

Ingredients to Great Mentorship

Mentorships allow us to build on the foundation of knowledge and business acumen that successful leaders already possess. This is especially true for entrepreneurs who rely on strategy and relationships to build and grow their business.

A mentor is a trusted advisor who offers support to someone who needs it.

A mentor is a person who is a business professional with the experience to provide personalized support, sound business advice and encouragement to help emerging entrepreneurs develop their own abilities and insights. A mentor's value stems from the fact that they've "been there and done that," giving you the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and successes.

- A mentor offers encouragement during challenging times.
- Provides personal development tips.
- Shares knowledge and life experiences.
- Discusses goal setting and aspirations, advises on professional development.
- Identifies and provides resources.
- Supports the mentee's journey towards progress.
- Helps build the mentee's self-reliance and leadership skills.
- Helps the mentee to discover their own insights, abilities and solutions as they start and grow their business.
- Supports the mentee's self-directed learning and helps them come to their own conclusions and decisions.
- Listens to the mentee's ideas and answers their questions truthfully.
- Gives emotional support while also challenging them.
- Provides real world business advice when requested.
- Celebrates milestones and successes.

Why is mentorship important?

Mentors are an essential ingredient for the success of any entrepreneurship project. They can help entrepreneurs navigate many of the challenges typically faced by them, such as, conceiving a viable business model that creates both social and financial value, measuring and evidencing social impact, governance and legal structures, processes, attracting investment and organizational structure.

When looking for a mentor, it is important to take into account the journey that person has taken from the beginning of their career to the point of success.

How to be a good mentor?

1. Be willing to offer constructive criticism

- Offering constructive criticism is essential to helping your mentee progress toward their goals.
- Make sure to first point out something positive.
- Draw on your own experiences to show empathy and understanding.
- Offer them guidance to improve their work.

2. Have empathy

Understanding how your mentee feels is vital to connecting with them on a deeper level. This also helps you decide the best approach to use when guiding them.

3. Put the responsibility in the mentee's hands

As a mentor, your job is to guide and inspire — not do the work for them.

After modeling how to complete a task, ask the mentee to give it a try. Then do the same with the next task. Do this until the mentee has gotten the chance to practice all necessary tasks.

You can also give your mentee 'homework' so they can continue practicing when you're not around. If you assign homework, make sure to go over their work with them when you see them again.

4. Know how to communicate and listen

A mentor-mentee relationship can't survive without healthy communication and listening.

Your number one task as a mentor is to be in the passenger's seat. You're there to listen, give feedback, and guide. You're not there to drive or control the car.

To practice this, focus on active listening. When your mentee brings up a concern, validate their feelings. Then, look for a solution.

If you want to become a mentor, make sure that you are:

1. Experienced in an area you're mentoring in

You can't be an effective mentor if you don't have experience in the area of expertise your mentee needs.

2. You're good at coaching one-on-one

To become a mentor, you need leadership skills. You need to be able to customize your approach to the specific person you're mentoring. You need to be able to read a person to see if a coaching approach is working or not. And you need to know how to course-correct and adapt when needed.

3. You have a desire to help others reach their potential

A great mentor wants to see their mentee reach soaring heights. They want them to fulfill their goals and live their fullest life. They want them to feel invigorated.

4. You have great communication skills

Every mentor needs proper communication skills to have a successful mentor-mentee relationship. It's the only way to discuss how to develop the mentee's path forward.

Being a mentor is a rewarding journey if you have the right tools to help your mentees succeed.