

## Mentor Programs Explained - It's all Greek to me!

By Lyndsay Swinton

Before I explain mentor programs, here's a little history lesson...

Mentoring is nothing new. Way back in Greek mythology, Mentor was the half-human, half god, entrusted by Odysseus with the upbringing of his son, Telemachus, while he was off fighting the Trojan wars. Trustworthy, credible but unreachable, Mentor soon became the epitome of wise counsel and sage instruction. The goddess Athena disguised herself as Mentor when she needed to give Telemachus important counsel, demonstrating that "mentoring" is both a male and female activity.

Mentoring is typically a relationship that gives people the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences, and to grow and develop in the process. There are many mentor programs running in the business world, and between business and charities. Obi Wan Kenobi mentored Luke Skywalker, Dr Dre mentors Eminem and Freddie Laker mentored Richard Branson.

### Agree your mentors role(s)

A mentoring program may make use of 5 or more [mentoring roles](#);

- \* Subject Matter Expert
- \* Listening Ear/Sounding Board
- \* Coach and Confidence Builder
- \* Performance Enhancer
- \* Entrepreneur and Networker

To make the most of your time with your chosen mentor, you may want to agree a mentoring contract, to clarify which of the roles you'd like the mentor to perform. A mentor is not psychic and will be better able to help you if you know and tell them what you want from them.

### Make every minute count... tick tick tick

Generally people who are worth being mentored by are busy people, so plan your time wisely. You will want to meet with them regularly, say 30 minutes per month, and if

possible send a message to them to let them know the discussion topic. That way, they can prepare accordingly. It's your job to do the running!



**“Grasshopper knows nothing” says mentor Master**

### **Grasshopper doesn't know best**

Youthful exuberance or blind ambition can cause friction with your mentor. If they set you a task, do it. If they suggest a contact, contact them. If they ask you to read something, read it. In other words, you are the grasshopper, they are the master.

### **Time to move on – it's not you, it's me...**

Depending on how the mentor program is set up, your relationship with your mentor could last from 6 months to several years. Often there is a natural break in the relationship, such as finishing a course, or getting a new job. Be mindful that the mentor/mentee relationship needs to be mutually beneficial and developmental, and avoids slipping into cosy chat through lack of focus or planning.

That was a quick overview of mentor programs, from

διαχείρισης για τους υπόλοιπους από εμάς.

(Eek, have I just written your mother was a donkey? I will never know!)

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#### **Images**

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