Your guide to:

Creating meaningful coaching and mentoring relationships
Once upon a time, coaching and mentoring were reserved for senior managers and company directors, but now, coaching and mentoring is considered a worthwhile tool for everyone. Whether sought out by organisations to improve business outcomes or invested in by an individual to help achieve personal aspirations, both coaching and mentoring are incredibly useful tools to improve performance.

Because of this, it is important that any individual or organisation looking to take part in coaching and mentoring understands the difference from other learning and development activities, as well as the uniqueness of each coaching experience.

However, at times coaching and mentoring can be overlooked for more traditional methods because of time and labour costs that make it seem out of reach for most organisations. Unfortunately, this means that individual training needs are sometimes sidelined as one size fits all training becomes the norm.

This guide will provide the foundation to help develop meaningful coaching and mentoring relationships for both coaches, mentors and organisations with a desire to develop a coaching and mentoring programme that can fit within time and budget pressures.

### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching is...</th>
<th>Mentoring is...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Give (someone) extra teaching</td>
<td>- Advise or train (someone, especially a younger colleague)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Teach (a subject or sport) as a coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give (someone) instructions as to what to do or say in a particular situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give (someone) professional advice on how to attain their goals</td>
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Coaching and mentoring are closely linked with organisational change and success by aiding staff to adapt to change, new initiatives and pursue personal progression.

By taking into account personal development needs, coaching and mentoring can enhance morale, motivation and productivity, as well as make people feel valued. It is a two way relationship in which both the employee and the organisation gain significant benefits. What’s more, research shows that individuals who have access to a coach or mentor will take greater responsibility for their own development, and as a result, maximise their potential.

So how do coaching and mentoring differ from other learning and development provisions?

Without a doubt, coaching and mentoring offer a completely different experience to traditional training methods. The table on the right explores the difference between the two. By using the table you will be able to determine whether coaching and mentoring is suitable for the development you need to deliver or whether traditional methods would suffice.

### iConnect Customer?

If you wish to increase the flexibility of your coaching practice, use iConnect to record real life practice or role plays to receive remote feedback from your mentor or coach whilst keeping it contextualised and objective.

### Need help with performance coaching?

*Here’s 4 performance coaching problems and how to solve them*
Coaching or Mentoring?

There are key differences between coaching and mentoring. Passmore (2007) provides a useful table describing some of these differences in seven areas: level of formality, length of contract, outcome focus, level of business knowledge, training, client, and supervision or support.

Ideally a programme should be suited to an individual’s precise needs in terms of delivery, style and durations. Now this may seem a bit vague, but a programme could last a few weeks or be an ongoing process, it depends on the development area. Because of this, a great deal of flexibility is required from the coach or mentor and the relationship itself may change and develop overtime as different needs arise.

Ask yourself…

- What outcomes and improvements would you like to achieve?
- What am I (or my organisation) prepared to put in?
- How will I need to be supported to achieve my (or my organisation) goals?
- What level of expertise is required?
- Is the focus on skills or knowledge?

After answering the above questions you will be able to use the table to determine whether you need coaching, mentoring or a mixture of both.

Once you have decided between coaching or mentoring, you can begin to plan to facilitate the desired outcomes with the individual you are supporting.

### Table: Coaching vs. Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of formality</strong></td>
<td>More formal: ground rules set, sometimes involving a 3rd party</td>
<td>Less formal: an agreement, typically between two parties</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Length of contract</strong></td>
<td>Shorter term: typically over two to twelve months</td>
<td>Longer term: unspecified number of meetings, relationships that typically last 3-5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome focus</strong></td>
<td>More performance-focused: typically, a greater focus on short-term skills and job performance</td>
<td>More career-focused: typically, a concern with longer term career issue, obtaining the right experience and longer-term thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of business knowledge</strong></td>
<td>More generalist: typically, coaches have a strong appreciation of business or commercial realities</td>
<td>More sector knowledge: typically, mentors have detailed knowledge of the organisation or business sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td>More relationship training: typically, coaches have a background in psychology, psychotherapy or human resources, or have undertaken specialist coaching training</td>
<td>More management training: typically, mentors have a background in senior management, with limited coaching/mentoring training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client</strong></td>
<td>Dual client: more typically, a dual focus on the needs of the individual and the needs of the organisation</td>
<td>Single client: more typically, a single focus on the needs of the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervision</strong></td>
<td>Formal: typically, the coach will be in (or expected to be in) supervision as part of their CPD</td>
<td>Informal: typically, the mentor may have irregular discussions with HR or their senior management to discuss the impact of the mentoring relationship.</td>
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Top tip:

If you feel there is a discrepancy between what you want to achieve and what is available to you, try breaking down your objectives into individual goals which you can approach step-by-step.

Looking to mentor your sales team?

Click here to learn how to increase sales through mentoring
Reflective learning in coaching and mentoring

Throughout coaching and mentoring, reflection, analysis and development operate as a vehicle for effective behaviour change.

The experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984) shows how a learner’s actions and experience can be explored through reflection, leading to changed thinking and behaviours. If the learner is encouraged to explore a range of theoretical perspectives and practical applications, they may decide to act differently, which will inform future reflection.

Top tip:
Start by questioning the coachee about their understanding of the reality of the situation or the context, and issues they wish to address, establishing the facts and feelings involved before providing coaching.

Self-evaluation plays a key part in learning and will appear frequently throughout the duration of a coaching relationship. Reflective observation should be encouraged throughout so that learners can develop their own answers, skills and behaviours, by creating an understanding as to why that change will be beneficial.

Want to learn more about reflective learning? Read this blog.
How to develop a meaningful coaching or mentoring programme

1. Consider the why?
What is it that you want the coachee or mentee to be able to do during a certain time frame in the program and why do they want to be able to do this?

Mind tools has a fantastic video on goal setting that you can watch here

Keeping a goal in mind is key to creating buy-in to a coaching and mentoring programme. What’s more, there may be many areas which the coachee would like to develop but it may not be possible to address all of them in the time frame you have. A key aspect of setting goals with a coachee is making sure that they are reachable so that the coachee does not suffer from demotivation.

If it is an ongoing relationship, it is important to readdress goals and reconsider the why throughout and on a regular basis. If a goal is achieved, move onto the next one but always consider the reasoning behind why that particular goal is a goal.

Top tip:
Consider the coaching and mentoring graph on page 4, use this to help develop goals specifically suited to coaching or mentoring.

2. Plan ahead and check in regularly
Today’s workplace is hectic, and sometimes, no matter what your best intentions are, things fall to the wayside. Put time aside to meet, book it in your calendar and make sure those working with you and the coachee understand the importance. That way no one will ask you to make something else a priority above your coaching time.

Take the time to develop measurement and evaluation for your programme, as well. Use your goals and determine how you’re going to define the success of the programme as a whole, as well as for the individual coach and protégé.

Top tip:
Dedicate regular sessions to considering progress and revisit the why behind wanting to achieve a goal. How far have they come? What’s left to achieve? How are they going to continue working towards their goal? Has the goal been achieved? What evidence is there that their goal has been achieved?

By having an ongoing evaluation you will able to reset and re-evaluate goals if something isn’t working. It may be that you are meeting too frequently or not frequently enough, be prepared to re-evaluate and change your plan if necessary to gain the best outcomes for the coachee.
3. Play matchmaker
Finding the right coach is crucial to the success of the coaching or mentoring programme. Both the coach and coachee possess characteristics that might facilitate or impede a successful coaching relationship, helping or hindering goals. This can include personality traits, work and or life experiences and the level of commitment to learning. These characteristics are what each individual brings to the relationship before the coaching interaction starts.

Before a coaching or mentoring relationship starts, it may be helpful to both the coach and coachee do a self-evaluation of their own characteristics. The coaching relationship may not be beneficial if coach and coachee have opposing characteristics.

It will also be beneficial for the coach to be aware of their coachee’s characteristics so they can plan ahead accordingly and ensure that they can adapt their coaching skills to the coachee from the very beginning.

4. Provide the right tools
Whether the programme is face to face, email, telephone or video based is likely to impact the cost and effectiveness of the programme. Ultimately, a programme should be designed and delivered creatively and flexibly to needs, personal preferences, budget and learning styles. Make sure your tools align to your goals and discuss with your coachee what method they would prefer, what they will find to be the most beneficial.

**iConnect Customer?**
Use the commentary and analysis tools to provide a professional coaching dialogue over time and distance. Coach and coachee can log in at a time suitable for them to give and receive feedback whilst keeping real performance in focus.

5. Make individuals responsible
Facilitate non-directive and non-judgemental sessions, thereby encouraging the individual to find their own answers. By encouraging the individual to find their own answers, knowledge and skills, learning is facilitated through a cycle of experience and reflection, rather than just giving the learner the answers. This helps the learner focus on the process of learning and increases the chance of behaviour change.

**iConnect Customer?**
Use the app to video record your coachee in the workplace. Then, before your coaching session get them to watch themselves with their goals in mind to self-evaluate their own performance helping them to consider their own skills and behaviours, and develop an understanding of why change will be beneficial.
Managers, team leaders and experienced employees should be regularly looking for coaching and mentoring opportunities. Organising one to ones, sharing knowledge across departments, and encouraging ongoing coaching relationships are a fantastic way to make sure that knowledge is shared and development is ongoing.

To create buy in, support employees in developing their own coaching and mentoring relationships, working towards both personal and organisational goals, encouraging them to reach out to individuals who they believe can support their development.

By encouraging varying levels of formality depending on the time available to those involved, the coaching and mentoring support you provide can range from informal mentoring chats to individual coaching programmes, creating customised and individual development opportunities.

Don’t forget to experiment with different ideas to find out what really works for each person.

Top tip:
See the table on page 4 to work out what kind of coaching and mentoring programme would suit you best!

iConnect Customer?
Use iConnects sharing function to support staff sharing practice with other departments and individuals to create a collaborative coaching and mentoring culture.
What is iConnect?

Founded by research and trusted by more than 2000 organisations worldwide, our video based platform improves the quality of training delivery. iConnect makes coaching, observation, self-reflection and trainer collaboration simple, effective and flexible.

Join the community.

Book A Demo