

Mentoring

The 'Andy Guide to Being a Mentee

Step 1 Setting Your Objectives



1. Be clear about what you want to achieve from working with your mentor.
Are you focused on long-term career/business objectives or short-term projects?
Or a combination of both?
2. What are you struggling with, lacking key knowledge in or need to do better to get to the next level?
3. What experience has your mentor had with the same or similar challenges in their career?
What do you want to emulate?
4. Communicate your objectives clearly with your mentor, ensuring that they understand exactly what you want to achieve. You must drive the relationship.
5. While keeping a clear eye on your goal also maintain an open mind. Your mentor may suggest something you hadn't previously considered that changes your course.
Be open to considering this.

Step 2 What Are You Looking For in a Mentor?



1. Your ideal mentor should have the relevant experience to support you. Often they are more senior but that is not necessarily the case. Be open to 'reverse mentoring' or 'co-mentoring', where more junior partners are considered to have something of value to offer or a different perspective based on their own experience.
2. Your mentor should be someone you trust to be **objective, discreet** and **honest** with you. You need them to respond to you, challenge you and hold you accountable. Objectivity means that they should not be in your direct line of management.
3. Your mentor may not always agree with you or share the same opinions but you should seek someone whose **values** align with yours.
4. Seek someone who offers a different perspective. You don't need to have just one mentor and it helps to have mentors who have different experiences, backgrounds or circles of influence to help you widen the potential for new ideas and solutions.
5. It's nice if you like your mentor but it's more important that you **respect** them.

Step 3 Creating the Right Mentoring Environment



1. Ensure you are in a space with no distractions. Phones are off, email is off, social media is off. If necessary, find a private space outside the office.
2. Allow sufficient time for your conversation, particularly if you are exploring a tough challenge. Leave both of your diaries free immediately after so that you're not watching the clock.
3. Agree in advance a clear agenda for your meetings. This should ideally be provided by you as the mentee so that it focuses on your pressing needs, but be open to your mentor challenging it.
4. Have measurable objectives to help you to measure progress – it might help to build them around your development objectives or business plan.
5. If you're meeting virtually close all other windows on your computer, turn cameras on if using video conferencing and have the image of your mentor as close to your camera as possible to maximise eye contact.

Step 4 The Ingredients of a Good Mentoring Relationship



1. A great mentoring relationship is one with a clarity of purpose to give direction, aligned with open minds to allow for new ideas to be absorbed.
2. The relationship is **driven by the mentee** who keeps focused and takes action, not just preparing for, attending and summarising the sessions.
3. Honesty and transparency from both sides is essential. This is not a battle of the egos with each party seeking to impress each other. Mistakes should be admitted so that they can be learned from and advice should not be sugar coated.
4. Bring with you a curiosity and a willingness to explore. There should be more questions than answers and always seek to dig deeper.
5. **Accountability** is key. You don't have to follow all of the advice offered to you but it's important that you consider it and be held accountable for any actions that you do commit to taking.

Step 5 Knowing When the Relationship Isn't Working



1. Set up a clear review process to look at whether both parties feel the relationship is working. If you have agreed a date to review, neither party faces the discomfort of suggesting it.
2. You can agree a date for the mentoring relationship to end (many corporate programmes will run for a defined period) but be open to continuing if both parties would like to.
3. Ask for your mentor's feedback on how they think the relationship is working and review expectations regularly. Be clear not just whether original objectives are being met but whether your needs or aspirations may have changed.
4. If your mentor is no longer the best person to help you, ask them who they know who you should approach or, even better, who they can refer you to.
5. Keep in touch with your mentor even after the formal relationship is over. Let them know that you still value their support and give them the pleasure of seeing you progress in your career and celebrate their role in that journey.

