

Mentoring Agreement and Setting Objectives

Introduction

Part of starting a mentoring relationship is agreeing approach, and setting ground rules. These initial stages are vital to ensuring everyone has clear expectations. These expectations become a valuable reference point to how effective the mentoring relationship is.

The Mentoring Agreement

The initial stages of a mentoring relationship are focussed on getting to know each other, and agreeing how you will work together. By being self-aware and discussing expectations it can be agreed what the mentoring relationship will and will not focus on.

Confidentiality

A good start is to discuss confidentiality. Will discussions stay within the mentoring relationship? Is it okay to discuss content with other people, when seeking advice? Is it okay to discuss content, as long as it is positive?

Relationship Purpose

Fundamental to a mentoring agreement is defining the relationship purpose. Discussions could include the following;

- What are the goals we are working towards?
- What are our expectations from each other?
- Who are the other interested parties? (Line Manager / Senior leaders / HR/L&D)
- Agreeing time frame for relationship and that early separation is not either parties fault
- How do you best receive feedback?
- How formal or informal should meetings be?

As trust develops, this agreement may stretch and evolve.

Setting Objectives

Goals and objectives should be discussed and agreed within the initial stages of the mentoring relationship. The mentee is responsible for defining their objectives, but can seek support from their mentor. Objectives should be focussed on development needs during and professional targets. It may be necessary to prioritise the objectives.

Setting a SMART Objective

SMART stands for; Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Based. By using this acronym, objectives will be more clearly defined and more easily put into action.

Specific	The description of the objective should be precise and unambiguous. Be clear about what you want to achieve. Would someone else understand the objective without further explanation?
Measurable	How will you know when you have achieved the objective?
Attainable	Is the objective attainable within the mentoring relationship, given current role and external factors? The goal can be stretching.
Relevant	Check that the objective has a valid purpose for the individual and business.
Time-Based	By when should the objective be achieved, and are there any key milestones required before that?