

## **Sixteen Mentor and mentoring definitions**

### **Andrew Gibbons**

When working on mentoring I never assume we all have the same ideas around what a Mentor needs to be and what they must do well.

Inviting a group for instance, to define a Mentor, and mentoring can be very instructive, giving insights to the often wide ranging, even bizarre thoughts of those aspiring to this special and challenging role.

In my decades of working with Mentors I have gathered many definitions of the personal qualities needed, and of what mentoring actually involves.

I do not present these as the best (or the worst), simply as a range, that I show those with whom I work, and that never fail to generate very constructive debate and learning. I hope you find them of value.

### **Eight mentoring definitions**

1. "Mentoring is a long term relationship that meets a development need, helps develop full potential, and benefits all partners, mentor, mentee and the organisation".

Suzanne Faure

2. "Mentoring is a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation can occur, potential skills can be developed, and in which results can be measured in terms of competencies gained".

Audrey Collin

3. Mentoring is "A mutual relationship with an intentional agenda designed to convey specific content along with life wisdom from one individual to another. Mentoring does not happen by accident, nor do its benefits come quickly. It is relationally based, but it is more than a good friendship...mentoring is not two people who just spend time together sharing".

Thomas Addington and Stephen Graves

4. "Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between a caring individual who shares knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready and willing to benefit from this exchange, to enrich their professional journey".

Suzanne Faure

5. "Mentoring is an important adult relationship since it creates a legitimate and special space where people can take chances by trying to be authentic about, and find meaning within their real-life professional experience".

D Doyon

6. "The purpose of mentoring is always to help the mentee to change something – to improve their performance, to develop their leadership qualities, to develop their partnership skills, to realise their vision, or whatever. This movement from where they are, ('here'), to where they want to be ('there').

Mike Turner

7. "Mentoring involves primarily listening with empathy, sharing experience (usually mutually), professional friendship, developing insight through reflection, being a sounding board, encouraging"

David Clutterbuck

8. "Mentoring is an intense work relationship between senior and junior organisational members. The mentor has experience and power in the organisation, and personally advises, counsels, coaches and promotes the career development of the protégé".

Anne Stockdale

### **...and eight thoughts on what it takes to be a mentor**

9. A mentor is..."an accomplished and experienced performer who takes a special, personal interest in helping to guide and develop a junior or more inexperienced person".

Stephen Gibb

10. "A mentor should have the qualities of experience, perspective and distance, challenging the mentee and using candour to force re-examination and reprioritisation without being a crutch".

Christopher Conway

11. "A mentor facilitates personal and professional growth in an individual by sharing the knowledge and insights that have been learned through the years. The desire to want to share these 'life experiences' is characteristic of a successful mentor".

Arizona National Guard

12. "Mentors in the workplace are simply people who help other people succeed".

Neave Hospital Southern Minnesota

13. "A mentor is a more experienced individual willing to share knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust"

David Clutterbuck

14. A mentor is..."A trusted counsellor or guide. Normally a senior person to the associate. A mentor is a counsellor, coach, motivator, and role model. A mentor is a person who has a sincere desire to enhance the success of others. A person who volunteers time to help the associate".

Air National Guard USA

15. "A mentor is someone who can patiently assist with someone's growth and development in a given area. This assistance can come in the form of guidance, teaching, imparting of wisdom and experience".

Chicago Computer Society

16. “A great mentor has a knack for making us think we are better than we think we are. They force us to have a good opinion of ourselves, let us know they believe in us. They make us get more out of ourselves, and once we learn how good we really are, we never settle for anything less than our very best”.

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