

## FIRST SESSION

### TOP TIPS FOR YOUR FIRST MENTORING SESSION

Hopefully you will now be in the process of setting up your first contact meeting with your mentor/mentee. You may have already met them, however, these first actual meetings are crucial in establishing the tone and effectiveness of the relationship.

#### WHAT TO COVER IN THE FIRST MEETING:

1. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER ESTABLISHING TRUST AND RAPPORT.
2. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP AND DESIRED OUTCOMES.
3. CLARIFY HOW TO WORK WITH EACH OTHER WITH A 'LEARNING AGREEMENT'.

#### 1. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER ESTABLISHING TRUST AND RAPPORT

Whilst it may feel easier to concentrate solely on professional interests, we encourage you to spend some time getting to know each other on a personal level. There is evidence to suggest that rapport in mentoring grows fastest when it is built around shared values and common ground. Avoid going over your CVs (if needed these can be sent prior to meeting) and invest time in exploring how you connect with each other.

The following is a reminder of the important ingredients for building rapport:

- **Trust** - Is the mentee confident that the mentor will keep all information confidential? Do you do what you say you will do?
- **Focus** - Is the mentor fully focussed on the mentee? Is the mentor listening actively and openly without making judgements?
- **Empathy** - Is the mentor clearly trying to understand the mentee's point of view?
- **Connection** - Where is your common ground? Do you feel connected with each other? Enough so you can share your learning about your mistakes?
- **Empowerment** - Does the mentee feel empowered and liberated by the mentor?

#### 2. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

The goal and focus of the mentoring are the next priority. Research is clear on this - the mentee's self-motivation is an important active ingredient. Facilitating the mentee to sort out what they want to achieve and take responsibility for doing it, is vital. It gives the whole relationship focus and purpose.

So, these early meetings will be about helping the mentee articulate what they need to achieve. Some mentees will come with a very clear view of what they want to do, others will be very unsure of the specifics yet. Either way, goals evolve, and it is part of the mentor role to help the mentee crystallise their ideas.

Some questions you may want to ask of the mentee at this stage are:

- What is the purpose of you having a mentor?
- What are you looking for in a mentor?
- What is important to you about the mentoring relationship?

As the mentee starts to express what their goal might be, the mentor needs to help them test and re-test it. It will help the mentee refine and define what they need to do.

### 3. CLARIFY HOW TO WORK WITH EACH OTHER WITH A 'LEARNING AGREEMENT'

Managing the expectations of both the mentor and mentee is an essential stage of developing a successful mentoring relationship. Both people need to be in agreement regarding what this is about, how it will work and what both people will gain from the experience.

This is known as the 'contracting' stage although it is often called a 'learning agreement'. It should include:

- Confidentiality regarding the content of the conversations.
- Agreement regarding the topics you wish to discuss.
- Frequency and location of the meetings.
- Availability of contact between mentoring conversations.
- Understanding about how you might deal with any potential conflict.
- Ideas around how you will give feedback and review the effectiveness of the relationship.

Make sure you set the date of the next meeting before the end of the current meeting. Trying to find a date remotely via email is painful, so get it done at the end of the session.

If you would like a template 'learning agreement' to work with, please contact the [ACCELERATE programme manager](#).

More information on '[contracting](#)'.

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