Working together

Making the most of mentoring
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How to get the most from this booklet

This booklet covers the role of both the mentor and the mentee, because research shows that taking time to understand each other’s role will greatly enhance the outcomes of a mentoring relationship. It will be useful preparation in understanding what mentoring is about and how you can play your part in making the mentoring relationship work.

In the appendix you will find a variety of case-studies from IOP members, giving you their experiences of mentoring. These range from a recent graduate to seasoned mentors who have more than 30 years of mentoring experience between them. They share their personal views and experiences, and provide useful hints and tips.
Introduction

It is not a coincidence that mentoring has become so popular over the last few years. For so many of us, work has become more fast paced, unpredictable and challenging than ever before. We want to plan our next career step, yet it is difficult to know which move to make. We get deeply involved in complex projects, and when problems arise we are so close that we find it hard to see a way forward. We might struggle to balance our role as working parents, yet worry that admitting it will affect our career. Some of these issues we will happily discuss with our line managers; others we would rather not. Instead, we would appreciate an independent perspective – someone to listen to and challenge us without our having to worry about the consequences of our discussions.

This is where mentoring comes in. It provides a strictly confidential, safe and independent space in which we can come to our own conclusions about how to move forward. Mentoring has been described as “one of the best methods to enhance individuals’ learning and development”. The Institute of Physics (IOP) recognises this and is committed to promoting and facilitating it.

This booklet aims to help you to:
• gain an overview of mentoring, outlining the benefits and potential pitfalls;
• consider your own approach and identify your needs;
• choose the right mentor for you.

We hope you find it useful and we look forward to welcoming you to the mentoring scheme.
What is mentoring?

Your experience of mentoring

What do you think of when you hear the word “mentoring”? Someone sharing their wisdom? Career progression? A satisfying way of helping others? Or even greek mythology?

We all have our own ideas of what mentoring means, which will influence our approach to any mentoring relationship. Before we go any further in describing and defining mentoring, look at what it means to you.

Over to you

When I think of mentoring, I think of the following:

I see mentoring as:
Characteristics of mentoring

**Learning partnership** Mentoring is a partnership between two people: an experienced person (the mentor) who facilitates the development of another person (the mentee).

**Mentoring roles: what do mentors and mentees do?** The mentor asks the mentee questions to help them to clarify and understand an issue and to assist them in finding a constructive way forward. Mentors provide advice and support to enable mentees to discover solutions for themselves.

The role of the mentee is to take responsibility for their own objectives and to engage actively in the process, such as by undertaking any agreed actions and openly feeding back outcomes.

The mentor spends a great deal of their time listening, asking questions and helping the mentee to develop insights that are beyond their individual perspectives and sometimes outside their comfort zones. Naturally, the mentor will draw on their own experience and bring their specific knowledge into the process. Yet, as David Clutterbuck cautions, “effective mentors tend to treat their wisdom like a nuclear arsenal – they very rarely let it fly”. The reason for this is simple; mentees who are encouraged to find their own solutions will be more motivated to put them into practice and will learn more from the experience. They will also gain a greater sense of achievement.

**Focus** Mentoring concentrates on the mentee’s personal and professional development needs. Mentor and mentee take a long-term view, based on development goals and objectives that the mentee develops with support from the mentor.

**Offline, confidentiality and trust** The relationship between mentor and mentee is built on mutual trust and respect. Two conditions must be met for this to work. First, to avoid any conflict of interest, the mentor must not have direct line-management responsibility for the mentee. Second, mentor and mentee must treat all matters discussed in the strictest of confidence.

**Mentoring past vs present** Traditionally, the mentor has been the more senior partner in terms of age, position and status. The nature and perception of the mentoring relationship has changed greatly over the years and the mentor’s role has shifted from the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side”. The relationship between mentor and mentee is no longer a hierarchical one but one of equal learning partners.
Beneficiaries of mentoring It is not only the mentor and mentee who benefit directly from the outcomes of the mentoring relationship. Third parties, such as line managers, colleagues, customers and suppliers, will gain too, be it from higher motivation, greater insights and knowledge, more confidence or increased skill levels. It is this ripple effect that makes mentoring such an effective tool.

Phases of mentoring Mentoring takes place over an agreed period of time, which is negotiated at the beginning of the relationship. The duration depends on the agreed objectives and can vary from a few months to a few years (see case-studies). The mentoring process can be divided into different phases. The number of phases varies between three and four, depending on the model. Each is important in the process and must not be missed out.

One of these models is that of Zachary. This consists of four phases that build on each other, showing a natural progression from the start to the end of the mentoring partnership. The phases are:

1: Preparing
Preparation is key for both mentor and mentee. The mentor needs to assess their own personal motivations, their readiness to be a mentor and their skills in order to set learning objectives for themselves. The mentee needs to do the same, from their own perspective: thinking about their personal motivations and expectations, their readiness to enter a mentoring relationship, and what they want to learn and achieve as part of the arrangement.

The second part of the preparation phase is the “discovery process”. This involves finding out whether the mentor and mentee are suited and whether there is enough common ground to make the partnership a productive one.

2: Negotiating
This phase involves making an agreement regarding the ground rules, content, process, logistics and duration of the mentoring partnership. It also covers sensitive issues, such as personal and professional boundaries, working styles and how to handle confidentiality. Zachary points out that, because of the sensitive nature of these issues, mentoring partners might shy away from discussing them, but the best way to avoid any future problems is to address these issues at the beginning.
3: Enabling
At this stage, learning, discussion and feedback between the mentor and the mentee take place, focusing on the mentee’s challenges. Both mentor and mentee are responsible for staying on track, for reviewing regularly whether the mentee is achieving their learning goals, and for working together constructively so that progress is made.

4: Coming to closure
Marking the end of the mentoring relationship is an important step in allowing both parties to move on. Both parties should take this opportunity to review, evaluate, state and celebrate achievements and provide feedback to each other.

What to bear in mind when applying the four-phase model A degree of overlap between the phases is common, and the mentor and mentee can revisit an earlier, completed phase. For example, when the mentee or mentor’s personal or professional circumstances change during phase 3 (enabling), they may need to adjust previous expectations and objectives to ensure that their sessions are relevant under the new circumstances.

The four phases provide a common structure for the mentoring journey. The mentor can use the phases to reflect on their mentoring practice and for orientation. The phases then become milestones en route, offering natural points for reflection and review and enabling a more successful outcome.

Omitting stages or changing the order can cause problems. For example:

• Jumping straight into phase 3 (enabling) with insufficient preparation or negotiation of ground rules and learning objectives. This can lead to a mismatch in expectations, lacklustre commitment, unsatisfactory results and ultimately the faltering of the mentoring relationship.

• Ignoring the need for closure (phase 4) and letting the mentoring relationship fizzle out. This may leave mentoring partners feeling dissatisfied and the opportunity to review any learning outcomes is wasted.

“Having someone to talk to who is not directly involved in your work is definitely a good thing.”
Frances Dawson, Graduate Trainee Physicist, AMEC NNC
Mentoring definitions

As already mentioned, there are many definitions of mentoring. It’s worth having a look at a few of these to identify the one that feels most comfortable for you.

Definition 1: Clutterbuck and Megginson 1995
Mentoring is “offline help from one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.”

- The mentor–mentee relationship is an equal one.
- Confidentiality is key.
- The role of the mentor is described as “help” and, by not identifying what “help” means, implies that it can take many forms.
- The outcome is a change of behaviour.

Definition 2: Hay 1995
“The basic model of mentoring is that one person passes their greater knowledge and wisdom to another.”

- The relationship is more hierarchical, with the mentor at the giving and the mentee at the receiving end.
- No mention is made of confidentiality.
- The outcome is increased knowledge.

Definition 3: Kay and Hinds 2005
Mentoring is "a relationship between two parties, who are not connected within a line-management structure, in which one party (the mentor) guides the other (the mentee) through a period of change and towards an agreed objective”.

- The mentor–mentee relationship is a neutral one.
- Confidentiality is key.
- Change element.
- There is emphasis on the need to agree outcomes.
### Over to you

**Having read the previous section, your view of mentoring may have developed from your initial thoughts. This will influence the way you approach and interact with your mentor or mentee.**

Which of the definitions comes closest to your understanding of mentoring?

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How will your preferred definition influence your approach to mentoring?

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What is your own definition of mentoring?

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How will your own definition influence your approach to mentoring?

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In which professional contexts does mentoring take place?

Below are examples of typical professional contexts in which mentoring can take place. Mentoring is an individual process, so don’t feel constrained by them – you can use mentoring to suit your particular needs.

- **Induction programmes** Often as part of graduate development programmes, to maximise the graduate’s learning and development during that phase (see case-studies).

- **Continuous professional development** Supporting professionals to achieve chartered status, develop new skills or gain additional experience (see case-studies).

- **Career development** Typically internal mentoring arrangements for early-career employees and external mentoring for mid-career and senior staff.

- **Outplacement** Helping individuals to make the transition to new forms of employment and to be aware of a variety of career options through external mentors, and providing practical and emotional support to find new employment.

- **Succession planning** Internal and external mentoring to help to nurture in-house talent, and to retain and prepare employees for future roles in the organisation.

- **Change management** To strengthen communication and cohesion across the organisation.

- **Mergers and acquisitions** To ensure that knowledge across the merging organisations is shared, and communication and common ground are fostered.

- **Implementing the learning organisation** As a valuable and cost-effective learning and development tool, and as a means of sharing knowledge and expertise across an organisation.

- **Special projects** To support an individual’s professional development and ability to take on new responsibilities that are outside of their current expertise.
“It’s a real plus to have a mentor for your first job, especially if you are new from university, when you haven’t got much experience and find yourself in a new environment.”
Frances Dawson, Graduate Trainee Physicist, AMEC NNC
This section focuses on information and exercises for each individual role. We look at the benefits of becoming a mentor/mentee, the skills that you can expect to develop in both roles and your expectations of a mentor or mentee.

Why become a mentor?

“Mentors are fortunate. They enjoy the privilege of learning while helping others to solve challenges.”

There are many reasons why people become mentors. Some of the benefits are:

• Satisfaction from helping others to learn and grow (see case-studies);
• Stimulation from interacting with professionals who are at different stages in their careers and from different occupations and environments;
• The opportunity to develop new skills, such as listening and giving feedback;
• The gratification of being able to give something back to a community.

There is clear evidence that mentors who are aware of their motivations are more effective. At this stage it would be useful for you to consider which mentoring benefits are important to you.
Over to you

What would you like to gain from a mentoring relationship? Highlight or tick the benefits that you find most appealing (the list is in no particular order):

- stepping-stone for professional development or promotion;
- credibility as a professional with people-management skills;
- increased awareness of your strengths and limitations;
- status;
- passing on your knowledge and expertise;
- personal or professional challenge;
- retention of talent in the organisation;
- joy of helping others learn and progress;
- develop specific insights/skills in the areas of...

Other reasons:

How would you describe your key objectives in becoming a mentor?
What you do as a mentor

Communication skills are key competencies because mentors need to be able to build rapport, listen actively, and ask relevant and challenging questions. They also need to show empathy and encourage the mentee to be accountable for their development. These skills are also used in coaching, counselling and consulting and, although there is overlap between these roles, there are subtle differences.

Mentoring vs counselling and coaching and consulting

Counselling
Counselling focuses on resolving emotional and psychological problems that are grounded in the past and often impact on people’s wellbeing in the present. Specific counselling skills, such as active listening, mirroring and summarising, are also applied in a mentoring context. However, counselling is a specialist profession and it is important to understand the distinction between counselling and mentoring so that you recognise the boundaries.

Occasionally, a mentee brings personal matters into the mentoring relationship, such as interpersonal issues that affect their relationships at work. While as a mentor you may be expected to address these concerns, it is important for you to be aware of your limitations. Deeper issues, such as a severe lack of confidence or motivation, would be better dealt with by professionals. In this case, encouragement to seek professional help would be in the best interest of the mentee, and will enable you to focus on the issues that you are best equipped to deal with.

Coaching
Coaching has become a widely used professional development tool. The boundary between coaching and mentoring is blurred because both roles involve helping another person to develop strategies for change. As with mentoring, the coach challenges the coachee by asking questions to help them to gain self-awareness and to clarify the issues, identify the options and decide on an appropriate course of action. However, coaching differs from mentoring in its strong focus on performance improvement, plus clear task and action orientation.

As a mentor, you are likely to encounter situations where you may not consider yourself to be an expert in the area in which the mentee faces challenges. However, by asking them pertinent questions and following their agenda, you will still be able to help them. Again, this illustrates the similarity between the roles.
Consulting
There is a clear distinction between consulting and mentoring: as a mentor, your role is to ask the right questions, but the role of consultant is to provide the right answers. Giving advice and making suggestions is part of mentoring, but it is a matter of balance. You need to be aware that a mentee can fall into the trap of regarding their mentor as a consultant, offering solutions on a plate. However, this “quick fix” approach will not help the mentee to develop – remember, as a mentor your role is to facilitate the mentee’s learning so that they become more self-reliant. This means refraining from providing instant solutions, even if this is sometimes tempting. For the mentee this means taking ownership of challenges, learning from experience, and developing greater confidence and independence.

What you learn as a mentor
Mentoring provides an opportunity to develop and refine a wide set of skills that are essential in today’s world of work. Due to the nature of mentoring, these attributes are predominantly in the area of interpersonal skills and communication, but ability in, for example, planning, goal setting, project management and time management also play a key role.

“A big part of my role as a mentor is to broaden the questions that the mentees ask, to help them think more widely and consider alternatives. Through mentoring I have become more creative in seeing possibilities I might previously have disregarded.”
Sean Fox, Group Finance Director, IOP
Skills development for mentors

Below is a list of skills typically used by mentors. Depending on the context and your mentoring style, you will draw on them at different levels and frequencies.

Relationship management
• building rapport;
• creating an open and safe environment that is conducive to learning;
• recognising and managing the different phases of the relationship;
• establishing boundaries;
• getting buy-in to the process.

Time management
• managing your mentoring commitments, even if you have a heavy workload.

Effective communication
• listening skills, such as active listening, maintaining a balance of listening and speaking, and remaining non-judgmental;
• questioning skills, such as asking suitable questions to challenge and support the mentee;
• checking for understanding; reflecting and summarising;
• being aware of what is and isn’t being said, such as by reading non-verbal clues (body language).

Facilitating learning
• finding the right level of challenge and support for each individual;
• dealing with the mentee’s internal and/or external barriers;
• developing self-awareness – of your and of the mentee;
• being able to deviate from the agenda to respond to the mentee’s, often ad hoc, needs;
• supporting mentees to build relationships outside their existing networks.
Motivational skills
• being empathetic;
• showing encouragement;
• being challenging;
• learning to deal with setbacks;
• celebrating success;
• committing to action/creating accountability within the mentee.

Goal setting and action planning
• understanding the mentee’s agenda;
• enabling the mentee to identify, clarify and set realistic goals;
• creating a sense of accountability and the commitment of the mentee to achieve goals set.

Conflict management
• supporting the mentee in handling conflict situations.

Problem solving
• engaging the mentee in solving a problem;
• enabling the mentee to think creatively;
• being flexible and thinking on your feet.

Giving and receiving feedback
• suspending judgement;
• providing regular and constructive feedback;
• asking for regular feedback from your mentee.

Reflecting
• assisting the mentee to step back, learn from their experience, evaluate and acknowledge development, and plan further learning;
• engaging in self-reflection;
• helping the mentee to record their learning, such as for CPD purposes, and to be aware of their progress.

“Mentoring is very rewarding. You gain just as much from it as those whom you are mentoring.”
Sean Fox, Group Finance Director, IOP
Over to you

To maximise your learning from the mentoring experience it might be useful for you to consider the following questions:

which skills are you competent in?

which skills are you not yet competent in?

which skills are important in your current role?

which skills are likely to be important in your future role?

which skills do you want to develop through mentoring?

You can use the iop’s cpd website to consider these questions in more detail see http://www.iop.org/activity/careers/index.html
Choosing a mentee

Not every mentor has the option of choosing their mentee, and some mentors prefer not to, as they relish the challenge of working with anyone whom they are asked to support. This may be the case for some experienced mentors who have developed ways of adding value, irrespective of professional background and differing personality.

However, given the commitment that mentoring takes, it is worth taking the time to decide what kind of mentee would be a suitable match and where you can see yourself being of most use.

If you had the choice of who to mentor, who would you be prepared to take on? What criteria are you looking for in a mentee? You may wish to consider the following questions:

Over to you

What are you looking for in a mentee? Which of these characteristics are important to you?

- Internal/external mentee
- Professional background or discipline
- Level of expertise
- Membership grade
- Career stage: early career, mid career, senior level
- Size of organisation (entrepreneur, small, medium-sized, large, global)
- Industry sector
- Specialist skills
- Geographical location
Top tips for mentors

* At the beginning of the mentoring relationship, take time to build rapport, understand the mentee’s agenda and agree on objectives and boundaries, regardless of how keen your mentee is to begin. This will ensure that you are working towards the same goals.

* Be aware of your mentoring style. Make sure you find the right balance between support and challenge for each of your mentees – you don’t want to overwhelm them by challenging them too much or hold them back by giving them too much support.

* Making assumptions is part of human nature. However, leaving your assumptions unchecked may impact negatively on your mentee. To avoid this, ask probing questions to seek clarification of the whole situation before giving advice.

* Enthusiastic and motivated mentees are keen to learn. There is a great temptation to share your wisdom with a receptive audience. However, you should hold back and allow mentees to explore their own ideas before helping them to consider other options.

* Be clear about what you want to gain from the mentoring experience. It’s all too easy to focus exclusively on the mentee’s objectives and lose sight of your own. The clearer you are about your own objectives, the more motivated you will be. This will impact positively on the mentee.

Why become a mentee?

“The key...is that, with help, we have found our own answers.”

Individuals seek mentors for a variety of reasons, particularly when they are in transition, and where an outside perspective and support mechanism would be useful. You will get more from the relationship if you have a clear understanding of your needs.
Over to you

Below is a list of reasons (not exhaustive) why people look for a mentor. Tick the ones that match your requirements most closely:

- to get advice;
- to access a sounding-board;
- to increase motivation;
- to gain greater self-awareness;
- to overcome specific weaknesses;
- to achieve a better work–life balance;
- to achieve career progression;
- to improve confidence;
- to enlarge networks;
- to gain support for achieving chartered status;
- to broaden perspectives;
- to develop specific knowledge/skills in the areas of...
- to gain access to internal or external resources and networks;
- to get help during an induction period;
- to gain insight into different organisations and their culture;
- other reasons...

What are your key objectives from mentoring?

The clearer you are about your expectations from the mentoring process, and what kind of mentor would be an appropriate match for your developmental needs, the easier it is to:

- identify a suitable mentor;
- ensure that your expectations match theirs;
- assess whether those expectations are realistic;
- evaluate the mentoring relationship.

These steps will create a firm foundation for the relationship, ensuring that it is productive.
What you do as a mentee

Mentees may have the perception that mentoring is a passive exercise, with the onus being placed on the mentor to tease the learning out of them. However, the role of mentee is very proactive. The mentee who fully engages in the process, and accepts responsibility for their own learning and development, is more likely to find the experience valuable.

As a mentee, you are responsible for:

- building a working partnership with a more experienced and knowledgeable professional;
- taking charge of your professional development by sharing and communicating your professional development needs effectively;
- learning how to set smart objectives, review progress and respond to challenges;
- developing your interpersonal and problem-solving skills;
- understanding the mentor’s perspective and approach, thereby broadening your horizons.

What you learn as a mentee

When asked what they want to get out of mentoring, mentees commonly reply: learning from their mentors’ experience and knowledge, and having access to their resources. However, there is more to be gained from mentoring – by participating in a mentoring partnership you will develop your skills and enhance your attributes. Identify from the following list of skills those that you find most relevant and interesting for your current and future roles:

- **Time management**
  - honouring your commitment to your mentor and the mentoring process;
  - managing your time to get agreed tasks done;
  - making time for professional development.

- **Goal setting and action planning**
  - clarifying your professional development goals;
  - taking responsibility for achieving your goals;
  - maintaining focus and energy to achieve your goals;
  - becoming proactive;
  - investigating resources.
• **Communication skills**
  - developing listening skills;
  - asking meaningful questions;
  - asking for help when appropriate;
  - articulating yourself clearly (thoughts, feelings, needs and expectations).

• **Networking**
  - building rapport with new contacts;
  - presenting and “selling” yourself;
  - maintaining relationships: delivering on agreements and following up.

• **Problem solving**
  - learning new problem-solving techniques;
  - broadening your horizons by looking at various options.

• **Managing relationships at work**
  - developing a rapport with your mentor;
  - agreeing, setting and honouring boundaries within the partnership;
  - giving and receiving feedback.

• **Learning to learn**
  - driving your own development;
  - becoming aware of strengths and areas for development;
  - reflecting on and recording your learning and development.

• **Self-management**
  - becoming accountable;
  - increased self-management skills;
  - developing confidence;
  - expanding self-knowledge;
  - acknowledging successes and dealing with setbacks.
Over to you

Looking at the list of skills above, identify:

which skills you feel you are competent in...

which skills you feel you are not competent in...

which skills are important in your current role...

which skills are likely to be important in your future role...

which skills you want to develop through mentoring...

What can mentoring offer you?
Choosing a mentor

Some organisations offer mentoring programmes and allocate mentors to mentees, often as part of an induction programme or graduate training scheme, or for professional accreditation (see case-studies). Generally, organisations take great care to match suitable mentors and mentees, and they provide support and guidance should the relationships not develop as expected.

If you are in a position where you need to find your own mentor, considering the commitment involved, it makes sense to clarify what you are looking for. Important factors for you may be their professional experience, background or working style. You should also consider their availability and, if you are applying for professional registration, their membership grade.

When left to their own devices, people instinctively tend to opt for a mentor whom they know and like. This sounds like a recipe for success but research by David Clutterbuck\textsuperscript{13} shows that it has drawbacks, because if the mentor and mentee are too similar, it can be hard to set boundaries and develop a professional relationship. Familiarity can also make it harder to create a sense of accountability and challenge.

If you like being stretched and are willing to take a risk, choose a mentor who is very different from you. This is even more advantageous at a senior level, where the mentoring relationship is often needed to give exposure to a challenging and different perspective, environment or network. However, you will still need to ensure that you are able to work together.

If you want a mentor to guide you through your professional accreditation, it makes sense for them to belong to the same professional institution, to have gone through the same experience in the not-too-distant past or at least to have a sound and up-to-date understanding of the issues at stake. Mentors used officially as supporters for the application process for chartered status with the IOP must have chartered status.

“... My mentor comes up with things that I wouldn’t have thought of myself, because he has more experience and knowledge of the company and the processes we use. He gives me more to think about.”
Frances Dawson, Graduate Trainee Physicist, AMEC NNC
Over to you

**What are you looking for in a mentor?**

- Internal/external mentor
- Professional background or discipline
- Level of expertise
- Chartered status
- Career stage: early career, mid career, senior level
- Size of organisation (entrepreneur, small, medium-sized, large, global)
- Industry sector
- Specialist skills
- Geographic location
- Mentoring experience
Boundaries and responsibilities in a mentoring relationship

Specific mentor responsibilities:
• creating physical and emotional space for the mentoring relationship despite your busy schedule;
• clear contracting at the beginning, helping the mentee set smart objectives;
• setting boundaries and ground rules jointly with your mentee;
• creating a safe, open and honest learning environment;
• preparing meetings and recognising that your investment of time at the beginning of the relationship will pay dividends later on;
• being approachable and accessible;
• assisting your mentee but not doing the work for them;
• letting the mentee make their own mistakes and encouraging them to learn from experience;
• regularly reviewing the mentoring partnership and taking action to address issues if the mentoring process is not beneficial to both mentor and mentee;
• ending the mentoring relationship once objectives have been met, or renegotiating continuation, if it will be of benefit to both mentor and mentee.

Over to you

What commitment are you willing to make?

How much time are you prepared, and able, to give to the mentoring relationship (per week/month/year)?

Which of the responsibilities above will come easily to you?

Which of the responsibilities above will be difficult for you to fulfil?

What would help you to honour these responsibilities?
What makes a successful mentor?

Effective mentors are diverse in skills and attributes. They all engage in the same professional development activity, yet they do it in their own authentic way and in their own style. However, they all follow some basic mentoring principles.

Putting your mentee centre stage
Successful mentors strike a fine balance between the mentee’s agenda and development objectives and organisational expectations. Mentors open new horizons for mentees without imposing their own agendas.

Responding to your mentee’s needs
Mentees present challenges that are unique to them. Their attitudes and learning styles will also be different. Effective mentors are able to adapt their mentoring style to individuals so as to provide the best development opportunities for them. This involves being able to shift between different mentoring styles, and adapting the level of support and challenge to the needs of the mentee.

Helping mentees to help themselves
The aim of mentoring is for the mentee to grow and learn, and to achieve a higher level of independence and self-reliance. This means that the mentor must give the mentee space to develop ownership of their own development, help them find their own solutions, and guide only when appropriate and beneficial to the mentee.

Knowing yourself
“Mentors who are able to reflect critically on their own experiences and learn from them are best able to model critical reflection in their mentoring interaction.”

Knowing your limitations and boundaries
As already mentioned, sometimes mentees bring issues into the mentoring relationship that are beyond the capabilities and responsibilities of a mentor, and that are better addressed by a trained professional. Successful mentors recognise their professional and ethical boundaries and ask the mentee to seek professional support when appropriate.
Asking for feedback
The person best equipped to give you feedback on your performance as a mentor is your mentee. Giving and receiving feedback should be a regular feature of the mentoring process because it helps to establish the good practice of providing feedback, which can be transferred into the working environment. It also helps the professional development of both mentor and mentee. Asking for mentoring supervision and attending mentoring workshops with the opportunity to get feedback on live practice sessions is another way to ensure continuous learning.

Over to you

What does being a successful mentor mean to you?

Where do you see your strengths as a mentor?

How can you build on your strengths?

Where do you see your limitations?

What would help you to overcome your limitations?

“Mentoring is an extremely rewarding experience. I can do my bit, I give advice, I sit back and I watch what happens. Where do their careers go next? And then you watch someone make it far.”

Tub Aves, Independent Nuclear Manager, Devonport Management Ltd
**Specific mentee responsibilities**

- being clear about your expectations and learning objectives
- communicating those objectives and expectations to your mentor
- taking responsibility for your own learning and accepting that the more you put in the more you will get out of the mentoring relationship
- being open-minded, flexible and willing to embrace the mentor’s perspective, without compromising your own independent thinking
- following through on agreed action points.

**Over to you**

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<th>How much time are you able to give to the mentoring relationship (per week/month/year)</th>
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<th>Which of the responsibilities above are you most comfortable with?</th>
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<th>Which of the responsibilities above will you find most challenging?</th>
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<th>What would help you to honour these responsibilities?</th>
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What makes a successful mentee?

However you define “success” for yourself, in mentoring there are some clear indicators of whether a mentee will benefit fully from the mentoring process. Key factors are your attitude, your motivation, your commitment and your willingness to take responsibility for your own personal and professional development. However good a mentor is, unless you put in the work you will not progress.

This does not mean you that you have to be perfect. Your mentor’s role is to assist you with your development needs. You will find it easier if you are prepared to take the initiative, are clear about what you want to gain from mentoring and share this with your mentor. You do not have to agree with everything that your mentor says – a good mentor will expect to be challenged by you too.

**Top tips for mentees**

01 If you are interested in becoming a mentee but are not entirely sure what is involved, you could talk to other mentees. They don’t have to be work based – think of your colleagues, your friends and family, people you know through your hobbies and members of the IOP. Even if your contacts have not been mentees themselves, there is a good chance that they know someone who has.

02 Take ownership of your professional development. Finding out where you want to go is not always an easy process, but when you believe in your own path you are more likely to succeed.

03 Keep a regular log of your mentoring experience. What are your thoughts? How do you feel? What is going well? What are you struggling with? And what are you doing differently as a result of mentoring? Recording your personal insights and observations regularly will enhance your learning.

04 Respect your mentor’s boundaries. You are keen to learn; they are there to support and challenge you. Resolve what you can by yourself and save the real issues for the valuable mentoring time.

05 Play your part to get the mentoring relationship off to a good start. How can you prepare for the first meeting? What would be useful to share? Are you clear about your expectations? A good mentor will create a learning partnership with their mentees, and this means shared responsibility for making it work.
## Over to you

What does being a successful mentee mean to you?

Where do you see your strengths as a mentee?

How can you build on your strengths?

Where do you see your limitations?

What are your concerns about being a mentee?

What would be useful for your mentor to know to help you to progress?
Joint responsibilities of both mentee and mentor

• honouring agreements (meeting arrangements, ways of working together, accessibility)
• maintaining and safeguarding confidentiality
• sharing needs, learning and expected outcomes
• assessing what works and what doesn’t.

Over to you

What other questions do you have about mentoring?

1

2

3

4

5

Contact the IOP if you have further questions. We can put you in touch with mentors and mentees who will be willing to share their experiences and help to answer your queries.
The final review for mentor and mentee

Now that you have worked through this publication, note your observations and conclusions:

What I’ve learned about mentoring...

What excites me about mentoring...

What concerns me about mentoring...

What I have decided to do...

What I need to do next...

How ready are you to become a mentor or mentee?
On a scale of 1–10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 the highest, how do you rate your willingness or ability to take mentoring forward?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

What would you need to do to feel comfortable increasing the score by 1, 2 or 3 points?
Questions frequently asked by mentors

01 I have no previous mentoring experience but would like to become a mentor. How can I go about this?

A good starting point is to identify your professional experience and expertise. In which areas do you feel competent and confident? Where can you add value? Talk to other mentors in your field, such as in your organisation or at the IOP, and ask them about their experiences. This will provide useful insights into becoming a mentor. Attending a mentoring workshop, such as the one run regularly by the IOP, will help you to learn the relevant skills and tools, and to understand the processes involved.

02 How can I identify a suitable mentee for me?

The exercises in this publication will have given you a number of criteria to think about, insights into your own professional development needs and a better idea of the kind of person you would like to mentor. In which areas can you add value to a mentee? To identify a suitable mentee, visit www.iop.org/careers

03 How long does a mentoring partnership last?

Unless mentoring takes place as part of an organisational initiative within a set time frame, the duration of the mentoring partnership is a joint decision between you and your mentee. It can be for a specific length of time (e.g. 6 or 12 months) or it can be based on achieving certain objectives, or a combination of the two. In other words, mentoring takes as long as you and the mentee agree to continue your mentoring relationship.

04 What is the time commitment?

Mentoring sessions can range from a minimum of 30 minutes to two hours. It is preferable for the session to be face to face, particularly for the first meeting, but telephone or e-mail contact is also workable. It is important to stick to arrangements with your mentee, and to safeguard your allocated time. As a mentor, you are a role model. If you find yourself postponing meetings often and not honouring previous agreements, you send the wrong signals to your mentee, and their commitment will suffer as a consequence.

05 What do I need to do to plan for the mentoring sessions?

This depends on the context of the mentoring agreement, your level of experience and the challenges encountered. For instance, if you mentor someone who is getting professionally accredited, it is crucial that you are familiar with the guidelines, process, timetable and assessment criteria so that you can help them set relevant goals and review their progress. In general, you must keep track of where you are in the overall mentoring process so that you can monitor and evaluate progress.
Before each session you should go back over your notes from the previous session so that you can refresh your memory of any action points that the mentee agreed to take forward. This will enable you to reconnect with them quickly. A more detailed description of how to plan the mentoring process and individual mentoring sessions is available in Zachary’s mentoring publication.

06 Is it important to have review meetings?
Yes – regular learning reviews are an important part of any professional development activity, and mentoring is no exception. Engaging your mentees in the review process will help them to learn to reflect on their professional development and to become more self-reliant. Reviews also give you valuable feedback about your effectiveness as a mentor. The key is to have regular reviews – not only evaluating how mentees are developing and whether they are making progress towards their goals, but also assessing the effectiveness of the mentoring sessions.

07 What do I do if I can’t provide the right guidance to the mentee?
If you realise that you simply can’t help the mentee it is best to acknowledge this openly and to bring the relationship to a close. As in any professional relationship, these things happen, so no one is losing face because there is a mismatch of mentoring style, personality or expertise. In effect, identifying exactly what the mentee needs and helping them to find a more suitable mentor can show your concern for the mentee and your commitment to their professional development, even if you aren’t the right learning partner for them.

08 How much should the mentor confide in the mentee’s line manager?
The answer is not at all, unless you have permission from your mentee. A fruitful mentoring relationship is based on openness and trust. The only way that mentees can address their professional concerns openly with you is by knowing that whatever they discuss with you is treated with the strictest confidence.

09 How much informal contact between planned sessions is recommended?
There are no set rules: different mentors have different preferences and levels of tolerance for interruptions. The main thing is to have sufficient contact between you and your mentee so that you can maintain a trusting and productive working relationship. For some mentees this will mean a greater need for informal contact time than for others. Your expectations regarding informal (and formal) contact time are best clarified at the beginning of the mentoring partnership, and then reviewed if necessary. Make it work for both you and your mentee. Make sure that the mentee respects your time and does not approach you with issues that could easily be
resolved without your input. Equally, there may be times when the mentee has a pressing matter that needs urgent attention from you in your role as a mentor.

10 **How many mentees can I take on at the same time?**
There are a few factors to take into account:
- how much time you can spend on mentoring as part of your own professional development, in consultation with your line manager;
- how much time you can set aside for taking on additional mentoring responsibilities;
- how mentoring is valued in your organisation.

These factors will impact on the effort involved and your ability to commit. For first-time mentors, one mentee is a sensible start, because preparation before and after meetings is likely to take longer than for a more experienced mentor. As you gain experience you will be in a better position to decide how many individuals you can help. If you enjoy mentoring, resist the temptation to overcommit by taking on more mentees than you can manage. Your mentees will be disappointed if you are unable to give them all the attention that they deserve.

11 **What can I do if I struggle with my mentoring sessions?**
First, keep a learning log to help you to reflect on your experience and gain a deeper understanding of what is working well and what isn’t. Second, recognise that as a mentor you are not out there on your own. Help and support are available through the IOP’s mentoring service, such as through informal discussions with other mentors on the mentoring website forum. Attending mentoring workshops, where you can enhance your skills and receive feedback on your professional practice, is recommended. Whatever support mechanism you decide to use, remember your confidentiality agreement with your mentee and be careful not to disclose information in a way that might reveal their identity.
Over to you

Do you have any other questions about mentoring?

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

Contact the IOP if you have further questions. We can put you in touch with mentors and mentees who will be happy to share their experiences and help to answer your queries.

Experienced mentors

Before you embark on your next mentoring relationship, here is an opportunity to reflect on the mentoring skills and attributes that you have developed so far.
Over to you

What did you find easy as a mentor?
1
2
3

What did you find difficult and why?
1
2
3

List three things that you learned from your last mentor role:
1
2
3

Which three things do you want to keep doing as a mentor?
1
2
3

Which three things do you want to do differently?
1
2
3

Which three things do you want to learn from your next mentoring relationship?
1
2
3

Complete the following sentence: for me the mentoring relationship will have been successful if
Questions frequently asked by mentees

01 How do I identify the right mentor for me?
First decide what you are looking for in a mentor (see previous exercises to help you to clarify your thinking). The clearer you are about what you are looking for in a mentor, the easier it will be to search for that person. Bear in mind that it may not be possible to find one person who meets all of your criteria. You will need to be flexible and realistic, while ensuring that your key requirements are met.

02 How long does mentoring take?
Considering the effort that it takes for mentors and mentees to build a meaningful relationship and begin to see results, mentoring is usually a long-term commitment, not a quick-fix solution. As a rule of thumb the relationship will come to an end once you have achieved the goals that you agreed with your mentor at the outset. This can be after three months, six months, a year or as long as both you and your mentor agree that the relationship is still productive.

03 What do I need to do to prepare for mentoring sessions?
Before your very first mentoring session, take time to reflect on what you want to get out of mentoring (see previous exercises). What are your expectations? What are you able and willing to contribute? What information would it be useful to share with your mentor at the outset of the relationship? Together with your mentor, decide how you can make the most of your learning during and in between sessions.

04 How long will my mentoring sessions last?
There are no hard-and-fast rules, and you and your mentor need to know how much time you can set aside and what works best for the pair of you. For formal face-to-face meetings it is common to have anything between half an hour and two hours, depending on the issue at hand and how often your sessions take place. Once the relationship is established, most mentors will agree to informal contact time, such as an informal chat or phone call when the need arises.

05 How often do my mentoring sessions take place?
To ensure steady progress towards your goals, it is advisable to schedule regular mentoring sessions. The frequency is at your and your mentor’s discretion, but formal meetings should take place perhaps monthly or every other month, but at least every three months, ideally with the option of contacting your mentor informally in between.
06 **Will my mentoring discussions be fed back to my line manager?**
This is something that you should decide with your mentor. Mentoring relationships are normally confidential but your organisation may have a different policy. It is important that you and your mentor discuss confidentiality at your first meeting so that you can agree on how you want to handle it. If your mentor shares any discussions with your line manager without your consent, you will need to decide how you handle this breach of confidentiality. Depending on the severity of the case, it could mean that you consider ending the relationship. If your mentor has been allocated through a mentoring scheme, it is advisable to share this breach of confidence with the mentoring coordinator.

07 **If my mentor doesn’t live locally, how can we make it work?**
Face-to-face meetings are valuable, especially at the very beginning of a mentoring relationship, because it helps to establish common ground and trust. However, mentoring by e-mail, telephone and teleconference are becoming increasingly popular and it is a matter of personal preference. You may need to experiment with different methods until you have found what works best for you and your mentor.

08 **What is e-mentoring**
E-mentoring is mentoring via e-mail and is growing in popularity – organisations such as BT and the NHS currently use this method. Proponents claim that it delivers all of the benefits of conventional mentoring while overcoming the problems of geographical distance. Added benefits are that it gives people more time to reflect, because they can follow and rethink discussion points in their own time and at their own pace. And as the mentoring discussion is in writing, mentees can use the e-mails as a record of their learning, and look back at them over time to assess their progress. Bear in mind that while e-mentoring will save on travel time it still requires as much preparation and input.

09 **What do I do if my mentor keeps cancelling meetings or is, in general, inaccessible?**
If this happens on a regular basis, feed back to your mentor what impact this is having on you. Ask them for the reasons and how they are going to address the issue. It is also a good time to revisit your initial agreement regarding the frequency of your meetings. If you don’t come to a satisfactory outcome and the situation doesn’t improve, it’s best to acknowledge that the relationship isn’t working and to end it. Then find a new mentor who can devote the time required. >>
What do I do if I just don’t get on with my mentor?  
As with all human relationships, sometimes things just don’t work out. If you’ve tried to resolve the issue with your mentor and have had no success, it might be best to bring the relationship to an end. There’s no stigma attached to ending the relationship at any stage and a good mentor will be able to deal with this request in a professional manner.

How can I benefit from the IOP mentoring scheme if I already have a mentoring agreement through my current employer?  
It is not uncommon for people to have a number of mentors for different aspects of their lives, such as one internal mentor for developing your career, one external mentor for developing your networks and so on. As long as you don’t overcommit yourself and you respect the boundaries of each mentoring relationship, having more than one mentor at the same time may accelerate your personal and professional development. Visit the IOP website and register your interest for the mentoring service.

Over to you

What other questions do you have about mentoring?

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

Contact the IOP if you have further questions. We can put you in touch with mentors and mentees who are willing to share their experiences and to assist with your queries.
Experienced mentees

Before you embark on your next mentoring relationship, here is an opportunity to reflect on the mentoring skills and attributes that you have developed so far.

Over to you

What did you find easy as a mentee?

What did you find difficult and why?

List three things that you learned from your last mentee role:

1
2
3

Which three things do you want to keep doing as a mentee?

1
2
3

Which three things do you want to do differently?

1
2
3

Which three things do you want to learn from your next mentoring relationship?

1
2
3

Complete the following sentence: for me, the next mentoring relationship will be successful if
Going ahead

If you are ready to go ahead with mentoring, the following pages will guide you through the next steps.

01 Want to find out more about mentoring?
This document has provided some basic information about mentoring. Topics such as how to build the mentoring relationship and how to conduct individual mentoring sessions are not covered. There are many books and publications that will guide you in these areas. A selection of recommended books and websites is listed below. It is also advisable to book yourself on a mentoring course. The IOP website is the most up-to-date source of information about forthcoming events http://www.iop.org/activity/careers/index.html

02 Need to talk it through with someone?
Find other mentors or mentees, either in your own organisation or through the IOP and other professional networks. Peers and colleagues with mentoring experience are often the best source of information – they are enthusiastic about sharing their experiences and learning points.

03 Ready to go ahead?
Visit http://www.iop.org/activity/careers/index.html to find out more and to register as a mentor/mentee. The IOP’s online service matches mentors and mentees based on specific search criteria, such as geographical location, professional experience, specialisms and skills. You can also contact the iop with any questions or queries that you have (e-mail: mentoring@iop.org).
Resources

Below is a short list of publications, which are useful for further information and preparation for your mentoring role. The book references in the footnotes throughout the text are useful too.


Appendix: Mentor and mentee case-studies

01 The new mentee

Name
Frances Dawson

Job title and employer
Graduate Trainee Physicist, UK Operations, AMEC NNC

Previous mentoring experience
This is my first experience of mentoring and I have been a mentee since June 2006.

How did you get involved in mentoring?
The company offers a two-year training programme for graduates, and having a mentor is part of the process. I see having a mentor as another bonus of the job; having someone to talk to who is not directly involved in your work is definitely a good thing.

How did you find your mentor?
My mentor was assigned to me on the very first day at work. In our organisation, mentors volunteer for this role.

What do you find most rewarding about being a mentee?
It’s most useful to have three-monthly meetings with my mentor to look at my work programme, to review the last three months and plan for the next three. This ensures that I stay on the best path for my career development. I also learn about different opportunities in the organisation that, as someone new to the organisation, I’m not aware of. It’s also good to know that you can discuss any problems that you might have at work or at home with someone who is not directly involved in your work, and to know that they would support you. And to know that whatever you discuss is strictly confidential.

What do you find most challenging about being a mentee?
I haven’t really found anything difficult so far. My mentor also has a physics background, he knows the opportunities in the company and he has tried very hard to be accessible.
Which skills and attributes are you developing through mentoring?
Mainly learning how to get on to the best career path, becoming aware of training opportunities and setting reasonable objectives with the help of my mentor. He comes up with things that I wouldn’t have thought of, because he has more experience and knowledge of the company and the processes that we use. He gives me more to think about.

What impact has your mentoring experience had on your professional Development and career?
Because I have only had a mentor for a few months, I would say that mentoring made my induction period easier, especially during the first few weeks. My mentor was making sure I was fine with my new role and that my work was going okay.

What advice would you give someone starting out as a mentee?
Definitely talk to your mentor, take the opportunity to let them know what you are doing and what you find interesting. Your mentor can send you in the right direction, such as which department to approach, because they know the internal networks. Even if you have regular mentoring meetings, say every three months, try to arrange regular chats in between, at least every two to three weeks, so that you have ongoing contact. The point of the mentor is that they are there for immediate support.

Are there any other comments that you’d like to make about your mentoring experience?
Generally it’s a real plus to have a mentor for your first job. Especially if you are new from university, when you haven’t got much experience and find yourself in a new environment. To know that you have a mentor who will support you is comforting.
Making the transition from mentee to mentor

Name
Tom Withey

Job title and employer
Analyst, Performance and Analysis Team, AMEC NNC

Previous mentoring experience
I have been a mentee for four years and have just started as a mentor for two mentees.

How did you get involved in mentoring?
Straight after finishing university I joined the AMEC NNC graduate trainee scheme. Mentoring is a key element of the programme, and my organisation strongly supports mentoring as a form of professional development. I have been with the company for four years now and have had the same mentor all the way through, from being on the 18-month graduate development programme to becoming a Chartered Physicist.

How did you find your mentor?
My mentor was assigned to me by our training department on the very first day at work. He is also a physicist and has chartered status. He is based in a different department but in the same business unit. The fact that he understands my work but is not directly involved in it has been useful.

Initially we discussed topics such as making the transition from student to employee, and work in general. More recently he has helped me through the process of becoming a Chartered Physicist.

As I progress with my career my current mentoring partnership may be reassessed as part of my career development.

What did you find most rewarding about being a mentee?
It is good to know someone in the company whom you can turn to when you have questions and to raise issues with if you need help. Fortunately I haven’t had to approach my mentor with any real issues, but I appreciate his support role: someone to turn to and someone you can trust.

What did you find most challenging about being a mentee?
I have been very lucky. The only challenge has been accessibility on occasions, such as when we had to write our three-monthly training reports, or when my mentor was away from the office for a period of time. Sometimes you have to pin your mentor down, but it hasn’t been an issue for me, generally speaking.
Which skills and attributes did you develop through mentoring?
Certainly the ability to review my professional development by sitting down every three to six months and looking at what I have achieved over that period of time, what my new objectives are and how to take it from there. This then all feeds into the process of your annual performance review with your line manager. All in all, I’d say the ability to understand what I am looking for in my career, and how to achieve it with the help of my mentor.

What impact has your mentoring experience had on your professional development and career?
It has helped me to channel my career in the right direction and maintain the right focus. To make sure that I don’t reach a plateau but always gain skills and experiences.

What advice would you give someone starting out as a mentee?
To know that there is support for you out there in the form of a mentor is really helpful. Mentors in our organisation volunteer for this role – they want to do it – so use them as much as you can!

You are now making the transition from mentee to mentor.
What motivated you to become a mentor?
I enjoy working with people. I have recent experience of the graduate training scheme, I knew I’d enjoy it, so I just put my name down. I have been here for four or five years now and I am at the point where I am looking at the next stage of my career and my long-term role in the company. Mentoring is a way of making sure that my career develops and that I don’t just sit on my chartered status.

What has helped you to prepare for the role of mentor?
My relationship with my own mentor. Having gone through the graduate development programme I know that it is well structured, and you learn to deal with all of the people involved in the mentoring role: the supervisors, the line managers, the training department and the senior managers. As a mentor you are part of the big picture – all of the people in their different roles are here to help. Also, the information from our training department, which includes a large amount of information from the IOP. And, most important, speaking to other mentors and learning from their experiences. Our company is very proactive and proud of its graduate training scheme, and as a result there are plenty of people around who are mentors with a lot of experience. It’s good to know that you’re not on your own. >>
What advice would you give a mentee interested in becoming a mentor? Go for it, really, when you know you can do your job. You will learn a lot more, and it helps you to build your profile. It’s very enjoyable and a good thing to do.

The experienced mentor

Name
Sean Fox

Job title and employer
Group Finance Director, The Institute of Physics

Previous mentoring experience
I have been a mentor since about 1994, and started out when I worked at nestlé. I took on a mentoring role on the finance graduate development programme, working with the annual intake of three finance graduates, for three to four years. I then moved to Marks & Spencer, and mentored the six to ten graduates on the 2001 graduate finance training programme, all the way through their traineeship. I have been at the IOP for more than two years now. I joined our internal mentoring programme as a mentor and have worked with three mentees since then.

How did you get involved in mentoring?
Mentoring has never been part of my day job. I have an interest in recruitment and development, and mentoring was a natural extension of my interest in people development. There is a great satisfaction in seeing people develop, to see them move on in ways you can’t always predict, and to see over the years that you have contributed to that.

How do you select your mentees?
Before I joined the IOP, selection came through being recruited into a certain position (i.e. The graduate development programmes). At the IOP it is much more a case of self-selection. People volunteer to be mentors. Mentees then look at the list of volunteers and their backgrounds, and they approach them. After an initial discussion we decide whether we will work together. I don’t have any specific criteria for selecting a mentee – I’m fairly open. The only condition is that they are outside my direct work and line management responsibility.
What do you find most rewarding about being a mentor?
If somebody works with you over time and they discover something about themselves that they weren’t aware of before. When people change through the process of mentoring, and it was you who helped them become more aware of choices. Often, people think too narrowly, they don’t step back. Understanding them, and helping them to realise where they are and where they want to get to. To help them make career decisions in a wider sense, taking into account both work-related and personal factors.

What do you find most challenging about being a mentor?
Trying not to give too much advice and sticking to a facilitative role. Asking questions, and not swaying the mentee’s decision. Basically, staying neutral in the decision-making process and helping them see the pros and cons. Putting yourself into the shoes of someone else without imposing your own preferences. Inherently I’m a task-based person and in mentoring you have to stop that and change into a more people-oriented person. As a mentor, your job is not to resolve anything. Instead, the challenge is to decide what the right question is to ask so that you help the mentee to move forward.

Which skills and attributes have you developed through mentoring?
I have become much better at listening to people, picking up on the details. Reflecting on and querying what people say and making sure that people say what they mean. I have become more perceptive – I notice more easily when people aren’t saying what they mean, and when they struggle to articulate what they think and feel. I have also become more creative – a big part of my role as a mentor is to broaden the questions that the mentees ask, to help them to think more widely and consider alternatives. Through mentoring I have become more creative in seeing possibilities.

What impact has your mentoring experience had on your professional development and career?
Mentoring has probably not had a big impact on my career as such, because it’s not a key responsibility in my role in finance. It’s more like a nice add-on. And my mentoring experience has made me better at thinking about my own career, what I want and why. I would say it has helped me to steer in a certain direction.

What advice would you give someone starting out as a mentor?
First, don’t do it unless you have control over your own diary so that you can make the time available. If you can’t make sufficient time for mentoring it won’t work. Second, don’t try to see it as related to your daily job. Mentoring is not for the...
benefit of the company but for the individual. You have to be able to separate your role as a mentor from your role as an employee. And don’t confuse mentoring with coaching. Coaching is all about tasks and training. Mentoring is all about helping people to find their own questions that need answering. Third, it’s very rewarding. You gain just as much from it as those whom you mentor.

What advice would you give someone starting out as a mentee?
My main advice would be: don’t think your mentor is a guru who has all of the right answers. A good mentor won’t answer everything for you. They will simply help you to find answers to your questions. Develop an understanding of what mentoring is all about. Try to pick a mentor who is not very similar to yourself – someone who has a perspective as different as possible to your own. That way you’ll get a lot more out of them.

What advice would you give a mentee who is interested in becoming a mentor?
It’s harder work being a mentor than being a mentee. You have to be more challenging. But I’d say: “go for it!”

The experienced mentor

Name
Tub Aves

Job title and employer
Independent Nuclear Manager, Devonport Management Ltd

Previous mentoring experience
I have been mentoring throughout my professional career, since I became a chartered engineer in 1976. I was a mentor in the royal navy, until I joined Devonport Management in 1990, and have continued as one ever since.

How did you get involved in mentoring?
The desire to put something back into the engineering industry. Watch the kids grow and blossom. I consider mentoring part of a manager’s role in supporting their staff. Mentees could be apprentices as I am a qualified assessor for NVQS, graduates, or secretaries. Everyone in an organisation can grow and develop through mentoring.
I have responsibility for training safety engineers in our organisation, and I act as a mentor for the “odd balls” – I’ll come back to that a bit later. I am also a fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and have mentoring commitments through that role.

With regard to my responsibility for the training of safety engineers, all graduates go through a graduate training programme. Our programme became joint winners of the Institute of Physics Best Practice Award for Professional Development in 2006, and mentoring plays a key part in it. Because of the nature of our work, our annual intake of about 15 graduates is very varied: 60% are engineers in different areas, such as chemical, mechanical or electrical engineering; 20% are physicists, and 20% are from backgrounds applicable to a physics-related industry, ranging from occupational psychologists to environmental biologists and scientists.

Being the most experienced fellow in our organisation, I tend to pick up the graduates with the non-engineering background and guide them through the IOP accreditation process to become chartered physicists, and to gain an applicable MSC in Safety Engineering. I also continue to be a mentor of employees once they have gained chartered status. Altogether I have a wide range of mentees at any one time.

How do you select your mentees?
All of our graduates are allocated a mentor on their first day of arrival. Because I run the training scheme for safety engineers, I will pick out the relevant chartered physicists and allocate them to mentees with the same specialisation. When we can’t find a suitable match, for the reasons described above, I mentor those coming from a different discipline. I also involve all senior managers in mentoring, because I see it as important to give them ownership of the new recruits and their development. Yet sometimes things don’t work out: there can be a clash of personalities, or there is business overload of those allocated as mentors, and that’s when I step in as a mentor. Sometimes the new recruits need a bit of tender love and care to get them back on track.

What do you find most rewarding about being a mentor?
Watching the flower blossom. Some of our graduates are as green as grass when they start out, and to see them grow and expand, to see that their careers get the blue touch paper lit, to see them mature into adulthood, even have babies. It’s exactly the same as being a parent. You ask them: what do you want to do? Why do you want to do it? It is very rewarding to see them go through the business and, occasionally, see them develop into very powerful people. >>
What do you find most challenging about being a mentor?
I think it is getting a reasonable rapport with some of these young people. Some of our new recruits are insecure, they come into a totally new environment, onto a 180-acre site, surrounded by MOD police, which can be disconcerting. The challenge is to build that rapport, to get them to talk to you openly, to use the right questioning technique (i.e. open questions). Some treat their mentors as fathers, others are a bit of a brick wall. The challenge is to get to that level of communication where they open up to you so that you can help them to develop.

Which skills and attributes have you developed through mentoring?
The soft and fluffy ones. The ability to suppress my own thoughts and bring out the desires and concerns of the mentee. I am 60, and what I have learned about mentoring is through experience and what I see when I sit in at our quarterly reviews, together with the line manager, the mentor and the mentee. Sometimes the new mentor has just become professionally recognised, and their new graduate mentee who has been assigned to them is as green as grass. They don't know enough about the area that they are working in, and you have to be very careful to ensure that they give the right support to the mentees. And there are the older mentors, who have learned through the university of life. But it is a matter of balance: some of the mentors are in their early 30s, and they must be allowed to become a mentor and to learn from that experience. There should be some checks and balances, and that happens in our case through the training and development programme.

What impact has your mentoring experience had on your professional development and career?
Undoubtedly my mentoring experience was the reason I applied for a fellowship of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. I utilised what I had learned from being part of the professional accreditation process: doing professional reviews, using that knowledge and experience and applying it to the people who go for professional qualifications, developing the competencies, learning from the way you conduct yourself at these interviews, and teaching the younger generation. It was the mentoring that got me the fellowship.

What advice would you give someone starting out as a mentor?
Go and do a course. The professional institutions all run mentoring workshops. The advice to all prospective mentors is: you do need to understand the attributes that generate the relationship between mentee and mentor. You need to understand the training processes and the training programme, and how to drive the mentee in setting the correct objectives. The mentor should set objectives
for the mentee obtaining professional chartered status. You also need to understand the role of the line manager.

**What advice would you give someone starting out as a mentee?**
They’ve got to gain an understanding of the aspirations of the graduate training programme: we aim for competence, not just knowledge. They must understand the aims so that when they apply to become chartered in four to five years time they understand the requirements of the professional institutions. They must take ownership of the training package. If they don’t, they come up against barriers in the future. If they do, it will be reflected in the remuneration scales applied by the graduate training programme.

**What advice would you give a mentee who is interested in becoming a mentor?**
Exactly the same: we start with this fairly early. We give each graduate a buddy who is a year or two years into the system. They start to engender the responsibility of bringing someone on. It’s the same sort of relationship that a person gets to at three or four years into their careers when they are at the point of review for their professional accreditation. That’s when we start advising them to take on a mentoring role.

Mentoring is an extremely rewarding experience. I can do my bit, I give advice, I sit back and I watch what happens. Where do their careers go next? And then you watch someone make it far.
In Summary

The case studies in this booklet illustrate the positive impact mentoring can have on people's experience in work and on their career development.

The mentors speak of their satisfaction from seeing their mentees grow and develop. Mentors feel a sense of achievement for having made an impact on others, regardless of scale. Sean Fox sums up what many mentors describe: mentoring is very rewarding. You gain just as much from it as those whom you are mentoring. For some of these mentors, mentoring is part of their professional role and they dedicate a great deal of their time to the development of colleagues. For others, mentoring offers an opportunity to get involved in people development beyond their day-to-day responsibilities. What all of these mentors have in common is clarity about their individual motivations, such as the desire to give something back to their industry, being part of other people's growth and development, developing new skills, and pursuing a keen interest in people development.

The mentees describe the reassurance that they gain from their mentors, especially during the early stages of their careers. They appreciate the inspiration and guidance given, which enables them to give their careers a clear focus and direction. And what makes it work for them is having access to a trusted and respected person, who is there to turn to when needed.

Tom Withey's case describes a phenomenon that keeps the mentoring cycle alive and fresh: once you've been exposed to good mentoring and have gained valuable experience, there comes a point when you want to give it a try yourself. This is where mentoring goes full circle: previous mentees making the transition to mentor.

The case-studies featured here are all very positive mentoring stories. We are well aware that mentoring does not always work, relationships do not get off to a proper start, or fail to produce the expected results. The mentoring literature listed in the references cover a wider range of experiences, and they offer lessons to be learned from when things do not go as planned.

If you have been inspired by the stories covered, we would encourage you to learn more about mentoring and to get involved in mentoring activities yourself.

Good luck!
The Mentoring Team
References


04 David Clutterbuck uses a three-phase model; Lois J Zachary uses a four-phase model.


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Tub Aves, Independent Nuclear Manager, Devonport Management Ltd

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