

21 BUSINESS MENTORING QUESTIONS ASKED & ANSWERED



A THOUGHT PAPER BY MANAGEMENT MENTORS

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Welcome to Our Business Mentoring Q&A

You've got questions about business mentoring, and we've got answers. Let's get to it.

Here's to your mentoring success!

1. What, exactly, is business mentoring?

Mentoring is most often defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentoree) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth.

2. Does business mentoring work?

[This article in Forbes](#) discusses a study where "Sun Microsystems compared the career progress of 1000 employees over a 5-year period." Some of the results? "Both mentors and mentees were approximately 20% more likely to get a raise than people who did not participate in the mentoring program."

In an article called "[Guiding the Way](#)" in *Success* magazine, the author quotes Ellen Ensher, associate professor of management at the business college at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, as saying, "People who use mentors are more successful than those without mentors, and that's substantiated by academic research. They get more promotions, make more money, and have more career and job satisfaction."

Interested in more compelling statistics and studies? Our free white paper "[The Well Leveraged Mentoring Program](#)" is full of them.

3. What are the benefits of mentoring?

Mentoring benefits the organization, mentors, and mentorees.

A successful mentoring program benefits the organization by:

- Enhancing strategic business initiatives
- Encouraging retention
- Reducing turnover costs
- Improving productivity
- Breaking down the "silos" mentality that hinders cooperation among company departments or divisions
- Enhancing professional development
- Linking employees with valuable knowledge and information to other employees in need of such information
- Using your own employees, instead of outside consultants, as internal experts for professional development
- Supporting the creation of a multicultural workforce by creating relationships among diverse employees and allowing equal access to mentoring
- Creating a mentoring culture that continuously promotes individual employee growth and development

Mentors enjoy many benefits, including:

- Gaining insights from the mentoree's background and history, which can be used in the mentor's own professional and personal development
- Gaining satisfaction in sharing expertise with others
- Re-energizing the mentor's career



- Gaining an ally in promoting the organization's well-being
- Learning more about other areas/departments within the organization

Mentorees enjoy many benefits, including:

- Gaining from the mentor's expertise
- Receiving critical feedback in key areas, such as communications, interpersonal relationships, technical abilities, change management, and leadership skills
- Developing a sharper focus on what is needed to grow professionally within the organization
- Learning specific skills and knowledge that are relevant to personal goals
- Networking with a more influential employee
- Gaining knowledge about the organization's culture and unspoken rules that can be critical for success
- Finding a friendly ear with which to share frustrations as well as successes

4. What's the difference between coaching and mentoring?

People often confuse coaching and mentoring. Though related, they are not the same. A mentor may coach, but a coach does not mentor. Understanding the definition of mentoring is crucial. Mentoring is relational, while coaching is functional. That's the short answer, but the truth is that the answer to this question deserves a deeper look, which is why we've devoted a whole white paper to this topic. [You can download it here.](#)

Mentoring is relational, while coaching is functional.

5. What's the difference between formal and informal mentoring?

It's important to understand the difference between formal and informal mentoring. Why? Because different mentoring processes require different strategies and include different benchmarks and goals.

Formal mentoring programs include:

- Connection to a strategic business objective
- Established goals
- Measurable outcomes
- Open access for all who qualify
- Strategic pairing of mentors and mentorees
- Mentoring engagements lasting 9-12 months
- Expert training and support
- Direct organizational benefits

Informal mentoring programs include:

- Unspecified goals
- Unknown outcomes
- Limited access to the program
- Self-selection of mentors and mentorees
- No expert training or support
- Indirect organizational benefits

6. What is one-to-one mentoring?

In this traditional model, one mentor is matched with one mentoree, and a trained program manager monitors the match's progress over the course of 9-12 months. Usually, the matches are deliberate; the mentoring program manager pairs two people together based on certain criteria, such as experience, skill sets, goals, personality, and a variety of other factors.

7. What is self-directed mentoring?

Self-directed mentoring offers some of the features provided by one-to-one mentoring. The main difference is that mentors and mentorees are not interviewed and matched accordingly by a mentoring program manager. Instead, mentors agree to add their names to a list of available mentors from which a mentoree can choose. It's up to a mentoree to initiate the process, asking one of the volunteer mentors for assistance.

8. What is group mentoring?

Group mentoring requires a mentor to work with four to six mentorees at one time. The group meets once or twice a month to discuss various topics. The mentor as well as the mentorees help one another learn and develop appropriate skills/knowledge.



9. What is reverse mentoring?

This model matches senior executives (the mentorees) with younger people (the mentors) to help the older generation stay current and informed about new technologies or trends. For example, a 20-something employee may introduce a senior executive to social networking on Facebook or Twitter.

10. What mentoring model should an organization use?

It depends. There's no such thing as "one size fits all," which is why it's important to understand the many different types of mentoring that's available. We've talked about some models above, but for a more in depth look, we encourage you to [download our free white paper](#) on corporate mentoring models.

11. What are the benefits of using mentoring software?

Mentoring software streamlines program management, connects remote workforces, offers a "green" solution, ensures consistency, and provides headroom to easily grow your program. For a deeper discussion into each of these benefits, [download this free white paper](#).

12. What are three important things that a business mentor should do?

A mentor should actively listen to his or her mentoree. A mentor should empower the mentoree to solve a problem on his or her own (rather than solving or "fixing" the issue for the mentoree). And a mentor should always provide honest feedback. [Read more about the mentor's role here](#).

13. What are the three important things that a mentoree should do?

A mentoree should actively listen to his or her mentor. A mentoree should practice receiving and accepting critical feedback, including how to respond to and implement the feedback. A mentoree should be prepared to do the heavy lifting. Remember, it's the mentoree's job, not the mentor's job. [Read more about the mentoree's role here](#).

14. What role does a mentoring program manager (MPM) play?

An effective mentoring program manager can often make the difference between a failed mentoring relationship and a successful one. Some of the MPM's tasks include creating and implementing the mentoring program, training participants, planning meetings and providing resources, evaluating the program, providing reports to senior management, and expanding the program (as needed). The MPM's role is so important that we've designed an [online course specifically for mentoring program managers](#).

15. What is executive mentoring?

Executive mentoring is a strategic developmental relationship. In this relationship, we pair an executive-level mentor with a less senior, but high-potential mentoree to assist in the development of high-level thinking, visioning, and leadership within the company. [Learn more in our Executive Mentoring 101 white paper](#).

16. What is “knowledge share” and how does it relate to mentoring?

Formal mentoring is something that happens between two people (a mentor and mentoree) over a period of 9 to 12 months. While the sharing of knowledge certainly happens to some degree between mentor and mentoree, the mentor's function isn't necessarily to teach the mentoree a specific skill, such as using Twitter. Often, the goals are more ambitious (e.g. develop leadership skills), whereas knowledge share tasks are typically hyper-focused.

Think of knowledge share as “short-term” mentoring that can happen anywhere, at any place, with anyone. You needn't go through the typical matching prerequisites that a formal match requires. The only matching requirement needed is that someone has expertise in a certain area and is willing to share that expertise with someone who is willing to learn it. [Read 20 compelling reasons why your organization needs to consider a knowledge share solution](#).



17. How should my organization create a pilot mentoring program?

The Mentoring Program Manager (MPM) forms a task force of 6-8 people. Members of the task force should represent a cross-section of the organization, including potential mentors and mentorees, supervisory personnel, and any stakeholders who can bring value to the process. For example, a representative from Human Resources might help tie department goals with the goals of the mentoring program.

The task force:

- Determines the goals of the program
- Chooses the proper mentoring model
- Selects criteria for mentors and mentorees
- Defines other critical components of the program
- Interviews potential candidates
- Matches participants
- Evaluates results at the end of the pilot program

18. Are buddy systems and mentoring programs the same?

No. Buddy systems are initiated by organizations to help new employees adjust to jobs during their first few months of employment. Buddies are most often peers in the same department who assist new employees for short periods of time and require no specialized training as a buddy. Mentoring is a more complex relationship and focuses on both short- and long-term professional development goals. Though a mentor may be an employee's peer, most often a mentor is a person at least one level higher in the organization who is not within the mentoree's direct supervisory line of management.

19. What role does safety play in a mentoring relationship?

Safety is one of the key differentiators between coaching and mentoring. In coaching, creating a "safe" environment might not even be necessary since a coach is often brought in for remedial work with the coachee. This coach is expected to improve the coachee's performance in a specific area, and results are measured.

Mentoring, on the other hand, is never remedial and is primarily a developmental relationship, one where feelings, thoughts, and emotions come into play. While coaching may occur to some extent over 9 to 12 months, the goal of mentoring is to create a meaningful relationship between the mentor and mentoree. A sense of safety is needed in order to have the honest, heartfelt conversations that occur in these sorts of relationships.

20. What is the role of diversity in mentoring?

Mentoring can be of great value to women and people of color. These are the employees who have often been disenfranchised within organizations and have not been "chosen" by informal mentors. However, if mentoring is to be successful as a tool for empowering employees, it needs to be truly diverse – representing everyone within the organization and not just women and people of color. By including the broadest spectrum of people, mentoring offers everyone the opportunity to grow professionally and personally without regard to gender or race. A successful mentoring program needs to balance the need for inclusion with the need for fair representation. [Read more about the role of diversity in mentoring here.](#)

21. Where can I learn more about mentoring?

At Management Mentors, we provide free access to a wide variety of articles, white papers, podcasts, and online presentations. Check out our resources.

And, of course, if you have a specific question, don't hesitate to contact us.



About Management Mentors:

For over two decades, [Management Mentors](http://www.management-mentors.com) has been designing and implementing world-class business mentoring programs and helping companies attract and retain high potential employees. Based outside of Boston, Mass., Management Mentors' corporate mentoring programs develop future leaders and create a more diverse workforce by removing the barriers to equal opportunity. Management Mentors has achieved a 90% success rate with pairs it matches using a thoughtful, proven process. Current and past clients include Enterprise Rent-A-Car, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, The New York Times Corporation, The City of Tallahassee, Cooper Tire, FedEx Kinkos, Quaker Oats, Schering Plough, TJX Corporation, and Sony Music Corporation. For more information on how your firm can enjoy greater success through mentoring, contact us at 617.789.4622 or visit us at www.management-mentors.com.



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