



A guide for mentees

What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who will encourage and support you to make the most of yourself and your business.

Although the final decisions are always in your hands, a mentor can be invaluable in guiding you to identify the support you need, consider your options and get new information. As a mentor, their role is to be a trusted confidante, helping you to make informed choices.

Mentoring is just one type of business support. More examples are shown in the diagram opposite.

Shell LiveWire supports 1000s of young entrepreneurs each year. Our feedback shows that mentors are a key part of what many of them see as vital to support and growth of their business.

Stuart Anderson
Shell LiveWIRE



What is enterprise mentoring?

- A one-to-one relationship, usually over a set period of time, in which an established business person (mentor) provides consistent support, guidance and practical help for a less experienced person (mentee)
- A voluntary relationship which the mentee or the mentor can end at any time
- A two-way process in which the mentor shares their personal skills, knowledge and experience with the mentee to enable him or her to explore their personal and professional situation, and in which the mentor and mentee work together to achieve predetermined goals and objectives
- A way of enabling the mentee to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to perform at a higher level, and of giving them access to impartial, non-judgemental guidance and support

What should a mentor do?

An enterprise mentor is normally someone who has a great deal of entrepreneurial business experience and who acts as a trusted confidante over a flexible period of time. It can be a close and meaningful relationship and promotes a self-discovery approach. You should expect your mentor to:

- Provide an outside perspective on you and your business
- Listen, in confidence, to the things that are worrying you about your business
- Help you by sharing their own experience of failures and successes
- Give you friendly, unbiased support and guidance
- Provide honest and constructive feedback
- Be a sounding board for your ideas
- Facilitate your decision-making by suggesting alternatives based on personal experience
- Provide ongoing support and encouragement

Your mentor is there to:

- Guide you to look at a wide variety of options and consider alternative courses of action in order to solve problems
- Help you to gain new personal skills, experiences and knowledge
- Help you to develop new attitudes and behaviour and therefore improve both your personal and your business performance
- Release and develop your own resourcefulness - it is up to you to decide whether to use the information you receive from your mentor

Remember: It is not your mentor's responsibility to make your business a success; the ultimate responsibility for making your business successful is down to you.

Establishing a successful relationship with your mentor

Once you have been matched with your mentor through your mentoring organisation, we suggest that you:

- Draw up a timetable of regularly spaced meetings in advance
- Establish a set of ground rules to which you will both abide
- Keep notes of your meetings and use these as the basis for ongoing discussions
- Work towards developing a trusting relationship and establishing a good rapport with your mentor
- Aim at maintaining the relationship for as long as is appropriate to your needs

Your first meeting with your mentor

- The relationship that evolves between you and your mentor over a period of time is crucial to the success of the mentoring journey. Although you will control what you get out of the relationship, your mentor is the guardian of the relationship because of their experience and knowledge
- Your first meeting is vital because it will set the tone of the relationship. Ideally, this will get off to a swift and productive start
- You might feel a bit nervous about your first meeting but don't worry about it – a lot of people do. You might be thinking, 'How will we start?' or 'What are we going to talk about?'
- It's a good idea to devote some thought to your first meeting because it's extremely important. If you get off to a good start, everything else should be much easier

Starting the first meeting

To get started, you could:

- Make yourselves comfortable, pour some tea or coffee, sit down and get to know each other
- You could tell your mentor something about yourself; this might include information about your personal life as well as your professional life – whatever feels right for you
- You might explain why you got involved, and discuss what you think you might do together and what both of you might get out of mentoring

Remember: If you don't hit it off straight away, don't panic. It takes time to build any relationship and it will get easier the more you meet because you'll build up trust and get used to each other.

If you're worried about anything after the first meeting, get in touch with your mentoring organisation; it's there to provide you with all the support you need.

Key principles in building trust

1 Get to know your mentor

Talk about their business and their life outside it. Try to understand what they think and why. Value their viewpoint.

2 Do what you say you're going to do

Agree what you are aiming to achieve through your mentoring sessions. Be reliable and always do what you say you are going to do.

3 Communicate openly and honestly

Discuss issues as soon as they arise. Ask for and give feedback.

4 Don't be afraid to challenge

Your open, honest relationship will allow you to challenge your mentee constructively to explore a wider viewpoint.

Trust is the highest form of human motivation.

It brings out the very best in people.

Stephen Covey
Management Development
Consultant

Building a trusting and respectful relationship with your mentee

The extent to which you trust your mentor will depend on how caring your mentor is and their levels of competence and integrity.

