

Skills of Mentoring

Being a mentor can be a hugely fulfilling experience. Becoming a mentor provides the opportunity to support someone to become established in their career, the chance to pass on your hard earned experience and to help someone avoid making the mistakes that you made at times in your career. It can be very satisfying to see someone progress in their career and to feel proud that you have offered a helping hand with their career and played a part in that success. Many people who mentor, look back at their career and realise that they were supported and influenced by someone who played the role of a mentor early on in their career; even if the relationship wasn't set up in that way.

So do you have what it takes to be a mentor? Here are a couple of things to think about when considering becoming a mentor. Do you have the following skills?

- The ability to listen to understand rather than just respond. Who is interested in what is being said, and what is not being said? Who can assess whether an individual's body language, tone and words align, who can spot when there is a discrepancy between what is being said and how it is being said?
- To be empathetic. Someone who can step into another person's world, understand how they experience things and appreciate that, even if it is different from their own view of the world. The ability to feel what it is like to be that person and be able to offer support on that basis.
- Curiosity. Someone who is comfortable asking questions which they don't know the answer to! Wondering and exploring what is being said or experienced by the mentee. Seeking to understand that rather than judge it.
- The ability to be honest especially being able to give honest feedback in a way that can be heard and acted upon. Being able to appreciate what a person does well and to suggest areas for improvement. Someone who is good at receiving feedback and can demonstrate this to their mentee.
- Being able to support the mentee. Someone with the ability to encourage and provide a sounding board for the mentee to bounce ideas off. Someone who takes the ideas seriously and engages with them without being critical.
- As well as being able to challenge! Being someone who can offer constructive analysis of a proposal or approach. Able to flag up the cons alongside the pros and who can stand back and critic an idea effectively.

Of course the more you mentor the more opportunity you get to develop and hone these skills! Maybe it's worth thinking about the attributes that might get in the way of you being an effective mentor. If you have to have the last word, expect to always be right, need your mentees to hero worship you or talk more than you listen then you probably not ready to be a mentor.

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