

1. What is Mentoring?

Most of us can look back and identify certain special people who have been there for us at critical stages of our lives, helping us to acquire new skills and make the most of opportunities and challenges. The most successful entrepreneurs sought out a mentor (generally a successful peer) or someone they consider to be more experienced. Generally entrepreneurs focus on doing the work rather than creating a business - missing out on opportunities.

Mentoring is the process by which one person assists another to grow and learn in a safe and sympathetic relationship.

1. Why get involved in Business Mentoring?

For business owners, many find that their self-confidence and motivation increase through sharing one-on-one feedback. From those who took part in previous programmes, the key benefits were:

- Raising business horizons
- An external “warts and all” viewpoint.
- Greater self-awareness.
- A more focused approach to developing the business.
- Greater ideas and focus on the bigger picture.

The mentor acts as a sounding board for exploring new possibilities and new ways of approaching problems, with the opportunity to think through the direction of the business.

For mentors, the experience is challenging and stimulating and ultimately the benefits of mentoring are clearly two-way.

The vital key to success in mentoring is that each relationship is custom-built by the mentee and mentor to address their specific needs. As with most other things, the more you put into mentoring, the more you will get out of it. You will probably get most from the relationship if you think of yourself as an active learner.

This means you should:

- Be committed to the programme, as this is key to the success of the relationship.
- Take responsibility for managing the mentoring relationship and agree the amount of time you are willing to give and when.
- Σ • Do you want the sessions to be formal or informal and how would you like them to be structured, and outline the agenda you want to set.
- Keep mentoring appointments that you make.
- Give honest and timely feedback to the mentor.
- Listen and reflect on the feedback.
- Σ • Keep a diary to monitor your own progress by recording details of issues or situations that were significant or important to you.

The mentor will offer encouragement, ideas and opinions, and reinforce what you do well. They offer their time and skills voluntarily, so respect that.

A mentor will -

- Offer an impartial view on business issues
- Develop your problem solving skills
- Offer their experience, expertise and guidance
- Build confidence
- Widen your network of contact and opportunities

A mentor will not -

- Solve your problems for you
- Tell you what to do
- Offer business advice

2.How does it work?

The simplicity of this programme is the key to its success as it gives business access to a mentor on an individual basis, for an official maximum period of 12 months. This allows the business to share the mentor's expertise and also have the motivation, understanding and support for between 2-4 hours once a month, with regular contact throughout the month between meetings.

This allow business to access this information without monopolizing their time, just short sharp bursts of the mentor time to get them to where they want to go with the business.

Contacting the mentor for the first meeting and further consecutive meetings is the responsibility of the mentee/business.

Feedback is also required at regular intervals to the mentoring team, as they need to assess the ongoing progress of the relationship.

If for any reason difficulties arise with this it must be addressed with the mentoring team to assess the future outcome.

4. Getting Started**Skills**

Businesses will be matched with a mentor who has strengths and experience in the areas in which they have expressed a need.

Experience/Business Background

We will also take into account the industry sector and business background of the mentor. However, it is not crucial for the mentor to come from the same sector as the business.

Personality

The fist introductory meeting is a key part of the matching process and allows both parties to identify the chemistry that exists between them, also whether or not an ongoing relationship is likely to work.

At this stage there is a "no faults" opt out, should either party feel this is necessary and we will simply re-match at the earliest opportunity.