

## **How to get the best from your relationship with your mentor**

Mentoring is defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. It's about reflecting, encouraging and supporting the mentee to achieve their current and future career goals.

### **Benefits of having a mentor:**

- Discover new talents about yourself
- Career satisfaction
- Expand your personal networks
- Maximise your strengths

Having a mentor can contribute to a successful and satisfying career. Without a mentor, that learning occurs mostly through trial and error. With a mentor, even experienced professionals can benefit from the experiences and expertise of someone who has withstood the trial and can help the mentee avoid the mistakes. Similarly, those new to the industry will discover that being a mentee shortens the learning curve for acquiring the skills and knowledge most critical to a fruitful career.

### **Your mentor is not there to:**

- Act as your line manager. The mentor will not take control; the responsibility lies with you.
- Act as a counsellor. The mentor is not there to fix problems for you.
- Listen to you moan. The mentor is not there just to listen to your problems
- Be your friend. Of course you can be friendly, but the role means they have to be completely honest in a way which might be difficult for a friend. It is important that the boundaries do not become blurred.
- Dispense discipline. If you are not pulling your weight, they may simply tell you so. Your success is your own responsibility.

- Always have the answer. No matter what experience and knowledge your mentor may have they cannot be expected to have all the answers. Their role is to guide, support and encourage you to progress along your own path

### **Things to think about:**

- What would you like to get out of a mentoring relationship?
- How do you think it might help you?
- Review some of the mentoring models available to see how it might work for you.

### **Building the relationship:**

- Get to know your mentor. Make time to talk to them about their career and their life outside their career. Try to understand what they think and why. Value their viewpoint.
- Do what you say you are going to do. Agree what you are aiming to achieve through your mentoring sessions.
- Communicate openly and honestly. Discuss issues as soon as they arise. Ask for and give feedback.
- Show empathy but do not be afraid to challenge.
- Consider body language. If you are meeting your mentor face to face, you need to be aware of body language. This is an excellent indication of how people really feel and makes up for a large proportion of the message they send. If someone is being less than honest, their body language will usually give them away. A lot of body language is universal, but some gestures differ between cultures so be careful not to give (or take) offence unwittingly! To 'read' body language:
  - Learn what to look for
  - Recognise people's body language so you can 'read' them better
  - Recognise your own body language