

# healthy *working*

*A workplace wellness update*

Tell me more about mentoring



## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring in the workplace happens when an experienced person builds a relationship with an individual who is new to the industry or field of study. The mentor helps the mentoree as they navigate a career path. The relationship can develop informally when two people meet through social circles or through more formal channels including mentoring

organizations and workplace programs. At some companies, new hires are paired with experienced employees and the process might include program schedules, goals and training for both the mentor and mentoree.

- Regardless of how the relationship develops, the overall job of the mentor remains the same. A mentor should provide:
- Expert knowledge in a specific industry or field of work
- Perspective on situations encountered by the mentoree in day-to-day activities
- Guidance with career choices
- Information and resources

## Mentoring: Leading The Way At Work

When Odysseus, King of Ithaca, went off to fight in the Trojan War, he requested his good friend Mentor to care for and educate his son. Today, a mentor is a trusted friend, counsellor or teacher—often all three—and mentoring has grown into an organized concept encouraged and endorsed in the workplace. The success of mentorship programs, not only at work but also in schools and communities, has led to a new crop of mentoring groups and networks. The result is that you'll now find prominent people—including the Chair of Google and a Brazilian soccer star —taking time out to mentor.

If you're looking for new challenges and increased job fulfillment, becoming a mentor can provide a feeling of accomplishment and worth. And, if you were lucky enough to have a dedicated mentor who helped your career, it might be time to give back and mentor a less experienced worker. Whether you've already made the decision to start mentoring or it's just a thought in the back of your mind, the information that follows can help you mould out a mentoring path that's right for you.

### A Win-Win Situation

A mentor is someone who shares their wealth of knowledge from years of experience. Recently, organizations have started to recognize the value of this information and senior employees are frequently asked to impart this knowledge on to new staff.

Developing a productive relationship with a mentor is key to many young workers looking to learn the ropes. A new employee in sales, for example, needs to build relationships with clients, keep on top of day-to-day activities, fit into the team and hit targets to become a contender in an extremely competitive field. Without support this balancing act can feel overwhelming. A mentor can not only help young employees improve on their skill set, but can also provide them with insights and strategies to deal with the ups and downs of the business.

Mentoring provides the mentor, mentoree and organization with an opportunity to reach goals, find personal fulfillment and gain success. You'll probably have your own reasons for choosing to invest your time to help out a novice employee. It may be a desire to pass on the knowledge you've built over many years to a new hire that shows signs of promise. Or you may have reached a sluggish point in your career and taking on a mentoree is a way to inject new life into the job.



These tips will help me support my staff



*Successful and effective mentoring isn't just the occasional lunch and "Hi, how are you doing" interaction. It's an investment of time and energy that requires commitment.*

Mentoring also translates into success for organizations. Time and money are invested into the hiring process, so ensuring employees are successful in their position is important. It also helps organizations run more efficiently. The fresh new face in the office might be full of fantastic ideas that can improve the bottom line, but the mentor can help that employee find ways to put those ideas into action.

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#### **Creating a Mentoring Culture**

Your company may have one or two experienced employees who recognize the importance of mentoring and take on the jobs themselves. Or maybe a few younger employees have been seeking out a mentor to help them acclimatize to their new position.

For this kind of environment to thrive there needs to be support and opportunity. Encourage a mentoring culture to blossom with the tips below.

**Set the rules.** Mentors (and mentorees) might have great business acumen or a PhD but don't know the first thing about what mentoring involves and how it can help them. Create a mentoring plan that includes goals, expectations, definitions of roles and responsibilities and progress measurement. Outline relative time commitments and intentions and don't forget to talk about the rewards that each will reap from the relationship.

**Connect mentoring to the big picture.** For a mentoring culture to truly thrive, it needs to be linked to your organization's mission and values. Make mentoring part of the hiring process so that each new employee is paired with a more experienced employee from the start.

**Communicate.** Whether it's mentor to mentor, mentoree to mentoree, mentor to mentoree or mentor to organization: the sharing of information, approaches and accomplishments are imperative to a successful mentoring culture. In a mentoring culture employees are encouraged to exchange insights and information. This chance for managers to discuss opportunities and prospects with their less experienced charges presents new ideas and opportunities and ultimately strengthens the organization. It also demonstrates to employees that the company values teamwork.

**Provide education and training.** Set up mentoring workshops in the organization or organize a 'mentoring kit' for more experienced workers. Promote peer learning and communication by setting up networking events with mentors and mentorees.

**Make it safe.** No relationship is failsafe, and mentoring is no different. Stumbles and obstacles are bound to present themselves, but mentors and mentorees should never feel forced to continue a mentoring partnership that isn't working out.

Though mentoring requires commitment of time and energy from all parties involved, studies show employees who mentor find it more rewarding and satisfying than many positions they've held. In fact, many people keep mentoring past retirement. While you have a wealth of information to share, the beauty of a good mentoring relationship is that you're also likely to learn new things—about different perspectives, ways of doing things and yourself—in the process.

## The Golden Rules

### A good mentor should:

**Provide perspective** about advancement opportunities, characteristics needed for success in the field, important issues facing the profession, personal frustrations and how to overcome them. An inexperienced employee who has stepped into a new world may only see one side of the story. A mentor can explain the beginning, middle and end, to help the mentoree make the right choices.

**Share information** about networking groups, resources and building skill sets. Teach the mentoree the ins and outs of the business. Mentors can also learn from the person they choose to mentor: newer employees may have a different perspective to contribute.

**Give feedback** on a regular basis. And not just mentor to mentoree. Both parties should discuss the progression of the relationship and where they want it to go. A mentor may be worried about pushing the individual too hard while the mentoree may want a greater challenge.

**Talk about expectations** and set goals for the mentoree. Setting a path for the relationship beforehand helps the mentoree focus on ways they can improve and become successful in their career. You may, for instance, challenge your mentoree to work on new skills and then share them at the next team meeting.

If you have any questions about this topic, or if you wish to discuss a personal situation you may be experiencing, we invite you to contact your JCP. All contact between you and your JCP is completely confidential.

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