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Associates

## EVALUATING MENTORING

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### Measurement and review in mentoring

One of the paradoxes of formal mentoring programmes is that the essence of the relationships is its *informality* – the ability to discuss in private a wide range of issues that will help the mentee cope with and learn from issues s/he encounters, putting aside any power or status differences that might operate outside the relationship. So the idea of measurement and review is, on the face of it, to some extent at odds with the need to retain a high degree of informality and ad hoc responsiveness.

In practice, a certain amount of measurement provides the foundation, on which the informal relationship can grow most healthily. It allows:

- Scheme co-ordinators to recognise where additional support is needed and to improve the operation of the scheme – not least the training
- Mentors and mentees to work together to build the relationship, understanding more clearly what each can and does bring to the discussions

Where attempts to measure mentoring become unacceptable, they usually involve:

- An attempt to assess and report upon mentees' performance to a third party
- A link between the mentor's opinion and a specific reward for the mentee (a promotion or a diploma, for example) – here the role has become more that of a tutor
- Disclosure of the content of discussions

In such circumstances, measurement is likely to make the mentee – and sometimes the mentor – less open, less willing to admit weaknesses and less trusting; hence limiting the potential of the relationship to deliver high quantity and quality of learning.

By contrast, effective measurement in mentoring is:

- Relatively unobtrusive
- Valued by all parties as helpful
- Timely
- Straightforward and easy to apply

### The measurement matrix

Mentoring measurements fall into four categories, illustrated in the matrix below.

1. Relationship processes – what happens in the relationship; for example, how often does the pair meet? Have they developed sufficient trust? Is there a clear sense of direction to the relationship? Does the mentor or the mentee have concerns about their own or the other person's contribution to the relationship?
2. Programme processes – for example, how many people attended training? How effective was the training? In some cases, programme processes will also include data derived from

adding together measurements from individual relationships, to gain a broad picture of what is going well and less well.

3. Relationship outcomes – have mentor and mentee met the goals they set? (Some adjustment may be needed for legitimate changes in goals as circumstances evolve.)
4. Programme outcomes – have we, for example, increased retention of key staff, or raised the competence of the mentees in critical areas?

	<b>Start</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>End</b>
<b>Scheme Outputs</b>	Have all mentees acquired a mentor? Have they met?	Frequency of meetings	Retention (in the company) Successful promotions Measured increase in competence Achievement of diploma/certificate
<b>Scheme Processes</b>	Major concerns by participants (e.g. confidentiality)	Major difficulties encountered (e.g. time pressures, skills gaps, cancelled meetings) Do the mentors/mentees feel supported?	Are mentors willing to continue with a new mentee?
<b>Relationship Outputs</b>	Has mentee selected mentor/mentor been appointed?	Have they set clear (learning) goals? Are there clear expectations on both sides?	Has the mentee achieved the desired improvement in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competence</li> <li>• confidence</li> <li>• clarity of career direction</li> </ul> Has the mentee progressed in his/her career? Has the mentor learned from the relationship?
<b>Relationship Processes</b>	Have they met? Mentor/mentee's confidence in being able to take part Have they established trust?	Frequency of meetings Who is managing the relationship? Are they preparing sufficiently for meetings? Is mentor's behaviour appropriate? (skills gaps) Is mentee's behaviour appropriate? (skills gaps) Level of rapport? Level of commitment?	Has the relationship come to a formal conclusion? Are both parties happy about that? Would mentee eventually like to become a mentor?

Measuring all four gives you a balanced view of the mentoring programme and allows the scheme co-ordinator to intervene, with sensitivity, where needed.

## **What should be reviewed when?**

### *At the programme planning stage*

There is a need at both programme and relationship level for a clear purpose up front, and a clear idea of what behaviours are expected from both mentors and mentees. It is good practice to involve potential participants and other interested parties (eg line managers, top management) to agree measurements up front. At the very least this discussion will establish the extent to which measurements can be "soft" (qualitative) or "hard" (quantitative).

Many organisations now begin the programme with a short research project to establish likely barriers and drivers to mentoring.

### *In selecting/training mentors and mentees*

Mentors and mentees can benefit from greater self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as developers of others. Mentees often need to have some ideas about the areas of interpersonal behaviour they can work on with the mentor.

### *After the first few meetings*

This is the opportunity for mentor and mentee to review whether the relationship is going to work. Key questions here include:

- have we established strong rapport and trust, sufficient to work together?
- does the mentee perceive the mentor's input as relevant and stimulating?
- if not, what sort of person does the mentee need to work with?

The scheme co-ordinator will want by this point to know whether people are meeting and whether they have discussed the future of the relationship.

### *As the relationship progresses*

The scheme co-ordinator will want, at the minimum, to know what further support is needed, if any, in the form of further, more focused skills training, or general encouragement to participants. Good practice typically involves a short survey of participants, followed by a review session, during which some ad hoc training can be provided.

### *At the end of the relationship*

Assuming the relationship achieves its objectives and winds down, it is useful for both parties to review:

- what did we expect to achieve?
- what did we actually achieve?
- what else did we learn on the way?
- how will we use what we have learnt in future developmental relationships?

### *At the end of the programme*

Assuming the programme assigns an end to the formal mentoring relationship (many relationships will, of course, continue informally thereafter), the outcomes can be measured against the original goals.

## How to use the matrix

The questions provided in this resource are intended to provide a basic checklist, from which you can design your own questionnaire(s) for each phase of the relationship. You will need to put those you select into language appropriate for your organisation.

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