

FREE
eChapter

"A clear, pragmatic and accessible guide for mentors."
Professor David Clutterbuck, author, speaker, and co-founder
of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council

The Mentoring Manual



Your step by step guide
to being a better mentor

JULIE STARR

It's good to **SHARE!**

You can use this free eChapter on your website or in your blog. You can post it on Facebook, Tweet about it or email it. The choice is yours and it's free to use.



The Mentoring Manual

Copyright Pearson Education LTD 2014 (print and electronic)

Being a mentor is a big responsibility.

But with *The Mentoring Manual*,
getting it right is easy.

"A clear, pragmatic and accessible guide for mentors."
Professor David Clutterbuck, author, speaker, and co-founder
of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council

The Mentoring Manual



Your step by step guide
to being a better mentor

JULIE STARR

As a mentor you must be many things: role model, expert, advocate, cheerleader, enforcer and friend.

Based on methods developed - and proven – in business, this highly practical book will show you how mentoring works, take you step-by-step through everything you need to know and do, and show you how both parties can get the best from the relationship.

- Understand what mentoring really is and how to do it well
- Feel fully confident in your ability to be a great mentor
- Develop key skills like listening, collaboration and coaching
- Help your mentee feel more knowledgeable, confident and valued
- Pass on your skills, experience and expertise to colleagues and contacts

Get the most from mentoring: help your mentee, develop your skills and make a positive difference

**Available to buy now in eBook or print
at your favourite bookshop.**

Introduction

This book offers you a comprehensive guide to support your thinking as a mentor, as well as helping you decide what to do and how to do it. From preparing to mentor someone, to the ultimate completion of the relationship, you will find explanation, advice and 'how-to' type guidance to help you embark upon and maintain a confident course. Chapters 1 to 4 explain what mentoring is and identify the principles that define and shape the distinct nature of the role. Chapter 5 offers you a practical process to support and guide you in your role as mentor, so if you're keen to get started, then perhaps check that out early on. You can then return to the earlier chapters to build your awareness and deepen your understanding. Chapter 6 will give you some examples of pitfalls to watch out for along the way. If you want an overview of the key messages in all of the chapters, you'll find that in Chapter 7.

A mentor provides support by offering information, advice and assistance in a way that empowers the mentee

Mentoring is a distinct relationship where one person (the mentor) supports the learning, development and progress of another person (the mentee). A mentor provides support by offering information, advice and assistance in a way that empowers the mentee. Many of us are familiar with the term mentoring,

INTRODUCTION

but I wonder how often we overlook its true potential as something we might explore for ourselves. For example, did you know that it's very likely you already have relationships in which you adopt the role of a mentor? Or that to become a great mentor you already have much of the ability you need? So why not hone these existing skills to become sharper and more effective?

Mentoring is a rich source of self-learning and personal growth. It offers you the opportunity to make a tangible difference to the success of others. This might be to help increase their confidence or ability, or support their career success. When our enjoyment comes from the difference we make to other people, mentoring becomes a living definition of the term 'win-win'.

This book will help you answer the following questions:

- What is mentoring and how is it distinct from other types of relationship?
- What does becoming a better mentor mean to you, e.g. what are the benefits?
- What areas do you need to focus on to become a better mentor, e.g. behaviours, principles and process?
- How can you start practising these principles right away?
- What are your unseen 'barriers' or 'blocks' to effective mentoring, e.g. beliefs, behaviours or circumstances? How can you overcome them?

First let's take a quick look at how you can get the most from the book.

The mentoring 'journey'

A mentoring relationship can be likened to the idea of a journey, i.e. an experience where you set out to go somewhere, travel for a while, overcome hazards and diversions, and ultimately reach somewhere else. Throughout the book, you will notice journey-type language to illustrate this: 'navigate', 'path', 'destination', etc. Journeys are a constant part of our lives, so this instinctive, familiar sense of physical travel can help us to relate to the more

interpretative experience of mentoring. Every now and then I'll use the journey metaphor more specifically and you might like to visualise your own imagery to complement this. For now, let's start with equipping yourself for travel.

A book that works in collaboration with you

This book is based on three main ideas. If you allow these ideas to guide your mentoring journey, then you will be naturally inclined to accept, adapt and incorporate concepts in ways that benefit you. While you don't have to live the rest of your life by these concepts, it will help if you accept them for now, at least on a logical level, e.g. 'I understand the sense of that and I can agree with it'.

Idea One: Some things can be taught and others must be learned

The basis for the 'teaching' element of this book comes from what I've learned from professionally coaching and mentoring others. Your part in this is to work with the ideas and information in ways that are practical for you. That means keeping reading and working with the ideas, trying out the exercises and checklists, etc. Ultimately, you will decide what you agree or disagree with in a way that works for you.

Idea Two: While all journeys benefit from a sense of destination and purpose, no great adventure was ever planned in detail

It helps to have an open mind about what mentoring might be for you and what you might ultimately do with this topic. For example, you might feel that mentoring is something you should know more about so that you can talk confidently about it. Or perhaps you are interested for professional reasons and have little interest in how it relates to relationships outside of work. Whatever your motivations for picking up the book, you will achieve more if you are willing to expand and adapt them along the way. If you imagine that you simply need to acquire

INTRODUCTION

knowledge, or pick up some handy hints and tips, then you are likely to do only that. However, if you acknowledge that this topic is one you are willing to look into with an open mind, you might reveal more about yourself than you expected.

Idea Three: Anything worth having is worth working for

In a world where ‘quick and easy’ seems to be on offer everywhere, the universal truth remains that anything in your life of value to you will require effort to acquire, maintain or enhance. What you value is up to you, e.g. a great car, your favourite people or your health. Sometimes we value something more because of our endeavours to obtain it; conversely, we might value something less simply because it has felt ‘too easy’. This is neither right nor wrong, just part of being human.

As you read, sometimes you will be required to do something extra, do something differently or consider something from another perspective. It is our mind’s natural tendency to want to stay in control, perhaps by saying ‘Yes, I know that already’ or ‘That’s awkward so I’ll ignore it’ or ‘Yes, I should do that but I’ll do it when I have more time’. Unfortunately this tendency directly impairs our ability to enquire, learn and create positive change. As author Neal Donald Walsch says:

Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.

Simply, what is required is that you stay aware of these limiting tendencies or beliefs while you are reading. For example, if you notice that you’re enjoying reading the ideas but skipping the exercises, perhaps go back and try one of the exercises that feels ‘less easy’. It’s quite possible that you will gain as much from a ten-minute exercise as an hour spent reading the book. So please allow the three concepts to help you to benefit as you read and know that you can, of course, return to or withdraw from them at any point. Think of them as preparation for your journey: a useful map to guide and support you, but one that you can put back in your pocket when you feel comfortable to do that.

It's quite possible that you will gain as much from a ten-minute exercise as an hour spent reading the book

No jacket required

I will often talk to you as though you already are a manager and/or mentor. Please know that you do not have to be a mentor or a manager to benefit from the ideas in this book. If you are in any situation where helping others to learn, grow and develop would really help (them or you), I'm confident that this book has something to offer. If you are mentoring as part of a mentoring scheme, e.g. run by your organisation or company, please let the book add to the existing principles and guidance you already have available to you.

As you read, you'll notice bite-sized sections that support your practice and learning. When you use them, these items will help you to increase both your self-awareness and your ability to mentor others. These sections comprise the following.

Reflection questions



These are a series of questions to help you link ideas specifically to your own situation and reflect on them to gain personal insight. You can write down your answers, speak them out loud, or just pause and think them through. The important thing to remember is that the questions are intended to provoke thought and action. By pausing and attending to the questions, you're letting the book go to work for you.

Checklists



These are quick summaries of points to confirm your understanding and also serve as memory joggers for future reference – for example, to remind you of things you can do to build respect in the relationship, or how you'll know you've had a constructive first session.

Story Teller



These are fictional examples to illustrate a principle or idea and use imaginary situations and people. They are inspired by my own work in this area, and are sometimes real situations combined to use features of both/all of them. Here I am also demonstrating a key technique you can use to mentor others, namely to tell stories from your own experience.

Exercise



At intervals, you'll be asked to try an approach or routine in a situation, such as an everyday conversation. This is where you will begin to make progress on your ability to mentor others more effectively. Some exercises will be straightforward and help you confirm your understanding, while others will challenge you to do something a little further from your comfort zone.

Hints and tips



These tips are a quick visual reminder of hints or advice to remind you of key points – for example, what to remember during conversations with your mentee, or how to balance talking with listening. Like the rest of the inserts, they are a quick visual aid that you can go back to at any time.

Mentor's toolkit: available online



To help you in your everyday mentoring, I have compiled downloadable content on my website at www.starrconsulting.co.uk. Here you will find documents to support your effectiveness as a mentor, including an overview of mentoring to give to someone you are preparing to mentor, and an agenda for a first meeting. This content is free to use as part of your personal practice and I request that you do not charge others for it.

Chapter summary

Becoming an effective mentor requires us to stay as engaged in our own development and learning as we hope the people we intend to mentor will. As in life, you will get out of this book what you put into it and that's a good thing, because it gives you the direct ability to influence your own results, success and enjoyment. You already have existing ability and potential to be a great mentor for others – all you need to do is explore and build on that.

Chapter 1

**I worked with Laurence Olivier some years ago.
He was a great mentor.**

Anthony Hopkins, actor

What is mentoring? And what is it not?

In this chapter:

- Gain a clearer sense of what a mentor is.
- Learn how mentoring is distinct from any other support relationship.
- Consider examples of mentors from stories and real life to support your understanding of the role.
- Discover the typical benefits of mentoring, both for individuals and for organisations.
- Understand when mentoring might not be the best option for a situation.

What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who takes on the role of a trusted adviser, supporter, teacher and wise counsel to another person. A mentor adopts a primarily selfless role in supporting the learning, development and ultimate success of another person. By 'primarily selfless' I mean that while as a mentor you will often benefit in some way from the relationship, these benefits are usually indirect and not your main motivation for mentoring someone. You might easily enjoy your mentoring sessions and gain skills, awareness and insight from doing that. However, mentoring is most effective when focused clearly on the needs, goals and challenges of the person you are mentoring – often referred to as the 'mentee'.

As old as Homer's *Odyssey*

Mentoring can often be defined by the nature and intention of a relationship. The term 'mentor' has its roots in Greek mythology and indicates a relationship of support, help and guidance given from a wise elder to a younger, less experienced person. This idea of 'passing down wisdom' has been embedded in cultures for thousands of years and can be seen in relationships both inside and outside the workplace. The consistent features of mentor relationships distinguish an archetype for the role. By archetype, I mean typical models or examples of the role which can inform our understanding. While situations and appearances may vary, the essential qualities remain. Consider the fictional teacher Miss Jean Brodie offering wise counsel to her school girls, or *The X Factor* judges mentoring their performers – can you see common features in those relationships? From community mentors working with youth, to business mentoring, young offender programmes or apprenticeships in skilled trades, the ancient archetype of a mentor is brought to life all around us.

Indeed, the mentor archetype is so constantly present in our lives that its powerful principles can remain unseen. For example, the principle that by forming an open, trusting relationship with someone, we create a channel through which support, help and learning can happen is something we have all experienced. Think back: did you sometimes listen to the advice of your grandparents more readily than that of your parents? Or was there someone else you might say that about? Most of us can recall someone we might now recognise was a mentor for us in the past.

Reflection Questions



Spot your own mentors

Use the following Reflection Questions to identify relationships you had/have that might have been mentoring.

- Q. Thinking about your childhood and growing up, who had a positive influence on how you see the world?

- Q. In your youth, was there a particular teacher, relation or friend who you would credit with having taught you lessons in life you are grateful for?
- Q. During your career, who has had a positive influence on how you operate professionally?
- Q. Who would you generally credit as being your mentors in life?
- Q. What relationships do you have right now that appear to fit the criteria of mentorship, e.g. someone you respect, someone you learn from, a relationship that feels 'personal' in a positive way?

Why might you want to be a mentor?

There are countless benefits available in becoming a mentor, many unforeseen and unexpected. From my experience, mentoring people can be challenging, fulfilling, gratifying, annoying, frustrating, impossible and fun – all in the same relationship! Reasons that you might consider mentoring others include:

- to affirm or confirm the value of your experience by exploring and sharing that with someone else, e.g. 'Here's what I've learned'
- to further clarify what you know, by distilling and simplifying your experience and learning, e.g. 'Here's what leadership/selling/success is really about'
- to help another person grow and succeed, and gain a sense of satisfaction from doing that
- to be challenged in a positive way. For example, to adapt your ideas or views to someone else's situations, or to develop greater empathy
- to have a sense of 'giving something back', perhaps by sharing experience gained over your career so far
- to increase your focus on developing others, as a useful addition to your managing skills. For example, as a mentor

you have no line management responsibility for the person you are mentoring, therefore you tend to focus more on the person and less on their specific tasks.

Mentoring people can be challenging, fulfilling, gratifying, annoying, frustrating, impossible and fun

Why might someone want a mentor?

Reasons for seeking a mentor are both personal and professional. An individual may want a mentor for one or more of these reasons:

- They feel they lack experience, contacts or awareness in a specific area or situation, e.g. 'I need to understand business start-ups, or how my organisation works, or to raise my profile in the business'.
- They feel something is 'missing' from what they know, what they do or how they think, and they want to learn from someone they feel can help them 'bridge a gap'.
- They want to mature and develop themselves generally, e.g. to be able to operate in a pressurised work environment or stay balanced and self-confident.
- They have reached some kind of barrier or 'roadblock' and feel they need a more individualised relationship with someone who has direct experience in their type of situation.
- They feel they would benefit from an open, trusting relationship with someone they can 'look up to' or at least respect for what they have experienced and learned during their career.

How did the idea of the mentor evolve?

The original 'Mentor' appeared in Homer's book *The Odyssey*, as an old and trusted friend of Odysseus. As he left to go to war, Odysseus entrusted Mentor with the care of his son, Telemachus.

Later, the goddess Athena took on the appearance of Mentor and used the disguise to give advice and practical guidance to both Odysseus and his son. Athena knew that because they had such trust and respect for Mentor, they would follow her advice more easily. Since then the idea of a mentoring role has appeared in many stories and fables, including those portrayed in novels, the theatre and film. Traditionally, the mentor archetype includes attributes of tutorship, learning and sometimes even magic or transformation.

When we attempt to define the mentor role only by behaviour, we can get confused by potential contradictions. For example, if a mentor is supposed to give advice, does that mean they do not help another person to think for themselves, perhaps by asking 'What are your options here?' or 'What do you want to do?' Or, if a mentor is supposed to provide assistance, how much help is too much help?

It's useful to explore the concept of a mentor by returning to the original archetype: the source of the concept can give you a stronger sense of what the role might mean for you. When your understanding is guided by the original concept, such as 'a mentor shares wisdom to foster learning and progress', then 'how' you express that becomes a question of personal choice. It might include giving clear advice, or it may be expressed by telling stories or even jokes. In Chapter 3, we will examine further principles from the original mentor archetype to show how they can help guide our choices in situations.

Reflection Questions



Where are you already a mentor?

Use the following Reflection Questions to identify current relationships where you might be already expressing the characteristics of a mentor.

- Q. Outside of your immediate family, e.g. your partner, children, etc., what relationships are you aware of where someone values your views and opinions and can often be influenced by those?

Q. How much does this person appear to respect you, or even look up to you?

Q. Think about how you relate to them, e.g. how much affinity or benevolence (generosity) do you feel towards them?

Where your answers to the second two questions confirm the presence of respect and benevolence, it's likely you are expressing mentoring principles in the relationship. However, if your responses to the second two questions are in disagreement, then the relationship is less likely to be a mentoring type of relationship.

Translating fable to fact

Even though our inspiration for the mentor archetype is mythical, the links to a modern-day mentor relationship are fairly straightforward:

- The person being mentored (the mentee) has something that they desire or want to achieve – perhaps to gain something, such as learning, confidence or a sense of clarity, or reach an external goal such as promotion or financial reward.
- A mentor has knowledge, experience and perhaps opinion/insight in areas of value to the mentee, e.g. business start-ups, running teams or simply career success.
- A mentor has a level of maturity around a topic that enables them to offer views and opinions based on understanding. For example, they have run various teams, during times of ease and difficulty, which enables them to comment upon principles of managing teams effectively.

To remind you of the essential qualities of a mentor, and mentor relationships, check Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Mentor–mentee relationships in the movies

| Mentor | Mentee | Source |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Saul Berenson | Carrie Mathison | <i>Homeland</i> |
| Karen Brady | The contestants | <i>The Apprentice</i> |
| Professor Dumbledore | Harry Potter | <i>Harry Potter</i> |
| Arthur Fonzarelli | Richie Cunningham | <i>Happy Days</i> |
| Gandalf | Frodo Baggins | <i>Lord of the Rings</i> |
| Hagrid | Harry Potter | <i>Harry Potter</i> |
| Tom Jones | The contestants | <i>The Voice</i> |
| Mister Miyagi | Daniel | <i>The Karate Kid</i> |
| Ser Jorah Mormont | Daenerys Targaryen | <i>Game of Thrones</i> |
| Obi-Wan Kenobi | Luke Skywalker | <i>Star Wars</i> |
| Mary Poppins | Jane and Michael Banks | <i>Mary Poppins</i> |
| Proximo | Maximus Decimus Meridius | <i>Gladiator</i> |
| Nicole Scherzinger | The contestants | <i>The X Factor</i> |
| Oprah Winfrey | Women in general | <i>The Oprah Winfrey Show</i> |
| Willy Wonka | Charlie Bucket | <i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> |

Reflection Questions



Confirm progress

Use the following Reflection Questions to increase your personal sense of what it means to be a mentor.

Q. What do the previous mentor characters seem to have in common?



- Q. Many of the mentors illustrated have some element of 'mystery' or 'dubious past'. How could this be relevant for a mentor now, i.e. why is it a useful idea to consider?
- Q. What questions do you have that you still need to answer?

When you're mature enough, you're old enough

Some aspects of the ancient archetype are less practical than others and these have been relaxed over time. For example, being older than a mentee by one or more generations is now less a clear attribute of a mentor than experience, awareness or skill. This is possibly because age does not assure wisdom, nor does youth always indicate a lack of it. There is no such thing as the 'optimum age for a mentor', nor is there a minimum number of years' seniority between a mentor and their mentee. While it is logical to assume becoming experienced takes time (meaning that a mentor is likely to be older), what actually qualifies you as a mentor might be more about life experience, relevant knowledge or general maturity.

Age does not assure wisdom, nor does youth always indicate a lack of it

Checklist

Features of a modern-day mentor



Using the original mentor archetype as a base, we can assume that a mentor role includes the following:

- ✓ A relationship where one person (the mentee) is learning from another (the mentor).

- ✓ The mentor is appropriate to support an individual because the mentor has knowledge, skills or experience that are relevant to that person's situations and goals.
- ✓ The mentor has a series of conversations with their mentee that usefully relate to the mentee's situations and goals.
- ✓ The mentor feels a degree of benevolence towards the mentee – they would like to see them succeed.
- ✓ The mentor is someone whom the mentee respects in a way that enables them to be influenced by them, i.e. it is not necessary for the mentee to 'like' the mentor.
- ✓ The mentee is the person who aims to be developed or to gain most directly from the relationship.
- ✓ While the relationship has no fixed duration, there may be a period of time over which the relationship is most relevant and therefore most active.

How do organisations use mentoring?

Mentoring has been used for many years to mature and develop individuals, and the use of mentoring continues to grow. By 2013, according to Adecco Employment Agency, 79 per cent of workplaces offered internal mentoring schemes. Also, in the 2013 CIPD (The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) Learning and Talent Development Survey, mentoring is listed by organisations as one of their top missing leadership skills. Clearly, while organisations are actively mentoring, they are also indicating a desire to get better at that.

Mentoring is seen as a way of nurturing talent and also a way to develop the skills of the people who are mentoring others. Here are just a few of the reasons why organisations encourage mentoring:

- to develop people in specific areas, e.g. leadership, working cross-culturally, commercial acumen, etc.

- to support people new to a role or transitioning to a new situation
- to nurture and foster talent, e.g. broaden people's knowledge and understanding, help to mature more junior professionals
- to groom/position individuals to succeed key people and so reduce the risk of loss of those people (as part of a succession-planning process)
- to help individuals through a challenging period, e.g. returning to work after extended absence
- to provide individuals with support in the absence of a line manager, e.g. when they are working in a resource pool
- to provide development and learning for individuals in the absence of other options, e.g. attendance on costly training courses, executive coaching, etc.

Use of mentoring schemes

Mentoring can be used in isolated situations for specific individuals, e.g. individuals thought to be high potential and in need of development. In addition, some organisations build mentoring schemes that involve groups of mentors operating from a set of agreed principles and processes. For further discussion of mentoring schemes, see Chapter 5, 'A process to support your journey'.

An individual may be assigned a mentor from inside or outside their organisation. For example, where the organisation seeks to give someone experience of a specific kind, or broaden someone's view of how the business operates, they may match them to someone inside their organisation. Where they want to grow someone's industry knowledge, they might seek a seasoned professional outside of the company network, perhaps sourcing that mentor through their network of contacts, a mentoring agency, or a professional body that supports mentoring. One example of this is the mentor programme offered by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), where developing engineers are matched to volunteer mentors outside of their organisation (see www.imeche.org for more details).

Story Teller

Using internal and external mentoring to promote the employer brand

A high-street clothes retailer wanted to demonstrate their commitment to developing staff and provide them with a clearer sense of career progression. They also wanted to develop their ability to keep pace with the changing nature of high-street retailing, e.g. customer expectations, social trends, technology, etc. An internal mentoring scheme was established to support and develop new and recently joined managers to help them 'survive and thrive' during a potentially tough initial 18-month period. Managers who had longer service were also considered for the internal mentoring scheme but had the added potential to be assigned an external mentor instead.

External mentors were identified from both within the retail sector and outside of it. For example, mentors were found from mobile phone retailers, restaurant chains and a hotel group. This mentoring by professionals outside of the company helped the managers to broaden their outlook and also to challenge their thinking about their approach to business, innovations in the marketplace, the customer experience, etc.

The combination of methods was monitored to understand the benefits of both options (mentoring by people who were internal and external to the company). In this way, over time the retailer was able to increase the effectiveness of the 'matching' process, i.e. how to decide if a manager would benefit more from an external mentor or one from inside the company instead.

How does mentoring compare with coaching, training and consultancy?

The potential similarities between coaching, training and consultancy demand that we reflect more generally to decide the relative differences of each. Table 1.2 indicates some initial features of the various activities to illustrate some obvious and simple differences.

Table 1.2 Mentoring, coaching, training, consultancy: the differences

| Activity | Typical features and attributes | Who is expected to have responsibility for learning, development and change? |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Mentoring | <p>Delivered by someone with a relevant set of skills, experience and perspectives, e.g. 'I am a working mum involved in education for ten years and three of those have been spent in Asia.'</p> <p>The mentor is mostly interested in the person and the content of the conversations, whereas coaches and trainers will additionally focus on the process of learning.</p> | <p>The mentee is expected to be responsible for their own learning; however, the mentor may also take on some secondary sense of responsibility for that. This shared sense of responsibility is often dependent on the nature of the individual mentor, e.g. a willingness to become involved.</p> <p>The mentor will not normally be held accountable in any way for the mentee's results, but will often receive feedback on their effectiveness, e.g. as part of a company-wide Mentor Scheme.</p> |
| Coaching | <p>Delivered by someone with training in how to coach others, e.g. to use skills of listening, questioning and facilitation to assist people to think and act for themselves. A coach focuses on the process of coaching conversations, in addition to the person and their situations.</p> | <p>The person being coached (the coachee) is encouraged to be responsible for their own learning. However, the coach will normally be evaluated on their effectiveness, e.g. how skilled are they at facilitating change? So while the coach is not responsible, they may be wise to feel accountable.</p> |

WHAT IS MENTORING? AND WHAT IS IT NOT?

| | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| Training | <p>Delivered to individuals and groups by someone with the ability to deliver training and also with theory and knowledge of the topic on which they are delivering training, e.g. presentation skills, project management, interviewing skills, etc. Effective trainers understand different approaches to encouraging learning/development and will be creative with those – for example, blending group work with individual exercises, or knowing how to maintain energy, engagement and interest.</p> | <p>Responsibility for the transfer of learning begins with the trainer, who is expected to design and deliver effective training. This responsibility later becomes shared with the learner as they are expected to engage with the training process, e.g. attend classes, do follow-up work, etc.</p> <p>A trainer will often be judged on their ability to deliver training that affects a person's learning and ability, plus hopefully their behaviours or behavioural style.</p> |
| Consultancy | <p>Consultancy services are normally delivered by someone who has relevant knowledge and experience, plus structured methods/tools for improving business practices – for example, knowledge of implementing safety within a construction environment, or of improving productivity, costs or business results. Their involvement will often be targeted at situations, rather than people, and they will endeavour to maintain an impartial, detached view, e.g. 'What's the best overall solution here?'</p> | <p>The consultant is regularly judged on their ability to effect improvement and change and so needs to maintain a sense of responsibility (and accountability) for the results of their involvement.</p> <p>However, the consultant's success in encouraging change relates directly to their ability to engage people or to create a shared sense of the situation with the people they are working with – for example, they must encourage the client and the client teams to buy-into or engage with, any proposed approach.</p> |

Blending theory with reality

Organisations might use mentoring where their resources do not stretch to another solution, e.g. training and consultancy. In this case, we may find ourselves straying from the traditional understanding of a mentor role, i.e. to fulfil the mentee's actual needs. For example, we may help rehearse a mentee through a presentation and 'teach' them presentation skills, because if we didn't, no one else would. In any potential 'situational dilemma' it is important that the mentor operates from a clear set of principles that helps guide their decisions. In the next chapter, 'What's different about a mentoring relationship?', we will look more closely at the principles and values from which a mentor operates.

When does mentoring become coaching or managing?

Where the organisation has a specific agenda for the mentoring that is not something that both the mentor and the mentee are engaged in, this can dilute the integrity of the mentor role. By 'integrity' I mean the pure (and powerful) intentions of the role, arising from the simple principles that underpin it. Perhaps the organisation would like the mentor to improve the performance of the mentee. This revised role, where the mentor is given objectives related to performance and results, leans more towards the intentions of managing or coaching. This is because responsibility and implied accountability have shifted (from the mentee to the mentor). Remember also that a mentor is not responsible or accountable for the performance of an individual – this is something a manager is focused on.

A mentor is not responsible or accountable for the performance of an individual

Story Teller**Adapting the mentor role can be a valid response to the needs of the individual and the organisation**

An IT company employed software engineers to work on projects to help build or adapt software applications. The engineers were assigned to work as part of a project team, typically for a six-month period, and then they moved to a different project and team. During a project, an engineer's 'manager' was the manager of the project they were assigned to. This Project Manager was interested only in the engineer's performance during the project (because that's what the Project Manager was accountable for). The engineers had no manager in the traditional sense, e.g. someone who would focus on their performance over time, discuss their development needs, etc.

The engineers needed additional support that included a focus on their long-term performance and their career. They also needed someone they could go to if they were having issues that they were unable to discuss with the Project Manager (such as a concern over career options, or training needs). In response, the IT company created a hybrid mentor role, i.e. a modified version of the role to meet the engineers' needs. Taking the original principles of the mentor role, they adapted it. For example:

- They encouraged mentoring conversations to focus on specific topics, such as career development or the need to identify training and development needs.
- They specified the duration of a mentor's involvement as a minimum of 18 months, to encourage a longer-term relationship to develop.
- They requested that mentoring conversations occurred at least once every 6–8 weeks to ensure that mentees felt they had access to regular support.



Mentees (the engineers) were still responsible for their own learning; however, the mentors were expected to raise certain topics in support of their on-going performance and development.

It was important to scope both the Project Manager's and the mentor's role carefully, to assign clear involvement and accountability. For example:

- The mentor did not conduct the engineer's annual appraisal conversation, at which they would receive feedback, be given a performance rating and also potentially receive a bonus.
- The mentor did contribute towards the appraisal conversation, by summarising (in a document) the feedback they had previously offered their mentee as part of their regular conversations.
- The mentor's documented feedback was shared first with the mentee (the engineer) and later the panel of two/three Project Managers assigned to conduct their appraisal conversation. This gave the mentee time to respond to the feedback, e.g. understand or challenge messages as appropriate.

While this is not a typical or 'authentic' use of the mentor role, it is justified as a valid response to the needs of the organisation and the individuals who work there.

Be clear about how and why you have reshaped the mentor role

As shown in the previous story, a dilution or reshaping of a 'pure' mentor's role can be appropriate in some situations. Here are some of the ways of creating a positive sense of balance to explain and even promote the need for a revised approach:

- Explain the nature and intentions of the role openly to all parties: the mentor, the mentee, the mentee's manager, etc.

- Communicate the rationale for the revised approach, such as:
 - ♦ ‘We need to accelerate people’s development in some areas critical to our overall plan (such as safety, data protection, innovation, etc.).’
- Consider a more accurate name for the role, e.g. ‘coach mentor’ or ‘manager coach’.

Reshaping the mentor role can sometimes be a mistake

Reshaping the mentor role to accommodate additional needs and opportunities can seem like a simple and straightforward thing to do, e.g. ‘Let’s get the training function to ask the mentor what courses their mentee should go on.’ However, with every adaptation of the mentor role comes some kind of compromise for that role. For example, when we ask the mentor what training they think their mentee needs, we also:

- reduce their impartiality (as they must ‘judge’ their mentee)
- give them subtle responsibility for the mentee’s learning
- create a potential perception with a mentee of inequality, e.g. ‘They are deciding something for me’ or ‘They have power over me.’

With every adaptation of the mentor role comes some kind of compromise for that role

Here are situations where it is less appropriate to corrupt the integrity of the role, for instance by adding in ‘manager type’ of involvement and responsibility:

- where the justification for this is that the mentee’s current manager lacks the time, skills or motivation to focus on someone’s performance and development
- where it has not been made clear to all parties that this will happen, i.e. the mentee or manager is unaware of this
- where the mentor does not have the time or skills to adapt their focus, e.g. to support someone’s performance or delivery

- where the implications of doing this have not been properly explored, e.g. 'If the mentor decides someone's performance-related bonus – how does that impact openness in the conversations?'

When is mentoring not the best option?

Sometimes, mentoring is not the best solution, depending on the situation and what's needed. Table 1.3 illustrates the main considerations in a situation to help you judge which intervention (mentoring, coaching, consultancy, etc.) will work best.

Table 1.3 Different options for different situations

| Situation | Requirements/ Objectives | Recommendation |
|--|---|---|
| An experienced team of 12 people has returned employee opinion surveys to indicate a lack of satisfaction in leadership generally. Further analysis indicates a senior manager is the target for individual criticism. The most obvious cause appears to be a lack of appropriately skilled leadership and/or burnout. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand and tackle the main issues creating the poor feedback. • To support the individual to shift the perception of their leadership style. • To increase satisfaction and engagement survey results. • To retain key members of the team. | <p>Coaching by an external seems to fit most directly as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the manager probably needs support within a structured process, e.g. one that is reviewed by HR • there is a need to target specific skills, e.g. communication, delegation • maintaining openness, trust and an objective/impartial viewpoint is essential and most easily indicated by use of an external coach. |

WHAT IS MENTORING? AND WHAT IS IT NOT?

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>A fairly confident Sales Manager is struggling to present effectively to groups – talks in too much detail, overruns, etc. Investigation shows a lack of awareness, e.g. the principles of presenting effectively.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have the Sales Manager operate from principles of effective presentations. • To increase the impact and efficiency of these sessions. • To improve both the perception of the board and the success of the individual. | <p>Appears to be most directly related to a training need. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual has a knowledge gap, e.g. presentation principles. • They would probably benefit from a 'shared' learning experience, i.e. with a group of people who also need to learn. • Once the individual has the knowledge, they can begin using it, after which the need can be reassessed. |
| <p>A new hire is appointed as the fourth Finance Director (FD) in 20 months after the previous FD quit suddenly. The role has internally become known as 'the poison chalice' to indicate the difficult nature of the role and complex reporting lines and organisational structure.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid the financial risks created by frequent turnover of staff in this role. • To support the individual to be successful, e.g. reduce the pressure upon them. • To shift poor perception of the role, both internally and externally. | <p>A consultancy-type intervention appears most likely as a first step where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role appears to have difficulties relating to structure and process, rather than people • by engaging services of an external specialist it communicates a clear intention to create change (to the rest of the organisation) • the situation appears to demand structured analysis, e.g. Is the organisational structure supporting someone to be effective? |



| Situation | Requirements/ Objectives | Recommendation |
|---|--|--|
| A newly qualified teacher (NQT) has just joined a large, inner-city secondary school where the normal challenges of teaching 11–16 year olds are increased by issues of a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, religion and cultures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the NQT as they transition into a full-time teaching role, e.g. deal with day-to-day issues as they happen and learn principles to help guide them in situations. • To benefit from the wisdom and insight of someone with much greater experience of the distinct challenges of that particular school. | <p>There appears a clear need for mentoring, when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the individual doesn't need further theory (they have just qualified) so training seems less relevant • the individual has less practical knowledge or awareness to draw upon (and needs to access and develop that quickly) • they will benefit from having a one-to-one relationship of personal support during what might be a tough or challenging period. |

Merge theory with your own experience

By now you'll notice some attributes of mentoring are simple to distinguish, for instance it's a one-on-one relationship focused on the development needs of a less-experienced person. You'll also notice that other principles are less clear-cut, e.g. 'What does 'help' mean in the context of a mentor relationship?' or 'How involved should I be in a mentee's situations?'

As we continue I will encourage you to use principles to consider these questions in combination with your situations. For example, you might decide that for your mentee, some types of 'helping' are appropriate, such as giving them a book on how to do well at job interviews. However, when you consider the principle that they need to learn to act for themselves, you might decide that other types of 'help' are inappropriate, e.g. offering to help write their CV for them. I'll be offering principles for you

to combine with your own situations and experience to help you stay clear as to what's right for you as a mentor.

Chapter summary

Mentoring is a distinct relationship where one person (the mentor) supports the learning, development and progress of another person (the mentee). The mentor gives support by providing information, advice and assistance in a way that empowers the mentee. An effective mentor is able to stay flexible to the needs of the mentee in order to offer the appropriate types of assistance in a particular situation. For example, sometimes they are required to be a 'wise guide' and draw upon their own experiences to offer insight gained from their own journey. Sometimes the mentor adopts a more detached posture to act as a facilitator who helps the mentee to think and decide for themselves.

The mentor is engaged in the potential of the mentee to progress and be successful, and will often feel a sense of benevolence towards them. However, the mentor's role must remain unattached to a specific agenda or results, as ultimate responsibility for learning, progress and outcomes rests with the mentee.



Julie's books aim to de-mystify mentoring and coaching, making both accessible to anyone and everyone. Her aim is to encourage coaching and mentoring behaviours to become normal, natural and everyday. Behaviours like listening with an effective attention, or offering an observation before a solution. Behaviours that suggest we see the value in someone else's process of personal enquiry - and trust in the ultimate benefits of that.

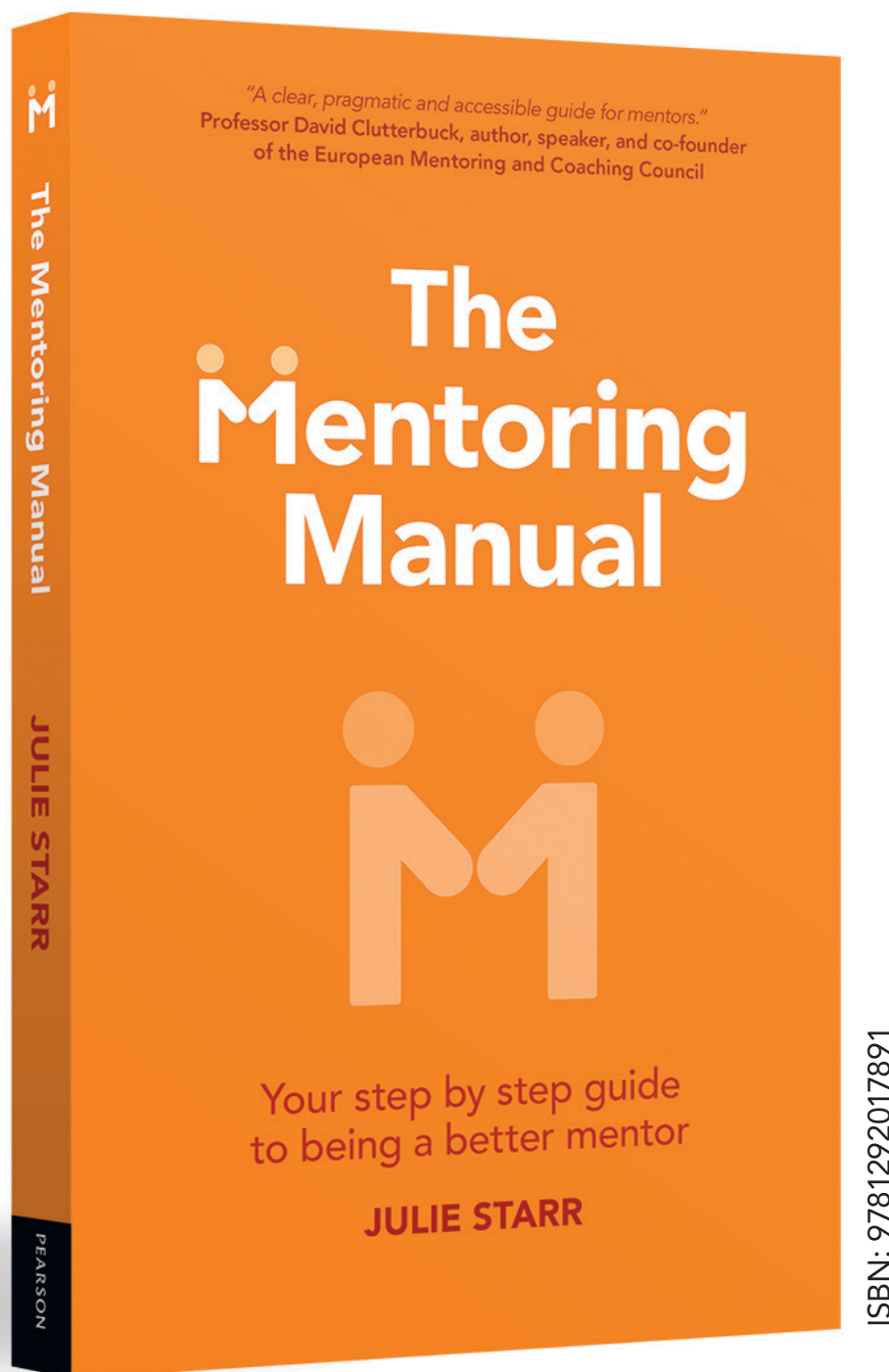
"A breath of fresh air compared with many books on coaching and mentoring. The process of mentoring and the potential pitfalls are presented in a clear and challenging way."

David Megginson, Emeritus Professor of HRD, Sheffield Hallam University

"A clear, pragmatic and accessible guide for mentors."

Professor David Clutterbuck, author, speaker, and co-founder of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council

Available to buy **NOW** from
your favourite bookshop



Like us on Facebook for updates,
exclusives and the latest news
www.facebook.com/pearsonbusiness