

Developing Mentoring Skills to Support Apprentices



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Developing Mentoring Skills to Support Apprentices

This workbook provides an introduction to the knowledge, experience and understanding required to mentor apprentices in your business.

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Based on An Introduction to Enterprise Mentoring:

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Thanks to Clutterbuck Associates for permission to use 'Toxic mentor, Toxic mentee'

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About this workbook

Welcome to Developing Mentoring Skills to Support Apprentices, a workbook that aims to provide an introduction to the role of the mentor and to ensure that, as a new mentor, you have the right level of knowledge and understanding to undertake the role. It should enable you to:

- understand the skills and tools required by a mentor
- develop some mentoring skills and tools that will help you with your role
- understand the legal and ethical requirements of mentoring
- consider the challenges facing apprentices in the workplace
- understand how to apply your skills, knowledge and experience to a mentoring role.

It will also provide some templates to support your mentoring meetings and your continued learning as a mentor.

The rewards of developing mentoring skills

If you're familiar with supporting apprentices in the workplace you'll already know how rewarding it can be to share your knowledge, skills and experience with others. This workbook will help you develop your mentoring skills and become more aware of what it takes to be a great mentor to the apprentices you're supporting.

Embarking on an apprenticeship can be a daunting prospect, and that is where a mentor can help. We want to ensure you can draw on effective mentoring skills that can make it the best experience for your apprentice and you. A true mentoring relationship is a mutually beneficial learning experience in which both the mentor and mentee can learn from each other, therefore developing these skills shouldn't just bring benefit to those you support, but enhance your working life too.

We hope you treat this workbook as a journey of self-discovery where you will be encouraged to:

- understand your role as a mentor
- reflect on and develop your current skills and knowledge and recognise how they can be used in your mentoring role
- understand how developing mentoring skills can support the apprentice, yourself and your business.

This workbook is full of information and practical activities that you will be able to use in your role as a mentor.

We hope you enjoy using it.

About Apprenticemakers

Apprenticemakers is a peer to peer network for apprentice employers. It provides a resource hub for businesses at all stages of the apprenticeship process and enables them to share best practice and ideas around apprenticeships.

Apprenticemakers was launched in 2014 in response to the Holt Review, a report commissioned by the government and written by Jason Holt, a small business owner who passionately believes in the benefits of apprenticeships for small businesses. The report identified ways to make apprenticeships more accessible to small businesses. One of the main ways was to support peer mentoring between businesses. Apprenticemakers was created to enable peer mentoring and has grown into a facility to provide information and resources for employers across the country.

Apprenticemakers is a not for profit company in the SFEDI (Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative) Group. All companies in the SFEDI Group are based around activities that support the skills development of small and micro businesses, and the enterprise skills of business people everywhere. SFEDI has extensive knowledge and experience in the area of mentoring and has developed mentoring programmes for businesses and organisations of all sizes. SFEDI also delivered the nationwide Get Mentoring programme which recruited and trained 15,000 volunteer mentors for small businesses.

SECTION 1:

The background to mentoring

The contents covered in this section are:

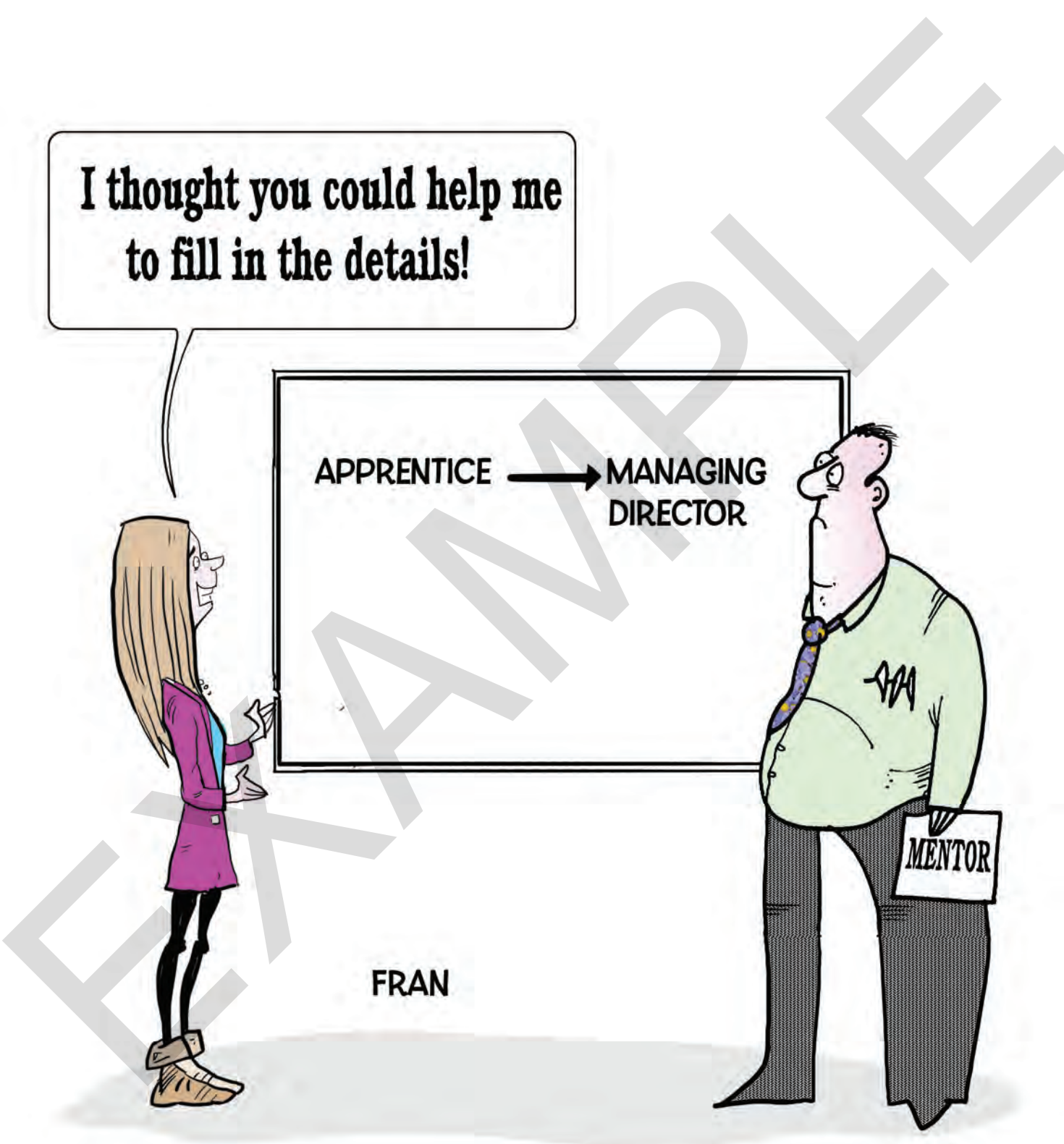
- What is mentoring?
- What is an apprenticeship?
- What is mentoring not?
- How does mentoring fit into apprenticeships?
- What is the role of the mentor?
- What are the different types of mentoring relationship?
- Mentors 'pull' – they don't 'push'
- Mentoring in summary

I thought you could help me to fill in the details!

APPRENTICE → MANAGING DIRECTOR

MENTOR

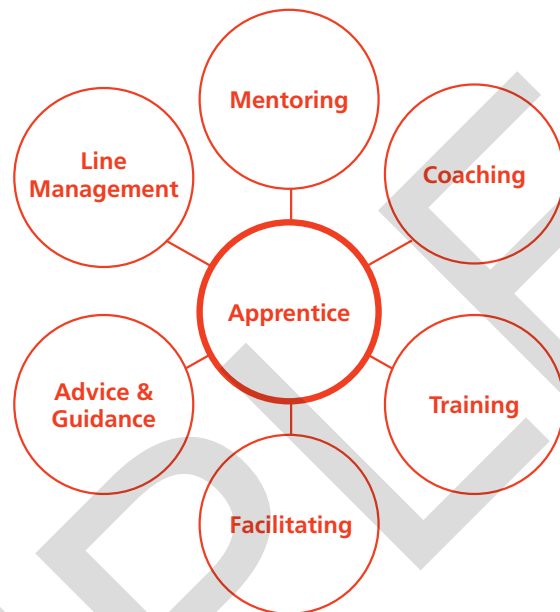
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What is mentoring?

The word 'mentor' comes from the Greek myth in which the legendary king Odysseus went off to fight in the Trojan Wars, entrusting the care of his son to a friend called Mentor. The word actually means 'enduring' and is usually used to describe a sustained relationship between an experienced person and someone who is in the initial stages of their development. The word has become synonymous with the idea of a trusted adviser – a friend, teacher, or wise person. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a mentor as an 'experienced and trusted adviser'.

Mentoring is one of a number of types of support for apprentices in the workplace. What they all have in common is the apprentice (mentee) is at the centre. It is the mentor's responsibility to be aware of the boundaries of the role and make sure this is understood by the apprentice.



What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a combination of on the job experience and job specific training. Apprenticeships have been around since the Middle Ages when a master craftsman was entitled to employ a young person in exchange for providing food, lodging and formal training in the craft. Over the centuries apprenticeships have endured as a way for businesses to train new employees.

Today there are apprenticeships in a vast range of job roles. Businesses recruit and train apprentices often with support from their training provider and/or trade association, and the apprenticeship period tends to last between 1 and 4 years, ideally leading to long term employment with the host employer.

How does mentoring fit into apprenticeships?

When an apprentice embarks on an apprenticeship they may be in very unfamiliar territory. It's likely that they will be beginning a learning journey in a job role that is new to them. In addition to that they may also be unfamiliar with the world of work and how to operate in a professional environment outside their realms of experience.

As well as this, they may also not have a clear idea of where they're heading. What does a fully competent professional in the job role look like? How do they operate both practically and professionally in the workplace?

Having access to a senior professional who is able to support them with mentoring skills enables the apprentice to develop a vision of where they're going, helps them shape career goals which align to their apprenticeship, and helps them overcome hurdles and challenges along the way.

Role of the mentor

The mentor's role is to act as a role model and trusted source of support along the way. A good mentor will use questioning and listening skills to help the apprentice navigate their journey and use guidance and tools to help the apprentice develop in their career. Using mentoring skills can help the apprentice to make wise choices as they progress on their apprenticeship journey.

An effective mentoring relationship gives the apprentice an opportunity to receive short, medium or long-term personal and professional support. The relationship enables the apprentice to explore his or her personal and professional situation in order to develop goals that will have a positive impact on their career.

The mentor should have the personal experience and skills to give the apprentice the right level of support, and it is equally important for the mentoring to be done in the most appropriate way.

Mentoring is based on establishing a relationship based on equality, openness and trust. Above all, it should be supportive.

In a good mentoring relationship, the mentor encourages the apprentice to reflect on his or her own personal and professional experiences, and shares his or her own personal and professional experiences as well. In this way, the mentor supports the apprentice to devise new or more effective ways to approach problems and challenges.

What mentoring is not

It could be that as well as fulfilling a mentoring role with the apprentice you are also fulfilling other roles, such as line manager, colleague, and assessor. For the purpose of providing you with a clear vision of what falls into the mentoring role, here's some things that are definitely **not** part of the mentor's role:

- **Acting as a parent.** The apprentice holds the reins, not the mentor. The mentor might sense that the apprentice would like them to take control and 'babysit' them, in which case they should make it clear that the responsibility lies with the mentee.
- **Acting as a counsellor.** It could be that part of your employer responsibility to the apprentice is to ensure they're signposted to practical support for personal or health problems. However, it's important to not find yourself in the role of a counsellor should these problems be outside your realms of experience or knowledge area.
- **An excuse for the apprentice to moan.** Although it's important that the apprentice is able to share issues and concerns they're experiencing, if they arrive at every mentoring session with a list of woes expecting to spend the session on these, the mentor should help the apprentice identify a course of action to address these issues and gently steer them in a more positive direction. This is where it would be more appropriate to deal with such issues in a management or supervision session.
- **Being the apprentice's friend.** That doesn't mean the mentor should be completely detached – of course, they can be friendly! But becoming too friendly can prevent honest feedback. It's important that the mentor doesn't let the boundaries become blurred.
- **Dispensing discipline.** Just as the mentor is not there to look after the apprentice, they are not there to tell them off if they make a mistake or aren't working hard enough. That might be part of another role you fulfil, but it's not a mentor's role. If the mentor notices the apprentice isn't pulling their weight, they should bring this up in a supervision session where work is being discussed and then help them identify the issue and a course of action for addressing it in that environment.
- **Being a god.** No matter how much experience and knowledge a mentor has, they are not expected to have all the answers. Instead mentors are there to guide, support and encourage someone to progress along their own learning and career path.