Mentoring - building relationships that build careers

A MENTEE GUIDEBOOK

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Mentoring for Professional Development

Mentors are useful at any stage in your career, but especially at times of rapid development or major change. They will be there to listen, challenge and help you to review your progress to ensure that together you reach your potential.

Joining forces

Working with a mentor gives a different perspective on your work and experience. A mentor will challenge your ability as well as provide the encouragement and support you need along the way. Linking yourself to a mentor will motivate you when the going is tough and help you set – and achieve – your career goals.

People who have used mentors in the past report that mentoring significantly influenced their attitude and professional outlook, made them challenge their assumptions and enhanced their career and professional development. Having the support of a mentor also helped them overcome obstacles and avoid pitfalls.

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How a mentoring relationship should be?

- Mentoring is all about sharing experiences.
- Mentors impart multiple lessons that they’ve learned to their mentees and help them navigate the rough seas of their own careers.
- Brainstorming between you and your mentor can often be quite productive.
- Nothing should be held back when brainstorming because there are no bad ideas in these informal settings, only great possibilities.
- A good mentee owns the relationship; the mentee shouldn’t expect the mentor to do so.
- It is important to spend time thinking about what you want from your mentoring relationship.
- The likelihood is that you would have never met your mentor, so they will have no idea what your background is and have no idea what your goals are in life.
- Before your initial meeting with your new mentor, it’s wise to update any work you have, e.g. update your CV, use and update Career Manager and prepare any questions you may have for your mentor.

Please remember

- You’re only likely to get out of the relationship what you’re prepared to put in.
- Taking ownership may seem scary but it might energise you into getting the most from your sessions.
- From the outset give your mentor the respect and recognition they deserve; their time and energy is as precious as yours.
- Preparing for your mentoring sessions also helps. In between sessions, reflect on what’s been discussed, your progression and what you want from future sessions.
- Take advantage of your mentor’s wisdom and experience but don’t hold back from challenging them where you think it’s necessary and being constructive; the disagreements can make the relationship healthy and stimulating.
- Be honest at all times, particularly in your feedback on the effectiveness of the mentoring process. Don’t be afraid to suggest the mentoring relationship isn’t working; otherwise you’ll be wasting both your time and the time of the mentor.
Mentors will listen, challenge and **help you reach your potential**

The IET Volunteer Mentoring Service is facilitated by IET staff and pairings are made centrally but it is expected that relationships will be managed by the individual mentor and mentee. This allows them to adapt the relationship according to the mentee’s needs and mentor’s commitments.

The following guidelines should be read by mentors and mentees. They do not constitute a formal agreement, but they need to be understood by both parties.

- The mentoring relationship is entirely voluntary for both parties. The IET does not reimburse any expenses incurred in this role.
- At the outset, the roles of mentor and mentee should be agreed so that both parties have a clear understanding of their role.

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The mentor should provide constructive feedback to the mentee, while the mentee should attempt to tackle any areas requiring development.

- The mentor should not act on behalf of the mentee or give specific advice. The mentor’s role is to challenge and support the mentee and provide constructive feedback.
- Mutually agree a location, time and date for meetings ensuring both parties are happy with regards to safety, security, travel arrangements and mutual well being.
- Mutual respect is required as either or both parties may be busy with workloads or other responsibilities. Be reasonable with each other and both take responsibility for the mentoring relationship.
- Both aim to keep the relationship working well and to keep in regular contact with each other as much as possible. Remember to keep each other updated and be aware that any matters discussed need to be treated as confidential.
- Both parties to mutually agree a relevant time period for the mentoring relationship – this can be terminated at any time but has to be discussed first ensuring mutual respect and understanding. Once the relationship has ended you need to inform us at the IET by completing an end of pairing form. This form can be found in the mentoring toolkit and needs to be completed by both, the mentee and mentor.

**E-Mentoring**

When face-to-face mentoring is not possible for individuals (distance difficulties, no local mentor/mentee availability, etc.), e-mentoring may be suggested and co-ordinated by the IET.

- Whilst e-mentoring may be convenient for some, it needs to be recognised that it can have its limitations:
  - It can take longer to build a good mentoring relationship
  - Benefits of a face-to-face meeting such as facial expressions and body language can be lost

E-mentoring is best suited for individuals who have an open mind and are keen to make the mentoring relationship work when there can be obstacles in their way or for people with specific needs that cannot be met locally.
Mentors give you the support and encouragement you need

Whilst there is no minimum qualification requirement to be a mentee, the following attributes are expected of those wishing to be mentored through the IET volunteer mentoring service.

A mentee is someone that has a mentor, this can be either a formal mentor through the IET or in company or an informal mentor that offers advice and guidance. For specific sector related mentoring, it is useful for a mentee to look within their own professional network of colleagues.

However, for wider career goals or aspirations of professional registration the IET are able to provide a volunteer mentor to assist in achieving these goals. Pairings made through the IET are made based on location and mentor experience with aspirational registration category.

The following behaviours are expected:

- Initial contact to be made by the mentee. Contact with mentor is expected to be made within a week of receipt of the acknowledgement email or the mentor maybe reassigned.
- Make sure you have prepared your CV for your mentor to view
- Have clear goals/expectations for the mentoring relationship. A mentor can help you achieve your goals but not decide them for you
- Be aware that the mentor only offers guidance and support. Mentors are unable to make decisions for you or on your behalf and they are not able to give personalised careers advice
- Have an open and honest approach
- Have good listening skills
- Be flexible when arranging to meet up with your mentor
- Be able to handle constructive criticism and feedback
- Have good people and communication skills. Make sure you keep in regular contact with your mentor
- Keep records of meetings (if agreed)
- Be willing to undertake mentee training

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Here are some practical tips to help you maintain an on-going relationship:

- Try to set a regular time for meetings and take control of maintaining regular contact.
- Prepare for your meetings beforehand so that you don’t waste valuable time.
- Don’t make too many demands on your mentor’s time.
- Remember that they are very busy people and will be giving up their time to help you. Try to give them notice if you need to cancel a meeting and be reasonable about contacting them during their working day or personal time.
- Be willing to learn from the guidance that your mentor will give you. Be open to suggestions and try out their ideas. Tell your mentor if you acted on their advice and what the outcome was.
- Make sure that you act on what you say you are going to do.
- Providing feedback is essential for a successful relationship. It is important for your mentor to know that you are interested in developing your skills and making use of his/her knowledge. This in turn, will encourage your mentor in his role and will help maintain a strong relationship. During your relationship, you might even be able to give something back to your mentor. You might have valuable information that you can share, or you might provide some useful contacts and networking opportunities. This will all help to create a mutually beneficial relationship that will last for as long as you need it to.

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**IET Birmingham: Austin Court**
Birmingham
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www.ietvenues.co.uk/austincourt

**IET Glasgow: Teacher Building**
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* Savoy Place will be closed for refurbishment from summer 2013 until autumn 2015. During this time IET’s London home will be within the Institution of Mechanical Engineers building at:
1 Birdcage Walk
Westminster
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If you are attending an event during this period, please check the venue details carefully.

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