



Mentoring - Time to get your pom poms out!

Maria Willis is a Chartered Surveyor, Project and Risk Manager and qualified Coach. As well as coaching and mentoring within the industry, she is author of the 'Construction Coach' blog which is focused on sharing experiences, learning and application of coaching and leadership related topics.

"Having experienced Mentoring both as a Mentor and a Mentee it is hugely rewarding to be able give something back and receive support..."

As a profession currently steering through some choppy waters we could all benefit from a helping hand along the way. Some of us may have been made redundant and, if unable to secure another position, forced into the route of self-employment, others have seen this as an opportunity to do something different, many of us are still in the same positions with our heads down and noses to the grindstone. So, how can mentoring help? From definition to application, here are some useful pointers to make you think about how you could benefit from the mentoring process.

What is Mentoring?

A common definition of a mentor is a wise and trusted counsellor and teacher. Someone you can trust, who has experience and has been there before you, who is impartial, a good sounding board. Mentoring is a one to one relationship with an individual (Mentee) sharing knowledge, wisdom and experience to help the Mentee to reach their full potential and achieve their goals. It requires a range of human qualities and skills such as commitment, listening, questioning, challenging and support. It's a bit like having your own, personal Cheerleader!

How can Mentoring Help?

SME's and Start-ups can benefit from Mentors who've been in the same position as them. If you've always worked for an organisation, starting a new business can be daunting and overwhelming, getting help from someone who's experienced what you're about to go through and can help you navigate your way through could be hugely beneficial and save a great deal of time.

Progressing up the career ladder whether you are recently qualified, have a few years' experience or are a next generation leader, a Mentor can help you to move on to the next level.

Helping future members Competition for year out students to find placements is greater than ever due to the current economic climate with a number of students unable to gain valuable experience in the industry. Mentoring students who are unable to find placements can be hugely beneficial to help them through their final year and give an insight into our industry.

Finding the right mentor A Mentor may be a manager or a peer but it needs to be someone you can trust. This could be done informally by approaching someone within the workplace or externally who you respect and feel has the knowledge and experience to give you the guidance you need, or formally with companies launching schemes within their organisation. Ideally your mentor should not be your line manager as it good to have a degree of separation between the roles. Local networking groups may offer mentoring schemes and Information can be found on www.mentorsme.co.uk which lists both commercial and not-for-profit mentoring organisations.

The Mentoring Process should ideally be structured with commitment by both parties to the process, set objectives, have measureable benchmarks to give structure to the relationship with agreed timescales.

Giving something back The government recently ran Get Mentoring www.getmentoring.org which was a public-private sector partnership initiative to unlock, train and support a community of enterprise mentors across the UK. The aim was to recruit and train thousands of mentors from the micro, small and medium-sized business community. There is still training information available on the website for those wanting to find out more about what Mentoring entails. Having experienced Mentoring both as a Mentor and a Mentee it is hugely rewarding to be able give something back and receive support to help me to achieve my goals and aspirations.

Take Action! Having read about the benefits and been given an indication of where to go to get further information, time to ask yourself how Mentoring can benefit you both as a Mentor and Mentee. Where are you right now with your career? Are you moving in the right direction? Are you overwhelmed at starting your own business? Have you reached where you want to be and want to give something back?

Time to get your pom poms out! 