



How to set up a Mentoring Scheme

Objective of this report

This is a short report on the issues around setting up a mentoring programme.

Organisation-specific issues

Organisations need to consider how the geographic distribution of their mentors and potential mentees. This has implications for how to manage a mentoring programme. To create mentor/mentee pairings, there needs to be a reasonably sized pool of mentors from whom a mentee can find a suitable mentor, within the same geographic area. However, if you wanted to also facilitate e-mentoring, then you could have mentor pairs who are in different country locations.

Objectives of the programme

Nature of mentoring

It is essential to be clear from the start what you are trying to achieve. Is it purely developmental or is it also partly about retention of key employees and succession planning?

True mentoring is about a mentor helping a mentee make best use of the mentee's skills and talents at work and outside work. This may sometimes mean that, through the course of the mentoring process, the mentee may begin to think that working for their current employer will not help him/her achieve that aim. While this may be true, some employers prefer mentors to help mentees explore careers within their own organisation in the first instance. We could call this 'organisational mentoring'.

It is important to distinguish between 'coaching' and 'mentoring'. Although they use the same set of skills (e.g. active listening and challenging) they are slightly different. Coaching is a short-term programme to develop an individual's specific skills and is usually performed by a direct boss. Mentoring is a longer-term programme where the mentor helps them mentee make the best use of their skills and talents. It is possible that sometimes a mentor will coach their mentor, but this is not the sole purpose of the relationship.

Any mentoring programme must align with the existing organisational mission and values. If, for example, 'trust' is a key organisational value, the mentoring programme must reflect this.

Target audience

Some organisations want to create a mentoring scheme for 'high potential' employees only, some want to create one for new joiners only and others want to create one to develop all employees. In an ideal world, everyone needs a mentor, so everyone can make best use of their skills and talents, both at work and outside work.

It may be that some of the employees will be engineers, accountants, lawyers or other professionals who are members of professional institutions and so may be required, as part of their continuing professional development, to have a mentor. So any mentoring programme should ensure the objectives of these professional institution programmes are incorporated.

Benefits

For the company, you will have better motivated and trained employees, who feel more attached to your organisation because you are valuing their development as a person. They will be less likely to resign since they will start to see many career routes through your organisation.

The mentee gets a good chance to talk to someone who is not their direct boss about their work, their career aspirations and their personal development plan that will help them achieve those aspirations.

The mentor gets a chance to develop other people in the organisation. They also develop their own active listening skills, which are transferable to the way they work with other people within and outside the organisation. This is usually an unexpected bonus for mentors.

The overall business case for mentoring is extremely strong, it has proven to be the single most effective way of developing staff. However it is important that your organisation builds its own, tailor-made, business case to sell the benefits of mentoring to all employees.

Building the foundations

While mentoring is a very powerful technique to motivate and develop people, it is not a case of 'build it and they will come'. A mentoring programme needs a very senior 'champion' in the organisation, ideally the chief executive and also a series of local champions in each location where the programme is being rolled out. These champions are convinced by the business case for mentoring and are positive about the benefits and constantly and visibly encourage mentoring in the organisation. This 'network of influencers' will help you roll out the programme successfully. And when employees see such top-level organisational commitment to mentoring, many more mentors are likely to come forward and many more mentees are likely to want to be mentored.

Recruitment and selection

You will need to recruit people who want to be mentored. This means marketing the mentoring programme as you would market any other internal organisational initiative.

You will need to sell mentees the benefits of mentoring and address any concerns they may have around the process, for example the confidentiality of the relationship.

You will also need to recruit mentors. These tend to be the more senior people in an organisation who are often busy people with plenty of diary commitments. So they need to be persuaded that mentoring is good for the organisation, their department and for themselves before they devote time and energy to it. You need to have criteria for mentor selection, so people can initially self-select rather than have the embarrassing situation of being told that they may not be suitable as a mentor.

You will need to have a document that sets out the objectives, benefits and process of mentoring within your organisation, so that everyone knows what they are signing up to. Recruitment can be by presentations, email, a series of webpages on your intranet, but preferably it will be multi-channel to ensure that all employees know about the benefits and process of mentoring.

You may like to start a pilot mentoring programme within one department or one location, for example in your own location. That way you can have plenty of influence on the programme, which will ensure it is successful. Then you can use this successful pilot to roll the programme out across the rest of the organisation.

Training

Both mentors and mentees will need to be trained.

Mentors needed to be briefed on the organisational aspects of mentoring in the organisation. For example how they will be matched, how the programme will be monitored, who to go to for help and advice, how they will be allocated a mentor, how many mentors they could have at any one time etc. They then need to be trained on the process and skills of mentoring, since this will be a new skill to many of them. Senior people are used to directing employees and sometimes find it hard to switch this off and concentrate on the mentee's agenda rather than their own agenda. With good training, mentors will find it easier to switch off and be a better mentor. We have several products and services in this area, which I have put in Appendix A.

Mentees also need a briefing about the process and organisational aspects. They also need to be firmly told that they are the driver of the mentoring relationship; it is their job to fix up meetings and keep in touch with their mentor. The mentoring meetings are not simply coaching sessions run by senior employees; it is up to the mentee to get as much from the mentoring relationship as they can.

Matching

A mentor needs to be matched to a mentee. A mentee needs to clarify, usually by questionnaire, what they are seeking from a mentor and the mentoring relationship. For example they may want to develop their career or they may want help in working out what it is they want to do in their career, or they may want a mentor who is sounding board and allows them to talk about issues they are currently facing at work that they find difficult.

If these are general mentoring sessions then mentors do not need to be matched with each other on the basis of technical specialism. But a mentee may request a mentor of a certain gender, who works in a certain office and who has experience in a certain technical field. Specific requests like these will narrow down the pool of available mentors for them, so they need to realise that being too specific reduces the chances of finding a mentor quickly.

There needs to be a process and a recording system to allow mentors to register what they can offer and for mentees to register what they want from a mentor. For the pilot, I would recommend a simple spreadsheet approach at first, rather than trying something too over-blown like mentor-matching software. The mentoring co-ordinator will have to exercise a certain amount of judgment when matching mentor to mentee. It is also best to offer a no-fault system to ending a mentoring contract, where either party can say they don't think it will work out, without having to say why.

Monitoring and improving

The mentoring co-ordinator needs to maintain a record of all volunteer mentors, all people who wish to be mentored and all matched pairs. This needs to be kept up to date. Mentors and mentees have a responsibility to tell the co-ordinator when they have ended a mentoring relationship, so that mentor can be re-allocated to another mentee.

The co-ordinator needs to constantly seek to improve the process by gathering feedback from mentors and mentees. It is important to share with mentors/mentees both the success stories and the problems encountered in the pairs (so lessons can be learned by all).

Reporting

As the programme develops, it is important for others to know how well it is doing. So it is important to report to the mentoring champions and/or the training/development function in the organisation about the number of active mentoring pairs and the number of unmatched mentors/mentees and the approximate total number of hours that employees spend being mentored per month.

Creating and sustaining a mentoring community

When the programme is launched in full, it is good for mentors to be able to keep in touch with each other after the training and give each other support. The methods of doing this are 'mentor lunches' for face-to-face support and email-based mentor discussion groups for e-support. The mentoring co-ordinator can also give some support by telephone/email, as well as maintaining a 'mentoring' section of the corporate intranet with best practice guides and an FAQ.

It can also be effective to have similar mutual support programmes for mentees, so they can share best practice and learn from each other.

Role of mentoring programme co-ordinator

The role of the mentoring co-ordinator is very important. They are the person who manages all the above processes, sometimes with help of a small team. Great mentoring co-ordinators are very enthusiastic about mentoring and the concept of developing others. They are usually people who have a strong network throughout the organisation and work well with all levels of employees in the organisation and also are comfortable working with people from all the different functional silos in an organisation.

Conclusion

Setting up a mentoring programme has several phases to it. They consist of :

- ❑ Clarifying the programme objectives
- ❑ Selling the benefits of mentoring
- ❑ Building the foundations
- ❑ Recruitment and selection
- ❑ Training
- ❑ Matching
- ❑ Monitoring and improving
- ❑ Reporting
- ❑ Creating a mentoring community
- ❑ The role of the mentoring co-ordinator

About the Qi Concepts

Qi Concepts is a learning consultancy based in Nottingham in England, which specialises in training senior managers to be mentors.

Products:

We have 3 products to help organisations train mentors:

- A 60-minute Mentoring Skills DVD.
- A 15-minute Active Listening Skills for Mentors on VHS or DVD.
- A 2-hour online Mentoring Skills programme

Details of the products can be found in Appendix A.

Services:

We develop custom-built face-to-face and online mentor-training programmes for clients.

We also help companies set up internal mentoring programmes.

People

Our lead consultant is Richard Naish MSc FCA is a director of Qi Concepts and a business psychologist with 20 years experience of assessment and development. He specialises in training senior managers in the private and public sector to be skilled mentors. He was trained as a Chartered Accountant and held senior positions in training and development including Head of Management Development programmes for KPMG and Chief Training Designer for the BBC distance-learning programme, Business Account. Using his financial- and people-based knowledge and skills, he helps clients become more successful by developing their people with high quality, rapid, cost-effective training solutions. He helps clients select and implement effective blended learning solutions, combining traditional learning methods as well as e-learning and serious games. Richard is an EC-accredited expert on e-learning, co-founder and regular columnist for e.learningage magazine and mentors directors of SMEs as part of his role as an East Midlands' Business Champion.

Richard works with a team of highly experienced mentors and trainers to deliver mentor-training workshops for clients.

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Appendix A

Qi Concepts has 4 products to help organisations train mentors:

- A 60-minute Mentoring Skills DVD.
- A 15-minute Active Listening Skills for Mentors on VHS or DVD.
- A 2-hour online Mentoring Skills programme
- A 15-minute self-assessment for mentors

Mentoring Skills DVD

The Mentoring Skills DVD has 60 minutes of video clips on all the skills needed to be a good mentor. Customers use our DVD as part of their face-to-face mentor training workshops. It is the only Mentoring Skills DVD for the UK business market with real life mentor/mentee video clips. It covers:

- The crucial first meeting
 - Meeting and breaking the ice
 - What to discuss in the meeting
 - Agreeing a mentoring contract
 - Confidentiality
 - Appreciating the bigger picture
- Active listening skills for mentors
 - Open questioning
 - Probing
 - Reflecting
 - Challenging
 - Summarising
 - Being comfortable with silence
 - Combining all six skills (Open questioning, probing, reflecting, challenging, summarising and being comfortable with silence)
 - Choosing the medium of communication, such as email or face-to-face
 - How to use body language when mentoring
 - How not to do it (a humorous look at how not to mentor someone)
- Typical mentoring scenarios
 - Four examples of why people want a mentor
- Frequently asked questions
 - Answers to sixteen of the most commonly asked questions about mentoring including: What is mentoring? How does it work? What if we just don't get on?

A free 15-page trainers' guide is also included, with all the information you need to know to run a 2-hour Introduction to Mentoring workshop, and a 2-hour Intensive Mentoring Skills Practice workshop, both using the Mentoring Skills DVD.

'I am delighted with the DVD; it is a very polished product and just what we need to train our mentors' Richard Pratt, Senior Mentor, Qinetiq, the one of the world's leading defence technology and security companies.

Visit www.qiconcepts.co.uk to view free previews of some of the Mentoring Skills video clips. Also a free 7-day preview of the whole DVD is available, subject to terms and conditions; contact the Qi Concepts team for details.

The DVD costs £750 (plus VAT at 17.5% for organisations in the EC) with a 10% discount for orders over £10,000. You can order online at www.qiconcepts.co.uk or you can call one of the Qi Concepts team on +44 (0) 115 8492769 who will be happy to take your order.

Active Listening Skills for Mentors: (VHS/DVD)

'Active listening skills for Mentors' is a *15-minute video*, available on DVD or VHS and is used by major companies like Rolls Royce and John Lewis use this video to train their mentors.

'Thanks very much for the video. We use it in a variety of ways, in classroom based training for mentors and as an individual open learning resource. There's very little on the open market for questioning skills and almost nothing as far as mentoring resources are concerned so it's nice to have something to fill the gap.'

Maureen McHugh, Learning and development manager, John Lewis.

The video has 10 sections, each with video clips illustrating the key skills listed below, using a real life mentor/mentee pair, to make it a realistic and useful video:

- Open questioning
- Probing
- Reflecting
- Challenging
- Summarising
- Being comfortable with silence
- Combining all six skills (Open questioning, probing, reflecting, challenging, summarising and being comfortable with silence)
- Choosing the medium of communication, such as email or face-to-face
- How to use body language when mentoring
- How not to do it (a humorous look at how not to mentor someone)

A free 5-page trainers' guide is also included, giving you all the information you need to know to run a 80-minute interactive training workshop on 'Active listening skills for mentors'.

Visit www.qiconcepts.co.uk to view free previews of some of the Active Listening video clips.

The DVD costs £250 (plus VAT at 17.5% for organisations in the EC) with a 10% discount for orders over £10,000. You can order online at www.qiconcepts.co.uk or you can call one of the Qi Concepts team on +44 (0) 115 8492769 who will be happy to take your order. The VHS version is available in both NTSC (mainly USA) or PAL (mainly Europe) versions.

Mentoring Skills programme

The Mentoring Skills programme is designed for all mentors, including those mentoring someone towards a professional qualification. It has been used by hundreds of mentors in engineering, medicine, banking, accountancy and nursing. It explains mentoring and covers all the essential skills of mentoring. It can be used either as:

- an introduction to mentoring for both mentors and mentees; or as
- a pre-course work before a mentor-training workshop, allowing the length of a typical workshop to be reduced from one-day to half-a-day.

'An EXCELLENT programme', Judith Goodman, Medical Careers Institute, Richmond, Virginia

'Both my EEO manager and I were impressed with your online mentor-training program'. Eileen Castro, US Army.

All the modules use video clips and interactive exercises to engage the learner. The programme was nominated for an IVCA online learning award in 2003 and is based on a programme accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation on behalf of the Department for Skills and Education.

Duration

About 2 hours, depending on how fast you want to go. You can login later to finish the programme.

Objectives

By the end of this programme mentors will be able to:

- understand the needs of potential mentees;
- act as a mentor to others with confidence and motivation;
- be ready to practise the skills needed for good mentoring.

Modules

- Background to mentoring
- Self-assessment
- Active listening skills
- Online mentoring skills
- Ethics
- Attaining the Professional Qualification
- The first meeting

Further resources

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Resources and web links
- Post-programme self-assessment
- Certificate of completion

The Mentoring Skills programme costs £35 for one month's access for one person (plus VAT at 17.5% for organisations in the EC) with a 10% discount for orders over £10,000. You can order online at www.qiconcepts.co.uk or you can call one of the Qi Concepts team on +44 (0) 115 8492769 who will be happy to take your order.

Mentoring Skills Online Self-assessment

The Online Self-assessment is designed for all mentors, including those mentoring someone towards a professional qualification. It has been used by hundreds of mentors in engineering, medicine, banking, accountancy and nursing.

Objectives

By the end of this self-assessment mentors will be able to:

- Have an understanding of some of the issues involved in mentoring;
- Be aware of how much they know about mentoring; and
- Be ready to practise the skills needed for good mentoring.

Content

The online questionnaire asks mentors to assess themselves on some of six key aspects of being a mentor using 20 questions. The questions cover:

- Understanding mentoring
- Active listening skills
- Online mentoring skills
- Ethics
- Mentoring someone towards a Professional Qualification
- The first meeting

There are 20 statements, which they move a slider bar to say whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know'. At the end of the questionnaire they get a score out of 100, broken down by each of the six aspects of being a mentor. This helps a mentor understand which areas they know a lot about and which areas they can learn about.

It can be used as a pre-workshop self-assessment to help mentors understand some of the issues involved in mentoring.

Duration

It should take about 15 minutes to complete and get feedback.

The Online Self-assessment for Mentors costs £5 for one month's access for one person (plus VAT at 17.5% for organisations in the EC). You can order online at www.qiconcepts.co.uk or you can call one of the Qi Concepts team on +44 (0) 115 8492769 who will be happy to take your order.