

### The Mentee Handbook

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## Part 1: Getting ready for mentoring

### About this program

### (Insert information about your program)

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### What is mentoring?

Mentoring has a long history with its origins in Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. In ancient Greek, the work 'mentor' means 'adviser'. Most people understand mentoring to be a relationship between a more mature, experienced person and a younger, less experienced person, in which knowledge and experience is shared and transferred.

[Mentoring](http://www.horizonsunlimited.com.au/mentoring/) is an “off-line” relationship (i.e. not on between employee and their own line manager) in which the mentee is helped to make significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking (Megginson & Clutterbuck, *Mentoring in Action*, 1995). It often has a career development focus and may be a long-term relationship. Mentors can become 'sponsors' for their mentees and help expand their horizons and networks. Mentors may be volunteers who assist people from other organisations or communities, they may be executives who assist less experienced people in the own organisations, or they may be external advisers who are paid for their services as Executive Mentors.

In this program, you will be in a one-to-one mentoring relationship with someone in the resource industry. The focus of the program will depend on your needs as a mentee, but could include career development, expansion of networks, or assistance with particular skills or knowledge.

### What does a mentor do... and not do?

Mentors take on many roles, depending on the needs of the mentee.

Your mentor’s role is **not**:

* To be a counsellor
* To be a best friend
* To discipline and correct
* To be revered as a super-hero
* To be a parent
* To be a an unpaid business consultant
* To take responsibility for the mentee, solve their problems, or make decisions for them

A mentor can be:

* A guide
* A sounding board
* A challenger
* A supporter and encourager
* A confidante
* A career coach
* A networking facilitator

In practical terms, you may want your mentor to:

* Provide you with an outside perspective on a variety of issues – which may include your career, your current role, current issues and challenges, relationships with significant people in your professional life
* Listen carefully to the things that worry you and excite you
* Help you solve your own problems by sharing some of their experiences – the good and the bad
* Be a sounding board to help you develop your ideas
* Provide support as well as challenge, to help you achieve your goals
* Help you make critical decisions by sharing their wisdom but also helping you see alternatives
* Give you unbiased guidance and support
* Help you extend your networks in the industry
* Encourage you and help you celebrate success

### What you can expect of one another

If you and your partner have different expectations of the mentoring relationship, you almost certainly will have problems and your relationship could fail. We outline below some general expectations (adapted from David Clutterbuck (2013), *Making the most of developmental mentoring*), but it is important that you and your partner discuss your expectations and needs at the start of the relationship.

***What can be expected of a Mentor?***

**Willingness to listen and learn** – research suggests that the most successful mentoring relationships are those in which the mentor places more emphasis on what they will learn from the relationship, than on their need to be useful to the mentee.

**Willingness to challenge** - a mentor will, when appropriate, push the mentee to think more deeply, address uncomfortable issues and set higher ambitions for themselves.

**Time** - the mentor should be willing to invest enough time to ensure that the relationship achieves a substantial depth of trust and positive outcomes for both the mentee and themselves.

**Enthusiasm, openness and honesty –** letting go of their ego and sharing thoughts and feelings they might not expose to a wider public

**Confidentiality and commitment** - what is said between mentor and mentee is confidential, except in very special circumstances that may be defined by the program organiser or by law.

***What’s expected of a Mentee?***

A mentee should follow the same guidelines as the mentor, with the addition of:

**Establishing the path they want to follow** - the mentoring relationship’s main aim is to help the mentee determine the broad career and personal development paths they want to take, and to follow them through.

**Showing consideration** - recognise that a mentor’s time and energy are precious and to be used wisely.

**Driving the relationship** - mentees are responsible for driving the relationship, setting the agenda and arranging mentoring meetings; they raise the issues they’d like to work on; and find their own solutions for issues that they may be facing.

### Key skills of a mentee – getting the most from the relationship

Mentoring relationships work well, and mentors appreciate it when their mentee:

* Drives the relationship i.e. takes responsibility for arranging meetings and acting on what has been agreed, and also sets the agenda for the relationship and every meeting
* Takes initiative – and doesn’t wait for the mentor to have all the answers
* Listens carefully to the mentor and ask questions to clarify/ check they have understood
* Gives feedback to the mentor – e.g. letting the mentor know how it went when they acted on their suggestions; and also telling the mentor when they have appreciated something the mentor has said or done
* Respects the time of the mentor – keep appointments, and if you can’t, then make sure you give plenty of notice to break an appointment!

### Establishing a relationship with a mentor

In order to optimise your mentoring relationship, we suggest that you:

* Draw up and schedule in your diaries a program of regular meetings, at least once a month. Most pairs find that meeting every 2-4 weeks works well. Any less frequently and it is hard to build rapport and sustain momentum.
* Discuss your expectations and agree your ground rules at the beginning
* Keep notes of your meetings so you can keep track of progress. We have provided a set of Meeting Tools in the Mentee Toolkit for that purpose. You can also track progress towards goals on the online platform in your shared mentoring space
* Work hard to establish trust and rapport quickly

You will find more support materials to help you prepare and get started, in the Mentoring Milestones section of the online platform.

### Confidentiality, trust and code of practice

Insert information about importance of confidentiality, trust and code of practice

## Part 2: Getting the relationship underway

### Getting acquainted and meeting with your mentor

The following are a few suggested topics to help you get started on conversations with your Mentor:

1. Jobs, hobbies, and extracurricular activities.
2. Research, projects, or career-related accomplishments.
3. Ways of balancing work with your personal life.
4. Favourite book, etc.

Don't forget to learn about your Mentor by asking them questions too!

### The first meeting

The first meeting should be about getting the relationship off the ground. We suggest you talk about:

* What you are hoping to achieve by being in a mentoring relationship – don’t worry too much if this is a little vague at first
* When and how you will meet
* How you will work together
* Confidentiality and trust – read the Mentoring Partnership Agreement together and discuss it
* Responsibility – who will do what?
* How you will resolve issues

In your Mentee Toolkit you have a First Meeting Tool which will help guide you through the first session.

### Building trust

The fastest ways to build trust are:

1. Do what you say you will do
2. Get to know one another – discuss your work and lives outside of work, as far as you both feel comfortable
3. Communicate openly and honestly – give one another feedback, share how you feel about how the relationship is going, and tackle any issues straight away

### Building rapport

Rapport tends to come quickly when you have shared experiences and values. Talk about what you have done and what is important to you, and look for areas of common interest. What gives you joy, what frustrates you, what do you get excited about, what do want to contribute to the world?

Your mentor will appreciate your non-judgemental listening – often in the workplace we have no-one who will just listen without offering an opinion or a criticism. If you are genuinely attentive and interested in what they have to day, you will build rapport quickly.

### Communicating effectively online

The term ‘*Communication*’ covers just about any interaction with another person. It includes sharing information, ideas and feelings. Communication is a two-way process. You can probably remember several occasions when the lack of communication or miscommunication has left you feeling angry, or worried.

While speaking to someone face to face you can use hand gestures, facial expressions and voice modulation for conveying your thoughts. If you are meeting by phone you will have to pay very careful attention to tone of voice – listen for what is not said and for meaningful silences. If you pick up that your mentor is hesitating, or emotional, it is OK to carefully check in with them and ask what is going on for them at the other end. If you are using Skype you have the added benefit of being able to see one another, but unless you have a perfect connection, the picture clarity may not be too good.

Imagine what happens when you communicate over emails; or, when you have to communicate through online discussion boards. Here, you cannot make use of non-textual ways of conveying information; you can only rely on your text messages.

The following netiquette tips are critical to a Mentor - Mentee relationship:

* **Meaningful Subject Line** -A good subject line ensures that the recipient recognises the importance of your message and doesn’t delete it accidentally. Another reason is that the subject line will give your Mentor a clear idea of the topic you want to discuss.
* **Clear and Concise Messages** - Were your Mentor’s points clear? Were you able to understand them? If not, ask your Mentor for clarification. Asking for a clarification will allow your mentor to restate, elaborate or reconsider her/his message. It is very important that even your messages are clear and concise.
* **Investigating Assumptions** - Even if they have not been stated explicitly, have you understood the assumptions your Mentor has made in the message? Stating your understanding of the message, or asking your Mentor to clarify his/her words can be useful in preventing any misinterpretations.
* **Communicating about Communication** - It is very important to inform your Mentor of your schedule, well in advance. This prevents a communication breakdown, which would have resulted in unnecessary frustration.

David Clutterbuck’s research suggests that email mentoring is effective because:

* It can take place in real time, just-in-time as issues occur
* It can occur in short bursts, which are easier to find than slots of an hour or more
* It provides a written record, which can be useful in revisiting a conversation
* If the conversation is asynchronous (i.e. not simultaneous), it provides built-in reflection time – as a result both the mentor’s questions and the mentee’s responses tend to be more considered
* Any power differential between mentor and mentee has much less influence on the conversation than in a face-to-face environment.

(Clutterbuck, D. & Hussain, Z. (2010) *Virtual Coach, Virtual Mentor.* Information Age Publishing: Charlotte NC.)

### Goal setting

You will find some notes on goal-setting in the Mentoring Milestones section of the online mentoring platform, under the “Getting ready for mentoring” tab. You may be surprised that many mentees have trouble articulating goals for the mentoring program. It is important that between you there is a shared sense of purpose for the relationship, but research indicates that focusing on specific goals too early in the mentoring relationship can actually be constraining. Let the goals emerge over the course of the first few meetings. If you are still having trouble by the third month then you may wish to contact the program organisers for assistance.

### Taking stock of the relationship

It makes sense and is good practice to take stock occasionally of how the relationship is going. Every 3-4 meetings you may wish to review the relationship – are you meeting frequently enough? Are you and your mentor getting what you need? What could you change to make your meetings more effective?

**We will ask you to complete evaluations three times during the course of the XX month program – twice during and once at the end.** This will help you and your partner take stock, and give us important information so we can support you as best we can.

***What to do if it’s not working***

Having a "no-fault separation clause" is an essential part of the mentoring process. In a small proportion of mentoring relationships, it becomes clear early on that the mentor does not have the skills, experience, background or interests that the mentee had expected.

Sometimes the initial “chemistry” is not present – have patience because we know that this often suddenly appears after a few meetings.

In the instance where either one or both of you feel it may not be working:

* Review your original expectations
* Consider how much have you veered away from your ground rules
* Establish a clear agenda to discuss the situation
* Give feedback to each other – with examples
* If there is no improvement – talk to your program manager

### Tools and techniques

You will find some useful exercises to complete with your mentor, in the Mentee Toolkit.

### Don’t lose sight of the goals

There might be times in your mentoring relationship when things might stagnate and a fresh impetus is required. “Relationship droop” commonly sets in at about three months – after the initial flush of enthusiasm, time constraints and other commitments start to get in the way. At such times, we recommend the following activities:

* Revisit the goals that you have set for your mentoring partner and for yourself. Are you on the right track to achieve what you had set out to do?
* Could you have done something better? Being enthusiastic can help you and your partner move forward.
* See if there is a useful exercise to do together, in the Mentee Toolkit. This often lets a new focus emerge

Don’t let your meetings get further and further apart – this is a recipe for a failed relationship. If you have not contacted your mentor for a while, get in touch ASAP!

### Bringing the relationship to closure

Some Mentoring Partnerships end with the successful completion of learning goals; some do not for a number of reasons. Even unproductive or unsatisfactory Mentoring Relationships can benefit from a good closure. The key to a successful closure is being prepared with an exit strategy. A good exit strategy has five components:

* A learning conclusion (processing the learning that took place because of the relationship while working towards the achievement of learning goals)
* A process for integrating what was learned (a conversation focusing on how to apply the learning and take it to the next level)
* A meaningful way of celebrating success (planning a mutually satisfying way to celebrate the successful achievement of goals)
* A conversation focusing on redefining the relationship (talking about how the relationship is to continue, whether it moves from a ‘*Professional Mentoring Relationship*’ to ‘*Colleague*’, ‘*Friendship*’, or ceases to exist entirely)
* Moving on (both partners let go and identify ways of keeping in touch, if appropriate and/or mutually desired)

## **Many pairs choose to keep in contact on an informal basis – however, you are not required to do so.**

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