



Guide to Mentoring

Step-by-Step

Mentoring is a two-way learning experience that helps to retain young people in the organisation, and enhances leadership and management skills amongst established personnel.

Ensure that Council policy includes a commitment to providing mentors for all new young employees.

Ensure the CEO and all managers are fully committed to the mentoring program.

Write the duty of mentoring into the job description of would-be mentors. It is NOT just a tack-on job.

The mentor must not be the young person's line supervisor. The mentor does not necessarily have to be an engineer, but should be aware of technical matters and must be fully conversant with the culture of Council.

Consider the various types of mentoring and agree on the best type for your situation. If you decide to hire a professional mentor, you must ensure you have money in the budget.

Training for mentors is available. *Engineers Australia* divisions run mentoring courses as part of their Professional Development Program.

Mentors should be appointed for :

- Work Experience students (University and TAFE students only)
- Young people who have been awarded a scholarship, cadetship or traineeship
 - All new employees.

The length of time that a mentor should be active varies for each type of mentorship but, for work experience and scholarship students, the mentor should play an active role even when the students are back at their educational institutions. This will ensure that the student remains "connected" with Council. The mentor should be prepared to remain active with new employees for up to three years.



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Origin of Mentoring

Mentoring derives its roots from Greek mythology. Odysseus set off for the Trojan War and left his son Telemachus in the care of his friend, Mentor. Mentor became an experienced and trusted advisor to the young Telemachus, thus setting up the first mentoring relationship.

Mentoring as a Tool in Addressing the Skills Shortage

Mentoring is a valuable tool in retaining skilled people in any industry, with demonstrated benefits for those providing as well as those receiving mentoring. This guide explains mentoring, what is expected of the mentor and mentee, and the benefits to those involved and the organisation.

What is Mentoring

Mentoring is where one individual provides support, encouragement and advice to another, based on their knowledge, life and experience relative to the mentoring theme. Mentoring often provides a two-way learning experience for both the mentor and the mentee, and can provide deep satisfaction and numerous benefits in many personal, career, organisational and developmental areas. Mentoring can be made available for all types of graduates, professional engineer, engineering technologist or engineering draftsman.

Types of Mentoring

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring is traditionally one of the most popular forms of mentoring. It is facilitated by a third party and often includes formal agreements between mentors and mentees. Most formal mentoring is conducted within the workplace. Usually there is a mentoring co-ordinator who matches mentees to mentors, organises their training and workshops, and generally oversees a structured mentor program.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring is where two people form a mentoring relationship without facilitation by a third party or the signing of formal agreements. This form of mentoring is usually fairly unstructured and often

begins spontaneously between colleagues or friends and evolves over time. It may however be initiated by a mentor or mentee seeking a mentoring relationship.

Small Group Mentoring

Mentoring in small groups of up to four people can be quite effective in many situations. Usually small group mentoring occurs within the same organisation so there is a common interest between mentees and the mentor. Applying the small group mentoring format to mentees and mentors from different backgrounds can be rewarding for all participants, as it expands their general knowledge about the organisation.

Professional Mentors

Professional mentors have substantial personal experience in local government, or the industry in which they are mentoring. Experienced engineers and technical staff nearing, or at, retirement age are ideal for this role. They use a combination of coaching and mentoring to achieve high levels of results with their clients (mentees). Unlike formal, informal or small group mentoring, which has traditionally been conducted free of charge (albeit at some expense to the local government authority or organisation facilitating the mentoring program), professional mentors charge for their services (the cost depending on the type of mentoring and the experience and reputation of the mentor).

What is Best for Public Works

In practice, most public works organisations should use a combination of formal and informal mentoring. Seldom will the organisation be large enough to have a formal structure with a mentoring co-ordinator etc, but mentoring must form part of the organisation's culture, and be formally endorsed and supported by the CEO and all managers. A formal agreement between mentor and mentee is important, as is some sort of structured mentoring program. This can be worked out to suit each case and be tailored to suit both individuals' experience and needs.

It is possible that a shortage of suitable mentors in your organisation could mean that you seek the assistance of a recently retired engineer under the Professional Mentor format. This option may have other benefits for your organisation as it keeps the retired engineer active, and possibly available for other work.



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Mentoring Versus Coaching

Coaching and mentoring are two different things, although both involve elements of the other. They are both a partnership between two people, whereby direction is clarified and support is provided to achieve goals.

Coaching encompasses elements of organisational psychology, management and personal training, as well as mentoring. Coaching approaches the achievement of goals in a much more structured and results-driven way. Coaching is for people who are willing to stretch themselves, to go beyond what they could achieve on their own, to make their goals a reality.

Coaching, like mentoring, can target many different personal issues and is broadly categorised into three main areas – executive, business and life or personal coaching (including career coaching). It's powerful approach will almost always guarantee results if the mentee is serious about achieving major goals.

Mentoring is ideal for the mentee looking for advice from somebody who has personal experience in the area or industry they wish to be mentored in. It's also perfect for getting support in achieving moderately hard goals, exploring a new industry, getting to know who's who in the industry, influential people, networking, or just having somebody who has already been through it all to bounce ideas off.

A combination of mentoring and coaching can be a very beneficial formula indeed, and can be used effectively for people who have the ambition and stamina to truly seek advancement with the organisation.

Benefits of Mentoring

Studies of mentoring in practice indicate that the benefits of mentoring and being mentored can include :

For Mentees

- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Personal growth and support for achieving goals
- Advancement of knowledge, networking and communication skills
- Increased clarity in personal direction and development of ideas

- Development of skills to enable better career prospects and choices
- Gathering ideas and techniques for balancing work, life and family
- A learning opportunity, which will provide exposure to new ideas and ways of thinking.

For Mentors

- Development of management, leadership and communication skills
- A learning opportunity, which will provide exposure to new ideas and ways of thinking
- Helping develop and support the leaders of tomorrow
- Personal satisfaction in making a contribution through sharing ideas and experience
- Transferral of knowledge (corporate knowledge and history)
- Increased respect, prestige, confidence and self-esteem
- Contributing to a career development track record.

For Organisations

- Enhanced leadership, interpersonal and management skills of mentors
- Increase in employee motivation, work satisfaction, commitment and loyalty
- Increased ability to attract and retain excellent staff
- Increase in the employees' sense of being valued by the organisation, through the provision of career development and networking opportunities, and the recognition of individual contributions
- Retaining corporate knowledge and sharing organisational culture and values
- Establishing staff support networks during periods of organisational change and low staff morale
- Decrease in staff turnover
- Demonstration of commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and diversity issues in the workplace.

(Note that the level of benefits obtained depends on the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the commitment of each of the parties to making it work).