

The mentor

Key skills of a mentor and mentor expectations

The traditional view of a mentor is someone who shares experience and imparts knowledge. In contemporary mentoring, a mentor is an active listener. A mentor's role isn't to tell a mentee what to do, it is to act as a guide. A mentor asks questions and draws out the mentee's own thoughts before offering guidance.

A mentor challenges, offers a different perspective and provides support. While no two mentoring partnerships are the same, they all start with the same solid foundations.

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| 1. ELICIT | ASK QUESTIONS, THEN LISTEN |
| 2. CHALLENGE | PROVIDE A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE |
| 3. SUPPORT | ENCOURAGE AND VALIDATE |
| 4. IMPART | SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE |

A mentor guides and doesn't push:

A mentor doesn't 'push', whether by telling, instructing or giving advice. Instead, a mentor:

- Listens to understand
- Asks questions
- Will paraphrase and summarise discussions
- Can suggest options
- Will give feedback
- Guide mentees to solve their problems

The role of the mentor is to:

- Encourage mentees to develop their own resourcefulness
- Do not give instructions – it is up to the mentee to decide whether to use the information
- Guide the mentee to explore a variety of options
- Consider alternative courses of action in order to solve problems for themselves, rather than give answers or provide solutions
- Be a sounding board and provide a link to information and people who can help – mentors don't need to have all the answers

- Help the mentee gain new personal skills, experiences and knowledge
- Provide an outside perspective on the mentee and their career
- Help the mentee to develop new attitudes and behaviour; thereby improving both their personal and business performance
- Listen, in confidence, to the things that are worrying the mentee about their career
- Help the mentee by sharing your own experience of failures and successes
- Give friendly, unbiased support and guidance
- Facilitate decision-making by suggesting alternatives based on personal experience
- Provide honest and constructive feedback
- Provide ongoing support and encouragement

REMEMBER – sometimes all a mentee needs is to talk to someone and this process in itself will reveal possible actions and solutions. The mentoring process then becomes a catalyst for change.