

3 COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT MENTORING

1. Are mentoring and coaching identical?

No. People often confuse mentoring and coaching. Though related, they are not the same. A mentor may coach, but a coach is not a mentor. Mentoring is “relational,” while coaching is “functional.” There are other significant differences.

Coaching characteristics:

- » Managers coach all of their staff as a required part of the job
- » Coaching takes place within the confines of a formal manager-employee relationship
- » Focuses on developing individuals within their current jobs
- » Interest is functional, arising out of the need to ensure that individuals can perform the tasks required to the best of their abilities
- » Relationship tends to be initiated and driven by an individual’s manager
- » Relationship is finite - ends as an individual transfers to another job

Mentoring characteristics:

- » Takes place outside of a line manager-employee relationship, at the mutual consent of a mentor and the person being mentored
- » Is career-focused or focuses on professional development that may be outside a mentoree’s area of work
- » Relationship is personal - a mentor provides both professional and personal support
- » Relationship may be initiated by a mentor or created through a match initiated by the organization
- » Relationship crosses job boundaries
- » Relationship may last for a specific period of time (nine months to a year) in a formal program, at which point the pair may continue in an informal mentoring relationship

2. Aren’t managers already performing this role?

While many managers demonstrate mentoring behavior on an informal basis, it is very different from having a structured mentoring program. There is a qualitative difference between a manager-employee relationship and a mentor-mentoree relationship.

Managerial Role:

The manager-employee relationship focuses on achieving the objectives of the department and the company.

The manager assigns tasks, evaluates the outcome, conducts performance reviews, and recommends possible salary increases and promotions. Because managers hold significant power over employees' work lives, most employees demonstrate only their strengths and hide their weaknesses in the work environment.

Mentoring Role

A mentor-mentoree relationship focuses on developing the mentoree professionally and personally. As such, the mentor does not evaluate the mentoree with respect to his or her current job, does not conduct performance reviews of the mentoree, and does not provide input about salary increases and promotions. This creates a safe learning environment, where the mentoree feels free to discuss issues openly and honestly, without worrying about negative consequences on the job. The roles of manager and mentor are fundamentally different. That's why structured mentoring programs never pair mentors with their direct reports.

3. What are the benefits of mentoring?

Mentoring benefits the organization, mentors and mentorees. A successful mentoring program benefits your organization by:

- » Enhancing strategic business initiatives
- » Encouraging retention
- » Reducing turnover costs
- » Improving productivity
- » Breaking down the "silo" mentality that hinders cooperation among company departments or divisions.
- » Elevating knowledge transfer from just getting information and to retaining the practical experience and wisdom gained from long-term employees.
- » Enhancing professional development.
- » Linking employees with valuable knowledge and information to other employees in need of such information
- » Using your own employees, instead of outside consultants, as internal experts for professional development
- » Supporting the creation of a multicultural workforce by creating relationships among diverse employees and allowing equal access to mentoring.
- » Creating a mentoring culture, which continuously promotes individual employee growth and development.

Mentors enjoy many benefits, including:

- » Gains insights from the mentoree's background and history that can be used in the mentor's professional and personal development.
- » Gains satisfaction in sharing expertise with others.
- » Re-energizes the mentor's career.

- » Gains an ally in promoting the organization's well-being.
- » Learns more about other areas within the organization.

Mentorees enjoy many benefits, including:

- » Gains from the mentor's expertise
- » Receives critical feedback in key areas, such as communications, interpersonal relationships, technical abilities, change management and leadership skills
- » Develops a sharper focus on what is needed to grow professionally within the organization
- » Learns specific skills and knowledge that are relevant to personal goals
- » Networks with a more influential employee
- » Gains knowledge about the organization's culture and unspoken rules that can be critical for success; as a result, adapts more quickly to the organization's culture

Source: <http://www.management-mentors.com/resources/corporate-mentoring-programs-resources-faqs>