



Many Ways to Mentor

By Ann Rolfe

Contemporary mentoring takes many forms and though informal mentoring often occurs naturally and spontaneously, more structured approaches are emerging.

1. **Traditional** mentoring pairs an expert with a novice. It has overtones of a master-apprentice or patron-protégé relationship. Contemporary mentoring tends to expand old ideas so that participants are more like colleagues or equal partners and benefits are enjoyed by both.
2. **Informal** mentoring conversations happen by chance with people you meet or people you know. The person may give you useful information, share their experience or just listen while you think out loud. It may be a one-off conversation or a life-long relationship. The word "mentor" may never be used.
3. **Formal** mentoring relationships are usually part of a structured program. You may be matched, introduced and supported in developing the mentoring partnership. There could be formal agreements about your roles and responsibilities and a timeframe for the relationship. You'll have goals and work towards outcomes.
4. In **reciprocal** mentoring two colleagues mentor each other. This is very much a two-way street with each able to ask the other for input and advice and each providing a listening ear in a confidential conversation.
5. **Reverse**-mentoring is where an executive is mentored by a non-executive, often a younger person talking to an older person about technology. This can bridge the generation gap when a relationship of trust and understanding is built. Young people who have grown up with social media for example, can convey the value and benefits as well as the practical ways to use it. In such a rapidly changing world, senior people can't afford to be left behind!
6. **Group** mentoring involves one mentor meeting with several mentorees. They might have common goals or a common background. For example new graduates in their first workplace, or small business owners.

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7. **Mastermind** - peers interact in a conversation or think-tank. The original concept was described by Napoleon Hill as: “ ... a group of brains, co-ordinated (or connected) in a spirit of harmony, will provide more thought energy than a single brain, just as a group of electric batteries will provide more energy than a single battery ... The increased energy created by that alliance becomes available to every brain in the group.”
8. **Mentoring circles** are a variation of group mentoring that led by one or more mentors that may blend elements of peer mentoring and mastermind groups.
9. **Manager-mentors** recognize that leading team learning or one-to-one development is a key role and contributes to employee engagement, retention and productivity.
10. **Mentoring moments** are those times you take the opportunity to have a conversation that creates insight, explores options or provides guidance, while you are doing something else. They happen in the workplace, at home, during leisure activities and are simply an extension of normal conversation.

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