

STM Mentoring Program Guidance Document

What is Mentoring?

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development describes mentoring as a method by which a more experienced colleague uses their greater knowledge and understanding of work and workplaces to support the development of a more junior or inexperienced member of staff through the long-term passing-on of support, guidance, and advice.

Mentoring facilitates the sharing of knowledge, expertise, skills, insights and experiences through dialogue and collaborative learning.

Mentoring is on the rise and, in fact, 71% of Fortune 500 companies offer mentoring programs to their employees.

The Benefits of Mentoring

The benefits of being a mentor include:

- Increased satisfaction and motivation from 'giving back' to the industry and helping others to achieve their professional goals.
- Development of leadership, management, coaching and listening skills.
- Learning from the insights, ideas and different perspectives provided by mentees.
- Feeling valued from being able to share knowledge and experience.
- Increased recognition at both personal and corporate levels within the STM publishing industry.

The benefits of having a mentor include:

- Receipt of constructive feedback.
- Increased self-awareness, understanding of situations, self-confidence, and self-reflection.
- Identification of, and improvement in, areas of development.
- Exposure to diverse perspectives and real-world experiences.
- Development of specific skills and knowledge relevant to professional goals.

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- Increased capacity to translate strategies into productive actions.
- Increased job satisfaction and motivation.
- Increased networking opportunities and industry awareness.

In addition, STM member organisations will benefit through the participation of their employees. As already outlined, both mentors and mentees enhance their personal and career development through participating in mentoring. Therefore, organisations will benefit from improved employee performance, talent retention and connectivity with other STM members as a result of this program.

The Role of the Mentor

The mentorship should be driven by the mentee's personal and professional development, with the mentor empowering the mentee by facilitating the mentee's self-appraisal, establishing facts, signposting, and giving information and advice drawing on their own experience, expertise, and knowledge.

Mentors should encourage mentees to take responsibility for their own development by enabling mentees to self-reflect, clarify understanding, challenge assumptions, consider different perspectives, make decisions, and set their own objectives.

To achieve this, mentors often need to demonstrate the following skills and behaviours:

- Effective and active listening
- Effective questioning
- Empathy and respect
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Offering different perspectives
- Offering encouragement and support
- Clarifying, evaluating and problem-solving
- Remaining unbiased and objective, and maintaining confidentiality
- Sharing of knowledge, information, and advice
- Sharing of own experience as appropriate.

The Role of the Mentee

The mentee should set the agenda for the mentorship, enabling mentees to take ownership of their own development with the support and guidance of their mentor.

Mentorships are most effective when mentees are open, honest, and receptive to their mentors in order to extract the required information which will benefit them.

To achieve this, mentees should utilise the following skills and behaviours:

- Accept advice, support, and encouragement
- Accept alternative perspectives
- Active listening
- Communicate circumstances honestly and clearly
- Decision-making, action-planning and objective-setting
- Effective questioning
- Follow up on actions agreed at the meeting
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Identify issues and situations
- Openly provide information and share knowledge and experience
- Prepare for meetings, including determining the agenda in advance.

Format of the Mentorship

Most mentorships comprise the following activities:

- First contracting meeting
- Regular review meetings
- Recording meeting outcomes
- Maintenance of a learning log
- Recording and reviewing achievements
- Reviewing the ongoing relationship
- Ending the relationship
- Evaluating the relationship.

Optimising Mentoring Meetings

At the first ('contracting') meeting, following introductions and rapport- building, a framework will need to be mutually agreed to cover the format, frequency, and duration of future ('review') meetings, as set out in the mentoring contract. This first meeting will confirm the mentee's initial development objectives and immediate goal(s), agree mutual expectations, and help clarify both parties' roles from the outset; covering issues of confidentiality, boundaries, style of mentoring, and how/when you decide to contact each other outside of arranged meetings.

Ongoing review meetings should have a clear structure, usually as follows:

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- Establishing the specific task or topic(s) for discussion e.g. progress since last meeting, or a new development need the mentee has identified.
- Clarification and exploration of the issues raised, from both parties' perspectives.
- Objectives and tasks identified and agreed for future action.

a) Surroundings and tone

The environment in which meetings take place should set the scene for a professional yet full and frank discussion. A quiet, relaxed, and pleasant environment is ideal, with no physical barriers (such as a desk between participants) if the meetings take place in person. An environment engendering trust and respect should be fostered by both parties, to encourage two-way discussions where ideas, views and opinions from both participants are exchanged. The discussions should focus on constructive outcomes, allowing the mentee to develop strategies and solutions in order to move their development forward.

b) Active listening

The mentor's primary task is that of the facilitator and listener. Active listening is the skill of simultaneously listening and internalising (understanding) what is being said. Active listening optimises the productivity of discussions and engenders respect and mutual understanding between mentors and mentees.

It involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal techniques include mentors giving prompts to mentees to continue, clarify or expand on their topic (e.g. repeating key words within a discussion, or using 'I see', 'go on') and keeping the mentee focussed on the specific discussion topics they defined at the start.

Non-verbal techniques include visibly showing interest in the conversation through eye contact, facial expressions, head-nodding, and an open body posture, including leaning slightly towards the mentee to show interest.

Mentees should be given space within discussions, as periods of silence will allow them to reflect on discussions and internalise their thoughts.

c) Effective questioning

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Effective questioning allows the mentor to understand the mentee's situation and the mentee to explore their mentor's experience and advice to best inform their development. Questioning effectively will enable participants to direct and develop the discussion, moving it forward in line with the mentee's development objectives.

Open questions optimise the opportunity to obtain information, explore issues and consider options. Open questions usually begin with 'who', 'what', 'where', 'what', 'why' or 'how'.

Closed questions (requiring a 'yes' or 'no' answer) can limit and curtail the conversation but are useful for clarifying understanding or summarising a discussion.

Multiple questions – where several questions are asked within the same sentence – should be avoided, as they can cause misunderstanding for both parties.