What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is not new. On the contrary, the term “mentor” originates from Greek Mythology. The practice of mentoring even dates back to earlier times. In recent years there has been a remarkable rise of interest in mentoring. Mentoring relationships are valued as a very powerful means to longer-term personal development in a business environment.

Sometimes there is confusion over what mentoring is, and what it is not.

Mentoring is a relationship between two individuals based on a mutual desire for development towards career goals and objectives. The relationship is a non-reporting one and replaces none of the organizational structures in place. It is additional to other forms of assistance, such as developmental assignments, classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and coaching.

In a mentoring relationship, the two individuals are referred to as the "mentor" and the "mentee" (the individual being mentored). Mentoring provides development opportunities for both partners. In mentoring, there is no reporting relationship between the mentor and the mentee (i.e., a manager would not mentor a direct report). Mentoring is not intended to replace the relationship between employees and their managers. Mentors do not conduct or provide input to performance reviews. Mentoring is sometimes confused with coaching. These two forms of development have a very different purpose:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
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<td>May be your manager, a colleague, or external coach.</td>
<td>Is a non-reporting relationship, normally with a leader from another division, site or J&amp;J company.</td>
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<td>Has expertise in the required area (e.g., oral presentations).</td>
<td>The individual typically has a broad range of knowledge and experience and may also have a strong network of contacts</td>
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within the organization.

Is concerned with task and normally focuses on explicit topics and behaviors that meet a short-term need.

Coaches set the direction for the interaction with the learner.

Coaches provide feedback to the employee.

Is concerned with long-term development and focuses on implicit, intuitive subjects and behaviors.

Mentees (the learners) set the direction and the agenda for interactions with their mentors.

Both mentors and mentees participate in mutual sharing and reflection.

What are the benefits of a mentoring relationship?
A mentoring relationship can provide a **mentee** with:

- greater clarity on life and career choices and their own career goals
- new insight on the company’s culture and organization
- different perspectives and cultural values
- the opportunity to develop new networks of contacts
- access to new resources
- greater career satisfaction and increased likelihood of career success
- development in areas not typically address through training or on the job

Through the mentoring process **mentors** have the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills and expand their perspectives by:

- seeing the business world through different eyes

Anne, a Mentee

"It was my mentor who for the first time raised the idea of me becoming a people manager. Before that, this possibility hadn't even crossed my mind..."
being challenged on perceived wisdom

- increasing their awareness of issues at other levels of the organization

- meeting new members of the organization

In addition to the benefits gained by mentees and their mentors, organizations also gain a great deal from having a mentoring program. Mentoring contributes to the development of a pipeline of talent and provides a process to transfer formal leadership skills from today's leaders to the leaders of the future. It can result in:

- employees with greater knowledge of the business and organization

- retention of staff

- improved productivity through networking

- improved communication throughout the organization

Finally, organizations that support mentoring demonstrate their commitment to the development and advancement of their employees.
What are the phases of a mentoring relationship?

There are 5 phases to a mentoring relationship. Click on a phase to read more about it.

**Phase 1: Focus on Growth**

The mentoring process begins with the mentee **examining their long-term development objectives**:

- What are my personal capabilities?
- What are my career aspirations?
- How do they align with the company objectives?
- What are the possibilities within my company?

Mentees may consult with their manager on setting mentoring objectives. Mentoring may even be formally added to the annual development plan.

With their goal in mind, the mentee **selects a mentor**. The starting point for selecting a mentor is your specific development goals for the mentoring relationship. Consider why you have chosen mentoring over other forms of development, such as developmental assignments, classroom instruction, on-the-job training, coaching, etc.

Are you looking for:

- A sounding board?
- An opportunity to tap into a rich source of experience, knowledge and networks?
- Someone to challenge your thinking?
- Someone to help you clarify your personal goals and values?
- Advice on career options?
- Insight on other roles, levels of the
organization or other cultures?

- A successful role model?
- Advice on balancing work and life goals?
- Insight on organizational politics?
- Leadership perspective on organizational priorities and direction?

Mentoring relationships are based on trust. Select a mentor who is:

- Honest
- Demonstrates Credo values
- Can be trusted to maintain the confidentiality of the mentoring relationship

Next consider someone who is committed to the development of others, understands the value of mentoring, is willing to share their personal experiences and has sufficient time to devote to the relationship.

Choose a mentor with sufficient experience and respect within the organization; someone who demonstrates maturity in work and life. Consider individuals who are regarded as successful in the organization and are sought out for their opinions. Depending on your development goal, you should also consider a mentor’s knowledge of company goals, policies, politics, functions and the decision making process. Mentors with a network of contacts and influence in the organization are desired. Be sure to consider the gap between your experience and that of a potential mentor. If the gap is too narrow, they will be able to provide little insight. If on the other hand, the gap is too great, you may have little to discuss and their experiences may be irrelevant to you.

Communication skills are also key to a mentoring relationship. Select someone who will listen, ask questions, give feedback, clearly articulate thoughts and be open to new ideas. Also consider characteristics such as common sense, a positive mindset and a sense of humor.

Another aspect of mentor selection is diversity. Mentoring relationships with gender diversity can be mutually beneficial and provide valuable insights. Men and women may have different approaches to team management, conflict resolution, career strategies, office politics, networking, building credibility, and balancing work and family.
Cultural diversity can contribute to broadening from a global perspective. For those who have chosen self-driven mentoring, it may be beneficial to target one or two people as mentors and to talk to others to gain more insight on the individuals before making a final selection. Many company-driven mentoring programs have a specific approach to establishing mentoring pairs.

**Phase 2: Building Rapport**

After selecting a mentor, the mentee formally asks the potential mentor face to face. Although this step might cause some uncertainty, most people are flattered and respond positively. The worst that can happen is that they say "no". Should they decline, they may offer suggestions of others that may be more suitable or available to take on a mentoring relationship with the mentee. During the first mentoring meeting(s), the mentor and mentee begin to get to know each other by sharing:

- Career history
- Interests outside work
- Information about your family
- What you like / dislike about working in this company
- Where you want to be in five years
- Your greatest achievements / failures
- Your picture of success
- Areas in which you want to develop for your current role and future roles
- Values
- Life goals

Through these initial discussions, mentors and mentees begin to recognize and appreciate their style differences.

Special thanks to Janssen Pharmaceutica, Beerse Belgium for use of their content from A Practical Guide to Mentoring
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- **Focus on Growth**
- **Building Rapport**
- **Setting Direction**
- **Progression**
- **Moving On**

Phase 3: Setting Direction

Also on the agenda for the first meeting is a discussion on mentoring goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship. This phase is often called the contracting phase.

**Goals** - What are my goals for the relationship? How does my vision of mentoring correspond to my mentor’s?

**Scope** - What areas do not require attention? Are there any limits to the scope of our discussions?

**Trust** - How will we deal with confidentiality? Do we both agree that openness and trust are essential?

**Fit** - When and how will we check that the mentoring relationship is "right" for both of us? If not, what type of "no harm done" clause should we establish to end the relationship? In the event that the relationship does end, the mentoring pair needs to agree to take responsibility to discuss the decision as part of mutual learning.

**Meeting Logistics** - When, where and how long will we
meet? How often will we get together (usually a minimum of 1 time per month)? Will we communicate in person, by phone or via e-mail? How will we set our meeting dates? Will we have an agenda for the meeting? Will there be written notes?

This is an opportunity to surface any possible issues and concerns about the relationship (e.g., your concern that your manager might feel threatened about your relationship with your mentor).

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Phase 5: Moving On

All good mentoring relationships come to an end!
After 12-24 months you should **ask yourself if it is time to conclude the mentoring relationship.** By this time the mentee has probably advanced sufficiently and achieved their mentoring goals. It is also quite possible that through the mentoring relationship, career goals may have changed. Mentees may be comfortable moving on independently and may no longer need this support.

Once you have decided to conclude the relationship, take time to discuss the following:

- What results have been delivered, including any unexpected outcomes?
- What has not been delivered and why not?
- What are the future development needs of the mentee?
- Are there needs that may be met by other mentors?

Possibly your mentoring relationship will develop into a broad friendship. You may see your meetings become less frequent and less focused, but more spontaneous and relaxed. You may decide to enter a new mentoring relationship or become a mentor yourself!

*Peter, a Mentor*

"To be honest I started this relationship with the belief that I was 'all-knowing', and simply had to pass on that knowledge to my mentee. Looking back on our relationship, I'm surprised at how much I learned myself!"