

Mentorship

Short guide

**National Research and Development Institute for Industrial
Ecology – ECOIND**

NATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
FOR INDUSTRIAL ECOLOGY

ECOIND

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

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Introduction

Mentorship has proven to be one of the best approaches to achieve personal and professional growth for both mentor and mentee. A mentor is someone who helps a mentee grow, develop, make decisions and receive guidance for their future. For the mentor, it serves as a way to give back and represents an important development and learning experience. The mentor acts as a role model for the mentee, but they both benefit from the relationship. Relationship between mentor and mentee must be considered an exchange.

Benefits

Benefits to a mentee:

- *Adapt to the workplace culture.* Persons involved in mentorship program are more aware of workplace procedures, policies and expectations compared with those that do not participate. This is an important factor in helping new colleagues to integrate within the institute.
- *Skills development.* Most mentees are looking for someone to help them advance into their career path. Through advice and guidance, the mentor can help the mentee develop their full potential at the workplace.
- *Networking.* Mentorship and networking are interdependent tools for career growth. While networking focuses on building a broad area of professional contacts to discover opportunities, mentorship provides deep, personalized guidance from an experienced individual to help the mentee to navigate within a specific career path. A workplace mentoring program is a great approach to boost mentee networking opportunities.
- *Problem solving.* A mentor can be helpful when the mentee comes up against a situation or problem that they are not familiar with or cannot see a solution to.
- *Knowledge transfer.* The mentor have a thorough knowledge of the institute, as well as on any programs or training that a mentee can access to help them reach their goals. The mentor can share wisdom developed on the job over time, information and workplace expectations or policies that will help the mentee to succeed in the long run.

Benefits to a mentor:

- Drives self-awareness
- Expands mentor's professional network
- Improves responsible leadership skills
- Increases visibility within the institute
- Increases chances to receive a promotion

Roles

Mentorships represents a positive experience for both the mentor and mentee. Challenges can become opportunities when you have someone who can reveal a different perspective. At the beginning of the relationship, spending time clarifying what mentor and mentee can legitimately expect to give and get through mentoring is essential. It is especially beneficial for the individuals involved to discuss, negotiate, and agree upon expectations.

It is essential that both mentor and mentee to understand what is a mentoring relationship:

Mentoring is:

- *Development tool:* It is a development program that improve knowledge, networks, and careers. Mentoring process allows more experienced researchers to support and develop early stage career researchers
- *Opportunity for knowledge sharing:* It is a process that improves cross functional knowledge sharing and facilitates the flow of information and ideas throughout the institute.
- *Institutional culture enhancer:* It help researchers better understand the institute operations, policies and culture
- *Honest and specific:* Good mentoring relationship provides honest and specific feedback and a route to growth for both mentees and mentors.

Mentoring is not:

- *Guarantee of promotion:* A mentoring relationship does not assure promotion or increase in salaries. However, both parties may develop competencies and skills that improve overall job performance
- *Replacement for formal development:* Mentoring cannot take the place of formal training but rather should augment formal development activities
- *Replacement for management:* The mentor should not take on the responsibilities of the mentee's manager
- *Personal counselling:* It is best to seek help on personal issues from a life coach or mental health professional

Mentoring and coaching differ:

- A key difference between coaching and mentorship is the evaluation. Mentoring is non-evaluative, while coaching is based on measuring performance change.
- The mentee drives mentoring; coaching is the opposite. The mentee sets the relationship goals and comes to their mentor with the problems they want to solve. In coaching, the coach or supervisor is driving the agenda for the relationship.
- Mentoring is highly personalised, coaching is repeatable. In mentoring, a mentee has specific needs and wants to discuss challenges that are not necessarily tied to institute's top-down performance initiatives. Mentoring also carries the benefit of building mentee network by meeting multiple mentors and making new connections. In coaching, the institute identified a specific skill gap, and one or more coaches are selected to provide a generalized program to make improvements. Thus, content is reused and generalized, and a coach wouldn't typically be a networking opportunity for a coached person.

Types of mentors

Advisor. An advisor is someone that makes suggestions and recommendations on what their mentee should do. Advisors give advice based on their professional experience and expertise. Mentees that want to follow the same path would do well with an advisor.

- Effective:
 - Act as a facilitator
 - Maintains privacy / confidentiality
- Ineffective:
 - Fixes problems for the mentee
 - Assumes responsibility for mentee

Developer. A developer is similar to a coach but is an observer without specific goals for performance improvements. They are good listeners and will point out weaknesses they recognise in their mentees.

- Effective:
 - Provides structures and directions
 - Provides guidance based on observations during interactions with the mentee
 - Empowers mentee to handle problems independently
- Ineffective:
 - Dictates, controls learning
 - Seek for quick fixes
 - Provides general criticism or judgement
 - Tells mentee what to do

Broker. A broker is great connecting their mentees with opportunities to grow. A broker will determine what their mentee want to learn and then connecting them with experts in that area. Brokers are great mentors for mentees who are less inclined to talk but are hungry for learning opportunities.

- Effective:
 - Identifies skills and gaps
 - Identifies and facilitate development opportunities
- Ineffective:
 - Allows for personal biases
 - Do not follow up

Challenger. They won't stand for poor attitude or faulty logic. They will push back their mentees if they complain about challenges without considering possible solutions.

- Effective:
 - Positively provokes, pushes toward highest standards
 - Help mentee explore potential career opportunities
- Ineffective:
 - Pushes too far too soon
 - Discounts mentees thoughts and opinions

Clarifier. A clarifier is a great partner to the mentee. A mentee that is independent and can pursue their growth without much directions will benefit from a clarifier. A clarifier will be able to fill the gaps in the mentee's knowledge based on own experience.

- Effective:
 - Teaches institutional values and policies
- Ineffective:
 - Removes obstacles for mentees

Affirmer. An affirmer is great for mentees that respond well to a soft shoulder. Affirmers are great listeners. If a mentee is going through a hard period they can trust their mentor to be there to discuss with them.

- Effective:
 - Gives needed support
 - Enhances self-esteem
 - Exhibits empathy and understanding
- Ineffective:
 - Gives too much feedback
 - Discounts mentee's feelings or concerns

Sponsor. Help their mentees to meet people who will make difference in their careers. They possess large networks and credibility. By having their recommendation for new opportunities, their mentees will gain access to professional growth much faster than if they were on their own.

- Effective:
 - Provides visibility and recognition for mentee
- Ineffective:
 - Promotes mentee at the expense of others

Protector. A protector is great for a mentee who is in the midst of transition which can be stressful and present some risk. Protectors help prepare their mentees for growth by making sure they don't make any mistake that would be detrimental to their career.

- Effective:
 - Supports, is a safety net
 - Ensures a safe environment to tackle risks
- Ineffective:
 - Fights mentee's battles
 - Overprotects

Skills and qualities

Common characteristics for great mentees and mentors:

- Motivation
- Communication skills
- Enjoy learning
- Team player
- Committed
- Positive attitude

Skills and qualities characteristic for a good mentor

- *Skilled and experienced in the field.* Mentors who have worked in their area of expertise for some time and who have gained experience with the institute will be a good fit for mentees wanting to follow their same path. A mentor can share what they know about their job, how they fit into the institute and share insights about their field of activity. In addition the mentors have the unique ability to prepare their successor or a new manager.
- *Desire or motivation to share knowledge.* Good mentors are those that not only have gained lots of knowledge and experience but are also motivated to share what they know with others. In particular, they must understand and respect the mentor-mentee relationship and take the workplace mentoring program seriously.
- *Commitment to extra responsibility.* Being a mentor can consume time and energy. An effective mentor need to be committed to putting in the extra time and effort. It's mentor's responsibility to demonstrate an understanding of what mentees are committing to and be willing to do what it takes to help make the relationship, and ultimately, the mentoring program work.
- *Positivity.* Good mentors are positive people. If you accept the responsibility of being a mentor but do so grudgingly, your mentee won't feel comfortable opening up about their goals and challenges. It's beneficial to see the glass as half full and have an optimistic view of what the relationship can provide.
- *Communicator.* One of the most critical factors in a mentoring relationship is good communication. Therefore, someone who has proven they can communicate positively and effectively will be a good mentor. In addition, you will need to provide guidance and give constructive feedback to the mentee. Thus, it is essential to know how to do so in a constructive way.
- *Find fulfilment in their job.* To pass along your knowledge and encourage the mentee to grow in their field, the mentor should enjoy what is doing. If mentor is not interested in a specific field of expertise, will not be able to develop enthusiasm in the mentee.
- *Enjoys learning.* Mentors that enjoy learning and are well-informed about their field are the best. These are those individuals who continuously learn about the changes and innovations happening in their area of expertise. They read journals and attend workshops and other training sessions to stay ahead of the game. A person who is up-to-date about their activity field will pass along that information to the mentee.
- *Team player.* Individuals who can work well independently and contribute to a team effort will also be good choices for mentoring programs. These researchers are often skilled at sharing and

listening to others. They usually value others and understand the importance of being part of a team in the workplace.

- *Emotionally intelligent.* Emotionally intelligent people have a good understanding of their own emotions and know how to be sensitive to others. This skill helps a mentor relate better to the mentee. In addition, they are often empathetic and can see things from another person's perspective.

Mentee-mentor relationship building

What to do for the mentees:

- Engage the mentor by listening and goal-setting. Mentees shouldn't shy away from getting advice. Receiving constructive feedback helps bring them closer to their goals.
- Respond to your mentor's advice. A mentor may encourage the mentee to take advantage of any advice or opportunities that they provide. These could be opportunities such as helpful workplace programs to advance skills or external opportunities for training.
- Celebrate with the mentor. One of the primary benefits to a mentor is the sense of fulfilment they get from helping mentees grow. A mentee can and should celebrate with the mentor when a goal or accomplishment has been achieved.
- Provide feedback to your mentor. The title of a mentor can sometimes feel intimidating. Being open and sharing with your mentor what they've helped you with will encourage them. Similarly, if there are things you'd like to see them start doing that they aren't currently it would help them become better mentors by knowing that.

What not to do for the mentees:

- Talk more than you listen. Communication is key to working together, and if the mentees cannot communicate well with their mentor, it could be a bad sign. Their role is as a teacher and a guide. So share your struggles and challenges but then take note of their answers. They may have more experience than you in that area.
- Discredit their feedback. A mentor has more knowledge and experience than a mentee. If you want to grow as a mentee it's crucial to try and absorb as much of that experience as possible. If discredit their feedback then you're only hurting yourself.
- Provide vague feedback. Few things are as frustrating as getting negative feedback that is unclear and doesn't provide actionable ways to improve. If your mentor became aware of a way of thinking, a behaviour, or anything else that could have negative ramifications on you, you'd probably want them to tell you about it. In the same way, share with them what you'd like them to change about the way they mentor you.
- Not being able to receive constructive feedback. It can be hard for a mentor to deliver harsh feedback. It's great to celebrate successes, but to grow you'll need to experience constructive feedback. Remember that your mentor wants to help you grow and they can't do that if they only provide positive feedback.

- Break trust. This may be obvious, but it is of the utmost importance to respect your mentor's privacy and respect their trust in you. Use your discretion, but do not share causally private details of your relationship. Your relationship with your mentor is built on trust. Respect that fact and don't do anything to jeopardize the trust your mentor has in you.

What to do for the mentors:

- Engage the mentee by listening and goal-setting. Providing constructive feedback helps bring the mentee closer to their goals.
- Point your mentee in the right direction. You can encourage mentees to take advantage of any advice or opportunities that you provide. These could be opportunities such as helpful workplace programs to advance skills or external opportunities for training. You can't know everything, so sometimes it's better to suggest training for the mentee rather than taking that burden on yourself.
- Celebrate with the mentee. Another important element of the mentor-mentee relationship is establishing a connection with one another. A mentor can and should celebrate with the mentee when a goal or accomplishment has been achieved.
- Show them the ropes. One of the most valuable factors of the mentor-mentee relationship is the opportunity to shape another researchers and encourage them to develop productive habits. In addition, by educating the mentees on workplace expectations, the mentor can positively impact not just the relationship but also the institute long-term performance.
- Be a teacher and a guide. Essentially, the mentor's role is both a teacher and a guide. They are responsible for shaping the mentee's professional development.

What not to do for the mentors:

- Talk more than you listen. Communication is key to working together, and if you cannot communicate well with your mentee, it could be a bad sign. Your role is as a teacher and a guide, not as a lecturer. It's important to remember that their career doesn't have to be the same as yours.
- Discredit their goals and ambitions. A great mentor will know how to balance providing critical feedback and supporting a mentees goals. Your role is not to approve or deny their decisions but to help them make sure they have confidence in those decisions after discussing them with you.
- Provide vague feedback. Few things are as frustrating as getting negative feedback that is unclear and doesn't provide actionable ways to improve. If you become aware of a way of thinking, a behaviour, or anything else that could have negative ramifications on your mentee, make sure you acknowledge it.
- Be overly positive. As a mentor, you will learn how to deliver feedback. Hopefully, you will understand when to be frank and blunt or gentle and sensitive when you provide feedback. One of the downfalls of peer performance reviews is that you have an incentive to remain positive because you'll have to continue working with them.

- Break trust. This may be obvious, but it is of the utmost importance to respect your mentee's privacy and respect their trust in you. Use your discretion, but do not share causally private details of your relationship.

Cultivation of a successful mentee-mentor relationship

Mentees and mentors need to be *actively involved in the relationship*. Mentees need to define goals, seek out advice, attend meetings and ask questions. Mentors are responsible for offering advice, guiding goal achievement and encouraging a mentee to develop their skills and networks. Mentees are responsible to actively respond to the guidance they receive.

Finding a *good mentor-mentee match* doesn't mean you should connect two similar people. Sometimes the best mentorship is between participants who are opposite of each other. The two can challenge each other in new ways and help them understand different perspectives.

Trust is crucial to a mentoring relationship. Yet, it can also take some time to build. Start your mentorship with a getting-to-know-you-style meeting. In this first session, both the mentor and mentee should exchange information about their backgrounds and interests. Slowly, as the relationship progresses, you can share more information, leading to more trust.

Every relationship has a *set of rules* that govern it. A mentorship should have some clear guidelines regarding behaviour and responsibility of the participants. Early on in relationship, both the mentor and mentee need to set some rules about their roles.

In the mentorship context, the mentor needs to provide *constructive criticism* rather than harsh judgment. They should be sensitive to the mentee's feelings. The mentee also needs to be able to express themselves clearly. If they feel that a mentor does not understand something or offering advice that they are not comfortable with, a mentee should say so in a diplomatic way.