort (mentee:mentor)
- Mentoring is a running conversation with people less experienced, trying to help them find their way through
- Mentoring needs to be driven by the mentee; the mentee is primarily responsible for developing the relationship. This needs to be a clear expectation.

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