

**AN INTRODUCTION TO
ENTERPRISE MENTORING:**

A POCKETBOOK FOR MENTEES

GET MENTORING

www.getmentoring.org



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and Entrepreneurs



Volunteer mentoring

Small businesses are the engine of the UK economy. Evidence proves that businesses that use external support are more likely to survive and succeed and business owners have repeatedly told us that the support they value most comes from other experienced business people. From my own experiences running a small business I know how useful it can be to learn from the experiences of someone who has already been there and done it.

Mentoring can be an effective way of promoting more successful start-ups, as well as higher productivity and growth amongst established businesses. I believe that mentors play a crucial role in helping new and growing firms to thrive and prosper.

Strengthening the mentoring network is vital if we're going to help the UK's budding entrepreneurs.

Mentoring is a great way for business owners and entrepreneurs to give back to the enterprise community but a true mentoring relationship works in both directions. As a volunteer mentor you can also learn new ideas to enhance your own enterprise know-how. You will develop your own relationship management and communication skills; you might learn new ways of tackling challenges in your own business.

So I say "Get Mentoring."

Mark Prisk, Minister for Business and Enterprise
at Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

“All our research at the IOEE shows that informal mentoring is tremendously important and goes on day to day, helping business owners solve problems and seize opportunities as they arise. Having a mentor, or mentors, within your enterprise support network has proven invaluable to pre-start, start-ups and existing small business owners. Mentoring reduces the mortality rate and increases the growth rate.”

Tony Robinson, IOEE

How to use this pocketbook

This pocketbook is designed to help you to understand how a mentor can help you when you are thinking about starting or running your business. It gives handy tips on how to get the most from the mentoring relationship and what you can expect to happen.



About SFEDI Group

SFEDI is the Sector Skills Body for Enterprise. Run by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs, SFEDI researches leading practice, and sets standards, principles and guidelines. We:

- make sure that self-employment is promoted as a positive choice for a career
- actively seek to increase the survival rate of new businesses
- make sure that the quality of support to businesses is of a consistently high standard
- design our services to give the right help at the right time so that businesses can grow
- set national standards for small, medium and micro businesses, on which this workbook is based.

Our team includes and works with entrepreneurs and owners of real small businesses to sort out real problems. These partnerships enhance the quality and quantity of start-up support provided, and help established businesses to grow.

The background to mentoring

1



What is a mentor?

“Shell LiveWIRE supports 1000s of young entrepreneurs each year. Our feedback shows that mentors are a key part of what many of them see as vital to support and growth of their business.”

Stuart Anderson Shell LiveWIRE

A mentor is someone who will encourage and support you to make the most of yourself and your business.

Although the final decisions are always in your hands, a mentor can be invaluable in **guiding** you to identify the support you need, consider your options and get new information. As mentor, their role is to be a trusted **confidante**, helping you, as the mentee, to make informed choices.

Mentoring is just one type of business support. More examples are shown in the diagram opposite.

Types of enterprise support



What is enterprise mentoring?

- **A one-to-one relationship**, usually over a set period of time, in which an established business person (mentor) provides consistent support, guidance and practical help for a less experienced person (mentee).
- **A voluntary relationship**, which the mentee or the mentor can end at any time.
- **A two-way process** in which the mentor shares their personal skills, knowledge and experience with the mentee to enable him or her to explore their personal and professional situation, and in which the mentor and mentee work together to achieve predetermined goals and objectives.
- **A way of enabling** the mentee to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to perform at a higher level, and of giving them access to impartial, non-judgemental guidance and support.

What is enterprise mentoring *not*?

The mentor's role is *not* to:

- give you advice (this is normally provided by a qualified business adviser)
- provide a counselling service
- provide a training service
- provide a coaching service
- provide therapeutic interventions
- sort out all of your problems.

“It is important that mentors come from all walks of life, including those that have run successful small businesses, so that they can offer a wide range of experience from different sectors for businesses to get the best out of their knowledge.”

John Walker Federation of Small Businesses

What should a mentor do?

An enterprise mentor is normally someone who has a great deal of entrepreneurial business experience and who acts as a trusted confidante over a flexible period of time. It can be a close and meaningful relationship, in which your mentor shares their personal knowledge and experiences, and promotes a self-discovery approach. You should expect your mentor to:

- provide an outside perspective on you and your business
- listen, in confidence, to the things that are worrying you about your business
- help you by sharing their own experience of failures and successes
- give you friendly, unbiased support and guidance
- provide honest and constructive feedback
- be a sounding board for your ideas
- facilitate your decision-making by suggesting alternatives based on personal experience
- provide ongoing support and encouragement.

Your mentor is there to:

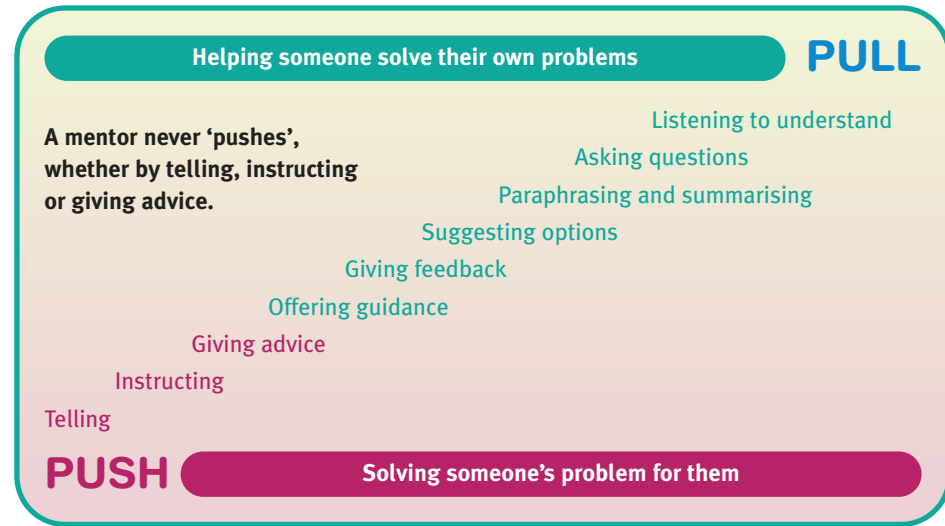
- guide you to look at a wide variety of options and consider alternative courses of action in order to solve problems for yourself, rather than to give answers or provide solutions
- help you to gain new personal skills, experiences and knowledge
- help you to develop new attitudes and behaviour, and therefore improve both your personal and your business performance
- release and develop your own resourcefulness: mentoring does not mean giving advice – it is up to you to decide whether to use the information you receive from your mentor.

Remember: It is not your mentor's responsibility to make your business a success; the ultimate responsibility for making your business successful is down to you.

What are the different types of mentoring relationship?

- **Face-to-face, one-to-one mentoring** is the most common sort of mentoring.
- **Face-to-face group mentoring** (or **peer mentoring**) is where a small group of business owners come together to discuss their opportunities.
- **Telephone mentoring** is usually part of a *blended* mentoring approach, used in tandem with face-to-face mentoring.
- **e-mentoring** can be part of a blended mentoring approach or used on its own.

Mentors 'pull' – they don't push



The key skills of a mentee

- 1** Listening in order to understand
- 2** Questioning to clarify and make sure they've understood correctly
- 3** Questioning to explore additional options and consequences
- 4** Being prepared to act on what has been agreed with their mentor



Establishing a successful relationship with your mentor

Once you have been matched with your mentor through your mentoring organisation, we suggest that you:

- draw up a timetable of regularly spaced meetings in advance
- establish a set of ground rules to which you will both abide
- keep notes of your meetings, and use these as the basis for ongoing discussions
- work towards developing a trusting relationship and establishing a good rapport with your mentor
- aim at maintaining the relationship for as long as is appropriate to your needs.

Effective mentoring meetings provide a sense of purpose and achievement.

Working with a mentor

2



Your first meeting with your mentor

- The relationship that evolves between you and your mentor over a period of time is crucial to the success of the mentoring journey. Although you will control what you get out of the relationship, your mentor is the guardian of the relationship because of their experience and knowledge.
- Your first meeting is vital because it will set the tone of the relationship. Ideally, this will get off to a swift and productive start.
- You might feel a bit nervous about your first meeting but don't worry about it – a lot of people do. You might be thinking, 'How will we start?' or 'What are we going to talk about?'
- It's a good idea to devote some thought to your first meeting because it's extremely important. If you get off to a good start, everything else should be much easier.

Starting the first meeting

To get started, you could:

- you and your mentor could make yourselves comfortable, pour some tea or coffee, sit down and get to know each other
- you could tell your mentor something about yourself; this might include information about your personal life as well as your professional life – whatever feels right for you
- you might explain why you got involved, and discuss what you think you might do together and what both of you might get out of mentoring.

Remember: if you don't hit it off straight away, don't panic. It takes time to build any relationship and it will get easier the more you meet because you'll build up trust and get used to each other.

If you're worried about anything after the first meeting, get in touch with your mentoring organisation; it's there to provide you with all the support you need.

What is the first meeting for?

The first meeting is all about getting your relationship off to a good start by establishing some ground rules and acknowledging that the relationship is two-way. This is also the best time to agree about what you hope to achieve, and share your expectations with one another.

As a 'starter for ten', we recommend you cover your ambitions and goals in relation to:

- particular issues you face
- your achievements so far and how to build on them
- realistic expectations
- scale of priorities
- areas in which you would find input most useful.

You should also cover a few basic essentials:

- when you would like to meet – how often and for how long
- venue for follow-up meetings
- how you'll keep in touch (by email and/or telephone?) and how you'll remind each other of future meetings.
- discussing and signing an agreement
- confidentiality
- responsibility
- how you will record progress and issues/targets for further development.

Key principles in building trust

- 1 Get to know your mentor.** Talk about their business and their life outside it. Try to understand what they think and why. Value their viewpoint.
- 2 Do what you say you're going to do.** Agree what you are aiming to achieve through your mentoring sessions. Be reliable and always do what you say you are going to do.
- 3 Communicate openly and honestly.** Discuss issues as soon as they arise. Ask for and give feedback.
- 4 Don't be afraid to challenge.** Your open, honest relationship will allow you to challenge your mentor constructively to explore a wider viewpoint.

“Trust is the highest form of human motivation. It brings out the very best in people.”

Stephen Covey,
management development
consultant

Building a trusting and respectful relationship with your mentor

Mutual trust and respect between you and your mentor should be key. The extent to which you trust your mentor will depend on how caring your mentor is and their levels of competence and integrity.



Things to think about when communicating with your mentor

If you are meeting your mentor face to face, you need to be aware of body language. This is an excellent indication of how people *really* feel and makes up a large proportion of the message they send. If someone is being less than honest, their body language will usually give them away.

A lot of body language is universal, but some gestures differ between cultures so be careful not to give (or take) offence unwittingly!

Take great care to recognise how cultural diversity influences all aspects of verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

To 'read' body language:

- 1** Learn what to look for.
- 2** Recognise people's body language so you can 'read' them better.
- 3** Recognise your own body language.
- 4** Control your own body language and use it to your advantage so you give the right messages to other people.

20 'killer' questions

Here are 20 'killer' questions that a mentor may ask you – or you may want to think about them for yourself.

- 1 “What will give you the most value from today’s session?”
- 2 “What do you want to focus on today?”
- 3 “What is keeping you awake at night?”
- 4 “What is the present situation in detail?”
- 5 “What is happening now that is working well?”
- 6 “What is happening now that tells you that you have a problem?”
- 7 “What do you have control over?”
- 8 “What strengths and resources do you bring to this?”
- 9 “Where do you want to be a year from now? How will you measure your success?”
- 10 “If you had to find a way, what would it be?”
- 11 “What do you not know about this situation/project? How could you find out?”
- 12 “If you improved one thing you do, what change would make the biggest improvement to your business’s performance?”
- 13 “What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail?”
- 14 “What do you enjoy about what you do?”
- 15 “What might you be overlooking?”
- 16 “Who else has done this before?”
- 17 “What have you learned from this?”
- 18 “What can you do differently next time?”
- 19 “What did you do well?”
- 20 “What will you do next?”

Building rapport with your mentor

- Taking time to build rapport with your mentor will help you to get the most from the mentoring relationship.
- Rapport comes from shared values or experiences, and sometimes from a 'chemistry' that is hard to define.
- One sign that there is comfort or rapport between two people is that they have similar tone of voice, body language, movements and so on.
- Next time you're in company, watch other people talking together. Look for examples of similarities or 'synchronicity' between them. Ask yourself:
 - Are their body postures similar?
 - Do they use similar hand movements?
 - What do their faces tell you, especially their expressions?
 - Do their moods seem similar?
 - How similar are their voices?



The 12 habits of a toxic mentor

Here's David Clutterbuck's lighthearted take on what he calls the 'toxic mentee' – how not to do it!

- 1 Bring to the first formal meeting a long shopping list of things you want the mentor to do for you.
- 2 Expect the mentor to be available for you whenever you want them. (Heroes never need sleep!)
- 3 Regard the mentor as your prime source of gossip to pass on to other people.
- 4 Expect the mentor always to have the answer – that's why they are more senior.
- 5 Expect the mentor to decide when to meet and what to talk about.
- 6 Boast about the relationship to your colleagues at every opportunity.
- 7 Never challenge what the mentor says – s/he is paid to know best.
- 8 Blame the mentor whenever advice doesn't work out – s/he should have known better.
- 9 Treat mentoring sessions as mobile, the easiest item in the diary to move at the last minute.
- 10 Enjoy the opportunity to have a good moan or whinge whenever you meet, especially if no one else will listen to you.

11 Make it clear to the mentor that you want to be just like them – adopt their style of speaking, dress and posture.

12 Never commit to doing anything as a result of the mentoring session.

If, by accident, you do commit to something, simply forget to follow it up. (Why spoil the fun of discussion with outcomes?)

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Barriers to an effective mentor/mentee relationship

Most barriers to effective mentoring stem from:

- personality issues
- lack of awareness of the role of the mentor.

Common barriers include:

- poor mentor/mentee matching
- lack of support from the mentoring organisation

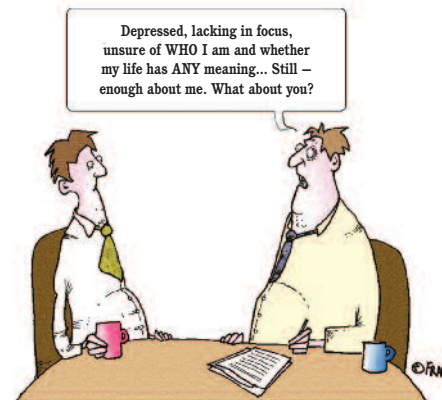
- mentor or mentee dissatisfaction about the way the mentoring is conducted
- unrealistic expectations about what mentoring can achieve
- the lack/blurring of boundaries in the mentor/mentee relationship.

Your mentoring organisation is there to help you to overcome any barriers you may encounter.

Challenges facing the mentee

As a mentee, you may face challenges including:

- finding new customers and markets
- being more energy-efficient
- accessing finance
- managing money
- taking on staff and developing people
- developing new products and service ideas
- taking new products and services to the market
- investing in plant, machinery or property
- exporting or funding overseas partners
- making the most of the Internet.



Think about how your mentor can help you to address these challenges.

Confidentiality

It's really important that you respect each other's confidentiality. Remember that anything you talk about when you meet up is between the two of you so you shouldn't talk about it to someone else. But, legally, you should report any criminal conduct or possible harassment or bullying. Speak to your mentoring organisation if you're worried about anything like this.

Four things to think about are:

- 1 Concerns.** If you've got any, chat to your mentoring organisation – they're there to help.
- 2 Secrets.** Don't promise to keep any secrets and don't ask your mentor to keep any of yours. Remember to ask your mentor if they mind you sharing confidential information with anyone else.
- 3 Information.** Keep information about your mentor (like their phone number) somewhere secure. If you happen to be aware of their financial details, never share these.
- 4 You.** Confidentiality works both ways. Be aware of those personal areas of your life you're happy to share with your mentor and those you are not.

Tools and techniques

Goal setting and action planning

A great way to start is by setting goals and making an action plan. This will keep you on track and help you to:

- identify where you need support
- set goals you can work towards
- gauge how you are doing
- keep an eye on your goals
- pat each other on the back for your successes.

Don't forget, goals are most useful when they are SMART:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Specific | For example, rather than 'get a website', say 'choose a suitable domain name for my business'. |
| Measurable | Decide how you'll know when you've achieved it. |
| Achievable | Can you do it? |
| Realistic | Do you think you have a real prospect of reaching your goal? |
| Timed | Is this a long-term or short-term goal? Agree timescales for each goal –you won't be able to get everything done at once. |

SWOT Analysis

This is a useful technique for understanding *strengths* and *weaknesses*, and identifying *opportunities* and *threats*. It is a framework that you can use to analyse both yourself and your competitors, and can help you to craft a strategy that distinguishes you from your competitors.

The following questions can help you to complete the SWOT grid.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Strengths

- What advantages does your business have over competitors?
- What do you do better than anyone else?
- What unique or lowest-cost resources can you draw upon that others can't?
- What do people in your market see as your strengths?
- What factors mean that you 'get the sale'?
- What is your organisation's unique selling proposition (USP)?

Weaknesses

- What could you improve?
- What should you avoid?
- What are people in your market likely to see as weaknesses?
- What factors lose you sales?

Opportunities

- What good opportunities can you spot?
- What interesting trends are you aware of?
(Useful opportunities can come from such things as local events or changes in technology, markets, government policy, social patterns, population profiles and lifestyle changes.)

Threats

- What obstacles do you face?
- What are your competitors doing?
- Are quality standards or specifications for your job, products or services changing?
- Is changing technology threatening your position?
- Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your business?

When you've completed this analysis, you could use your findings as the basis for a discussion with your mentor.

G-STAR model



This is a particularly useful technique in mentoring. Use it to explore a particular issue with your mentor – it can often be a fast track to the real answers you are looking for.

G What are your **GOALS**?

- What are your goals for today's discussion?
- What will give you the most value from today's session?
- Do you have control over this issue?
- When do you need to achieve this goal by?

S What **SITUATION** are you facing?

- How do you feel about the situation?
- How can you describe the situation?
- What do you know about the current situation?
- What do you not know about the current situation?

T What is your **THINKING** at this time?

- What options have you considered about the situation?
- What underlying assumptions are you making?
- Think how others would solve this problem.
- Think about how you will measure your success.

A What **ACTIONS** are you considering?

- What do you need to do first?
- By when do you need to have this done?
- In what sequence will you do these tasks?
- Can you think of anything that may disrupt your actions?

R What **RESULTS** do you expect?

- Are the results realistic?
- Have you considered other outcomes?
- What contingencies can you put in place?
- What are the consequences of not achieving these results?

Ending the mentoring relationship

There will come a time when the mentoring relationship will begin to draw to an end.

At this point you must both 'let go' so that you can maintain your independence. It will then become your responsibility to put what you have learned into practice. Although the two of you will probably continue to have some form of interaction, it should be on a more casual basis, where you consider each other as equals.

Here are some tips to help you end your mentoring relationship successfully:

- **Fix a date for your final meeting.** Have a chat with your mentor and decide on a date. Remind each other of the date of the final session in your penultimate meeting so that you can prepare for it.
- **Find other ways to support yourself.** You might like to look at ways you can continue your learning. As a starting point, there are some useful websites on page 36.
- **Celebrate your success.** Have a look at the goals you set when you first met. You can pat yourselves on the back when you see how far you've come.
- **Say goodbye.** Think of how you can end the session on a positive note so it's not awkward. You could talk about the thing you most enjoyed, what you'll remember most or the most important things you've both learned.

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