

10 Key Qualities and Habits of **Highly Effective Mentors**



Introduction

To help your mentoring program be as successful as it can be, we've created a list of qualities and habits we've found make the most effective mentors according to research. After all, effective mentors and mentees make effective mentorship programs!

In this eBook, we'll cover the following characteristics quality mentors possess:

1. They care about the next generation's success
2. They're self-aware and enthusiastic
3. They set a good example as positive role-models
4. They're intentional with their time
5. They share experience, rather than only giving advice
6. They get uncomfortable
7. They're lifelong learners
8. They provide quality feedback
9. They're open and active listeners
10. They extend their network

But wait, there's more!

Before we dive in, we should lay down the most basic characteristic of all mentors:

They're human.



Bonus Quality: They're Human

When we start working with someone full of wisdom and ready to guide us, we might forget that at the end of the day they're just like us—human!

They too have time commitments, weaknesses, and blind spots, so be kind and don't expect your mentor to get you where you want to be all on their own—you will have to put in the work.

Remembering this, above and before all of our listed 10 qualities and habits of effective mentors, is guaranteed to set you up for mentoring success.



#11 They're human

1. They aren't afraid to get personal: Build rapport and be friends!

First and foremost, getting to know a mentee or mentor beyond the business aspect of the relationship is a good way to generate trust, a vital part of any mentoring partnership. However, getting a fuller picture of a person's world also strengthens that relationship.

What are your mentee's passions apart from work? Their values? What are their most cherished relationships and who are they with? Understanding what drives your mentee and who will help support them throughout the mentoring partnership (apart from you) will help your time together be more meaningful and the work you do last longer and be more fulfilling.

2. They demonstrate compassion and are genuine.

Just because you must maintain your objectivity and fairness doesn't mean you can't show your compassion. In fact, your mentoring relationship probably won't work if you don't show your interest and desire to provide one-on-one help and guidance.

You must also be selfless about sharing what you know. Keeping your goal in mind—to remain worthy of someone's trust, model positive behaviour and successful performance, and offer guidance and advice toward reaching a specific goal—should be the compass that guides all your actions as a mentor.

3. They always keep the 3 R's in mind: Responsible, Respectful, & Ready.

People who are responsible, respectful, and ready to get started with new projects help make the day-to-day work experience a better one, not only for themselves but for everyone around them!

By going into your mentoring partnership with these three R's in mind, you'll get the relationship with your mentee off on the right foot. Being Responsible for the work you'll need to put in, Respectful of your partner's time, and Ready to do what's needed to make the partnership a success will keep everyone on the same page and moving forward together!

Unless they're superhuman, it's unlikely your mentor will inhabit all the qualities that we'll cover in this eBook. But that simply reminds us to keep the fact that they're human top of mind as we dive in. We must accept both each other's shortcomings and skills in order to really create an effective team and partnership.

Hopefully, you'll find that your own weaknesses are buttressed by your mentor's strengths, and vice versa.



Mentoring for the Next Generation's Success

Being able to recognise the qualities that make your mentors top-notch will help you identify other individuals that could make excellent mentors, as well as help train others to become them. The first quality of kickass mentors we'd like to highlight is this: They care about the next generation's success.

But how can you tell if someone *actually* cares?



#01

They care about the next generation's success

1. They can spot the potential in others

Effective mentors have a positive view of others that greatly increases how much knowledge can be transferred from one person to another. They push their mentees to achieve their goals and stretch themselves, in large part because they genuinely believe their mentee has the potential to succeed. The ability to recognise, and then actively encourage the potential in others can truly be the difference between a mediocre and an exceptional mentor.

2. They are dedicated to the other's success

Those who understand that the mentoring relationship goes beyond themselves are much more willing to make a genuine investment in the mentoring relationship. This, in turn, better sets up the partnership for success. Being dedicated to another's success, instead of just encouraging it, means actively helping mentees hit milestones that bring them closer and closer to their goals, as well as providing feedback on what can be improved as the mentee reaches for the next, upcoming milestone.

3. They genuinely care about the organisation they find themselves in

Exceptional mentors want to see success blossom from everyone involved in the mentoring program across the entire organisation. That's because they know this can help benefit not only the organisation, but also the participants individually and the mentoring program as a whole. By investing themselves in the organisation's mission and becoming an active participant in the company's mentoring program, effective mentors let it be known that they are willing to help not only their individual mentoring partner, but the program as a whole be a success. Which brings us to our last and final point...

4. They take a personal interest in their mentoring relationships

Good mentors do not take their responsibility lightly; on the contrary, they feel personally invested in the success of their mentees. This type of investment usually requires someone who is knowledgeable, compassionate, and has the additional attributes of a good teacher or trainer. Excellent communication skills are also required and should not be downplayed, as communication is at the heart of any relationship.

Ultimately, a good mentor is committed to helping their mentees find success and gratification in their chosen profession, as the mentor themselves has found.

That's because at the end of the day, how you mentor someone else is a direct reflection of the mentor and the mentor's values. If the mentor in question has found purpose and fulfilment in their chosen profession, it's likely they'll want to help their mentee find those things as well.

Overall, good mentoring requires dedication to empowering mentees to develop their own strengths, beliefs, and personal attributes. Although the mentee's path may not look identical to their mentor's, the tools that get them to where they want to be will be shared by someone invested in their success.



Being Self-Aware and Enthusiastic

Now that we know effective mentors are human and invested in the next generation's success, it's important to note that the best mentors are self-aware and enthusiastic.

Why? Self-awareness helps mentors see their own blind spots so that they can help their mentees avoid mistakes they themselves made, and a mentor's enthusiasm can help their mentees become more invested in the mentoring process—and the outcome.

Here are a few ways your mentor may exemplify self-awareness and enthusiasm during your mentoring partnership.



#02

They're self-aware and enthusiastic

1. They're engaged with their surroundings

Ever heard someone say, "it's more than just a job"? These are the people you want to search for. They don't just work in the industry, they participate. They look beyond their work to other departments, other organisations, and the industry as a whole. They're not just in it for a paycheck, to punch in every morning and punch out every night, they believe in the organisation's mission and their role in it. These people are enthusiastic about what they do, and that enthusiasm can be contagious. Seek these people out as a mentor, as they'll help you find purpose in your work.

2. They see the 'Big Picture'

Highly effective mentors have a broader perspective of the industry within which their organisation sits. This often helps them bring a new perspective or 'fresh set of eyes' to the mentee's work or challenges ahead, thereby ensuring better feedback is applied to the mentoring relationship. This understanding from the mentor means that they know all the effort put into the mentoring relationship affects more than just the two people in it, it affects the organisation and the industry as a whole. This ability to see the bigger picture of what mentoring can do in the long-run helps mentors better guide their mentees towards success.

3. They show enthusiasm for their chosen professional field

A mentor who does *not* exhibit enthusiasm for their line of work, generally doesn't make a good mentor. As we mentioned before, enthusiasm is catching and contagious and new employees want to feel as if their job has meaning and the potential to create a good life. Your mentor has to take a special interest in helping you build and develop your career, and if they aren't enthusiastic about you and the kind of work you are trying to do, it probably won't work out.

4. They're self-aware

Last but not least, a mentor who is self-aware is not married to their ego, delusional about their achievements, or unaware of their weaknesses. The ability to see and acknowledge blind spots allows mentors to be able to shine a light on those of their mentees. Many times, we aren't aware of our own shortcomings, so having someone who helps us see them is invaluable. What's more, a mentor's ability to be self-aware and vulnerable will provide mentees with a unique opportunity to adopt these traits for themselves!

Any individual in a mentoring partnership—mentor or mentee—can make the process not only more effective, but more fun, with a little enthusiasm and self-awareness.

Don't take yourself too seriously, after all this is a learning process!

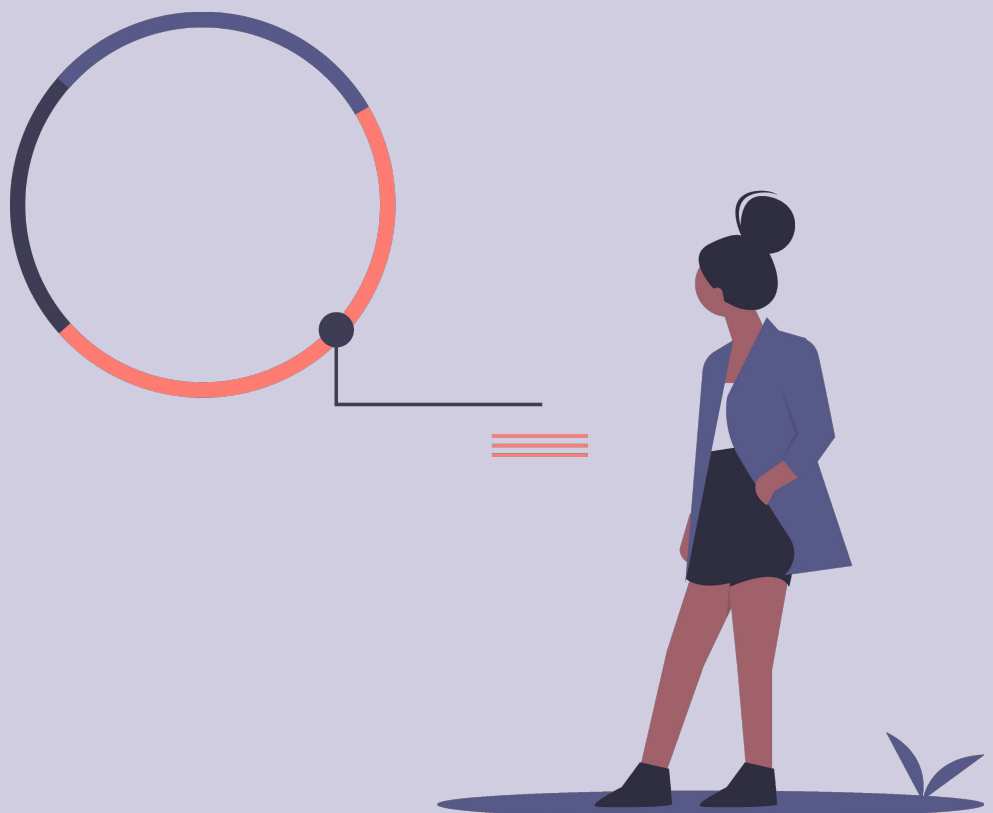


Acting as a Positive Role-Model

So far in this eBook, we've covered how highly effective mentors:

- Are human
- Care about the next generation's success
- Are self-aware and enthusiastic

In this chapter, we'll discuss why the best mentors set a good example as a positive role-model. Here are some ways they do it.



#03

They set a good example as a positive role-model

1. They behave as a positive role model and demonstrate a positive attitude

You can't beat a positive attitude. A good mentor exhibits the personal attributes it takes to be successful in the field. How so? By showing the mentee what it takes to be productive and successful, an effective mentor demonstrates the specific behaviours and actions required to succeed in the field. Remember, a positive attitude must go both ways; which is why it's important that you always treat your mentor with the utmost professionalism.

2. They set a good example

Often, this is known as "modelling," or the idea that one individual can thrive by finding inspiration in — and striving to emulate the traits of — a more successful individual. For example, mentoring is being encouraged as a way to help more minorities enter STEM fields.

Mentor [Chelsea Cobb](#), the Senior Partnerships Officer at the University of Melbourne, is a mentor in the Industry Mentoring Network in STEM (IMNIS) Mentoring Program, powered by Mentorloop. She recently shared her thoughts on how mentoring contributes to supporting women in her industry:



I personally think that mentoring is an important component of everyone's career journey, no matter what gender you are. That being said, I think diversity (whether that be gender, race, age, skills, experience, etc.) is critical to ensure our country remains competitive in a global environment, and believe mentoring women is just one way we can achieve this.

3. They show patience and tolerance

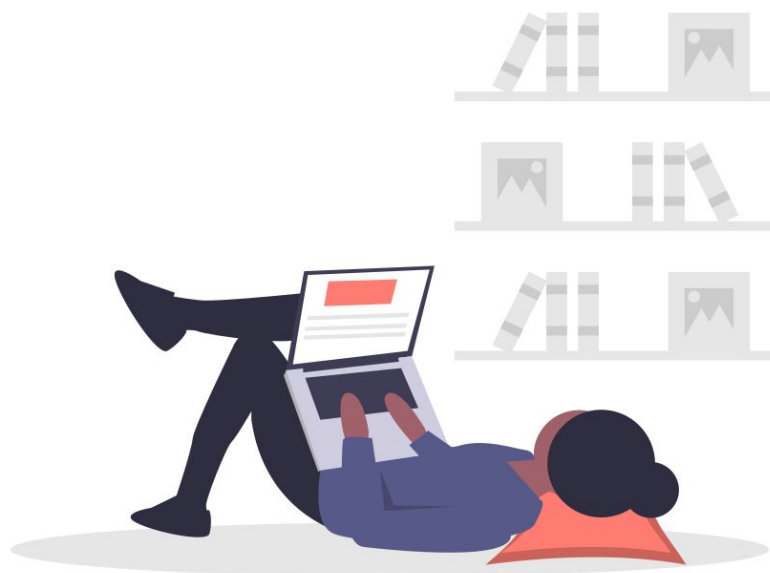
An effective mentor encourages the exercise that mistakes are a learning opportunity that fosters positive growth. Having been in a similar position, they can often empathise with a variety of similar situations. They allow mentees to make mistakes, and then use the mistakes as positive opportunities to learn. They know that they were once in a similar position, and have empathy for mentees as they take risks and seek to grow in their desired skill or field.

4. They're respected by colleagues and employees across all departments

Ideally, mentees look up to their mentors and can see themselves filling a mentor's role in the future. Mentees want to follow someone who is well respected by colleagues and coworkers alike, and whose contribution in the field is appreciated. Ask your mentor(s) about their experiences working with their team, how they navigate sticky situations, and the steps they took to get to where they are today.

5. They understand that role-modelling encourages inclusion

Mentorloop partner Out for Australia (OFA) aims to equip aspiring LGBTQI professionals with information, skills, contacts and role models to make their transition from university into the workplace easier. You can't be what you can't see. Sometimes, having a role-model mentor, as many LGBTQI university students or young professionals in the OFA program do, can help them through the early stages of their career as they face uncertainties or anxieties about how their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status may impact their professional careers.



Modeling the behaviour you believe your mentee will need to embody in order to succeed will help your mentee get on the fast-track to career success.

By adopting these positive traits for themselves, they'll be better equipped to move through the professional world and take steps in the direction of their goals.



Being Intentional with Your Mentoring Time

Intentionality is important in all aspects of life, but can be especially beneficial within the dynamic of a mentoring partnership.

That's because having an intention behind how you use your mentoring time, how you approach a conversation with your mentoring partner, and what action items you put on your to-do list can make the whole mentoring process more valuable for both mentor and mentee.



#04

They're intentional with their time

1. They invest time and energy purposefully

You only get out what you put in. Being a mentee is not a passive role. When you have a mentor, it's your job to know your intentions, define your own goals, cultivate the relationship, seek out advice, attend meetings or events you're invited to, and so on.

On the mentor's side, practising active listening and being present is important. This means putting the phone away, listening intently, and doing your best not to get distracted when working with your mentee. Try to be in the present moment!

If you're building multiple, purpose-driven mentoring relationships with several mentors, this will require the commitment of time and energy on both sides. While individuals are rewarded by tapping into a wider net of abilities and skill sets, remember that each individual mentor is passionate and perfectly placed to guide in their particular area of expertise! What's more, these multiple perspectives will expose you to an incredible diversity of thought.

2. They're prepared and ready

Effective mentors set an agenda, keep up with meetings, and if they were meant to bring something along, they do so—it's only common courtesy!

Being a mentor means making an important, serious commitment to someone, so give your mentee—and the process—the respect they deserve. Show your faith in your mentee's abilities and in the process by preparing for each mentoring session. This isn't a stream-of-consciousness deal or a "pick-my-brain" process, it requires some forethought and planning.

Yes, it's important for your mentee to actively participate and even take the lead in these sessions. But you should still start by asking your mentee what topics or subjects they want to talk about beforehand. Once you have this information, outline the key points you want to focus on ahead of time, having a plan ready for imparting your thoughts in an effective and expedient way.

3. They follow up.

Intentional mentors aren't the "set it and forget it" type; they follow up with their mentees to ensure that:

- Mentees understand what's expected of them when it comes to any tasks or do-outs from a previous meeting,
- Mentees are progressing at an appropriate rate and/or within the given timeframe, and
- The mentor can provide any additional guidance or clarification in order to help the mentee meet goals and/or complete assigned tasks.



A mentor's willingness to invest time and energy purposefully, be prepared, and follow-up shows their mentee that they're committed to the mentoring partnership, its success, and the development of the mentee.

It also demonstrates their willingness and ability to provide ongoing advice, reaching out even when not scheduled in order to ensure the mentee is fully supported.



Sharing Experience, Rather than Only Giving Advice

A mentor's willingness to invest time and energy purposefully, be prepared, and follow-up shows their mentee that they're committed to the mentoring partnership, its success, and the development of the mentee. It also demonstrates their willingness and ability to provide ongoing advice, reaching out even when not scheduled in order to ensure the mentee is fully supported.



#05

They share experience rather than only giving advice

1. Mentors share experiences rather than dictate actions.

Not all entrepreneurs are open to hearing that their great idea might need some work, or are even good at taking direction from someone else. Illustrating options by using the mentor's own experience or putting a positive spin on criticism helps deliver the message in a non-threatening way.

Dan Rose, a Partner at Precision Dialogue and a mentor himself, believes in "experience sharing following a Gestalt Language Protocol. It's non-threatening and non-judgmental. By illustrating what I did in a similar situation, the entrepreneur is able to decide themselves if this approach will work in their situation."

2. Mentors encourage the exploration of another perspective.

While mentorship can be valuable at any stage of a career, it's especially important when the mentee doesn't have as much personal experience in the industry. With a mentor, they can benefit from the insights gained through years of experience—without having to spend years of trial and error themselves. The mentee's adoption of the mentor's perspective can help them avoid pitfalls and in some cases fast-track them to success. This exploration of another person's worldview can also help mentees become more open to different approaches to problem-solving and more appreciative of other people's paths.



3. On advice, coaching and more

Every mentor leverages their experience differently. Whether it's straightforward advice, questioning, coaching, or merely making observations, every mentor will have their own particular brand of imparting their lived experiences. Liz Russell of [Living Life Confidently](#), a blog dedicated to empowering its readers, explains her own experience with mentoring:



What makes a quality mentor is the combination of their experiences, but more importantly, their willingness to share their insights and invest their time in developing the mentee... Sometimes the advice comes out as straight out advice, for example 'this is what you need to do...' Other times it is questioning, more like coaching, to get you to think through the situation. Other times, the advice comes in the form of simply making an observation that allows you to consider the point from another perspective. That is the mark of a great mentor—they know you and care about you enough to tell you what you need, at the time you need to hear it.

We would add that more importantly, they know *how* to say it!

Having someone with more real-world and professional experience to help guide you is undoubtedly one of the biggest perks of having a mentor. If your mentor is able to impart guidance in the form of sharing lived experiences instead of solely doling out what they think you should be doing, you'll be better able to connect with your mentor and vice versa!



Getting Uncomfortable

Is your mentor giving you all they got? Are you being a receptive mentee? Are you up to snuff as a mentor? In order to be the best mentoring partner you can be, it's important that you get into your growth zone.

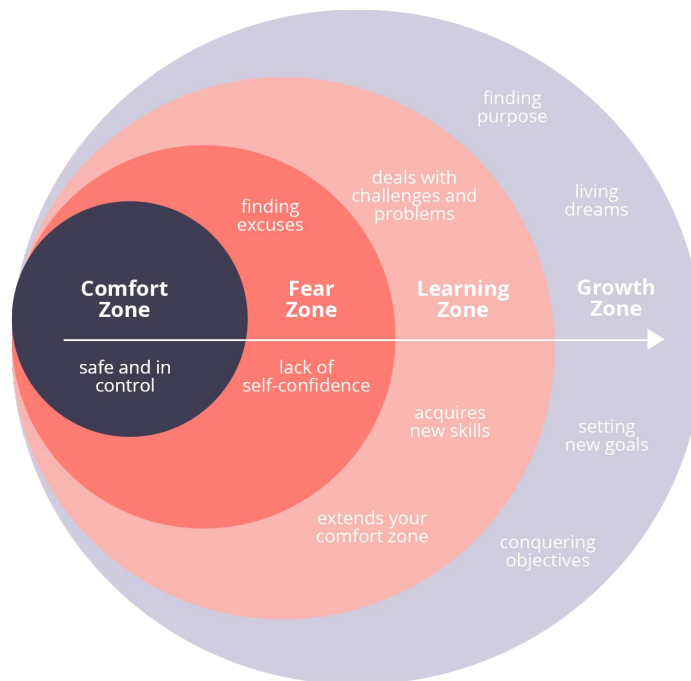
In this chapter, we'll look at how both mentors and their mentees can push themselves out of their respective comfort zones and into the growth zone.

Let's jump in!



#06

They get uncomfortable



1. They're in the growth zone

Possessing the key quality of stepping outside their comfort zone is essential to being both a good mentor and a good mentee.

These people are willing to try new things, consider new thoughts, and think outside of the proverbial box for the sake of personal and professional growth.

Prospective mentors and mentees who are willing to try something new and give it a "go" will have the best chance of reaping the most benefits from their mentoring relationships.

So how do you get out of the comfort zone and make your way into the growth zone?

The comfort zone is where most people love to reside: It's where you're comfortable, don't have to take risks or do anything new or different. It's a safe space that you know; a space that doesn't come with any unknown variables or unexpected surprises. This space is necessary in all of our lives: We absolutely *should* reside here during certain periods or under certain circumstances, but we have to know that the danger of this zone is that while we *are* living here, we aren't going to grow. Life itself is full of unknowns, we can't control it and have to accept that. That's why it's important to regularly push yourself out of your comfort zone in order to be better prepared when something goes awry.

Stepping outside of our comfort zones can be scary, but it's important that we harness that fear as a propellant to push ourselves into new territory! From there, we can begin to take a chance to look around and learn about this new land we've encountered, and ultimately, grow from it. That's because the more often we carry out this comfort→fear→learning→growth practice, the more comfortable we'll be at being uncomfortable, the more chances we'll take, the more often we'll willingly enter this cycle, the more we'll grow, faster, and so on!

2. They're curious!

Inquisitiveness is a gem. The curious ones often will take the time to dive into new ways of doing things.

Being a curious mentor also means you should continue learning about what's going on in your industry or business, your school, your community, or the world at large. Remember: What worked a decade ago may not be optimal today, and what works today may not work as well in one, two, five, or more years from now.

So, continual learning is essential if you plan to continue to be an effective mentor. Always keep an alert eye on trends, topics, and developments that may impact you or your role, both now and in the future. And if your mentee asks you something you don't know the answer to, admit that you yourself do not know, then do yourself and your mentee a favour and follow up to find the answer.

People who are naturally curious tend to follow the "if there's a will, there's a way" philosophy. If they don't know the answer or if they need help with something, they won't sit back and wait; they'll go looking for the answers.

Those who are curious will also generally participate more. They'll seek out resources to share, read, and further their learning via podcasts or tutorials. They do what they can to ensure they're building a successful mentoring relationship, and this is incredibly valuable if you have a mentor.

Mentors who live in the growth zone and stay curious not only take the time to dive into new ways of doing things, they generally participate more.

They'll seek out resources to share and read, and further their own learning via podcasts and/or tutorials. They do what they can to ensure they're building a successful mentoring relationship, and that is invaluable to a mentee!



Mentoring is a Life-Long Learning Opportunity

As a quick recap of our eBook thus far, we've learned that the most effective mentors:

- Are human
- Care about the next generation's success
- Are self-aware and enthusiastic
- Are positive role-models
- Are intentional with their mentoring time
- Share experience, rather than purely advice
- Aren't afraid to be uncomfortable

In this chapter, we'll dive into how the best mentors are lifelong learners. This nicely ties into our last chapter, as these mentors are committed to being forever students, always curious and ready to learn and grow in new ways. Let's take a look at how this shows up in everyday life and how it might look in your own mentoring partnership.



#07

They're lifelong learners

1. They're dedicated to their own success

We're not suggesting that these mentors are dedicated to their own success and theirs *alone*, but rather that these individuals take pride in their work, want to grow, and truly care about their career trajectories. This trait is an asset because these mentors have high expectations for themselves, and therefore for others.

It follows that people who are dedicated to their own career success will want to make the most out of their involvement in a mentoring program. Ultimately, the most effective mentors and mentees are those who are dedicated to putting in the work to make their mentoring relationship work.

2. They value ongoing learning and growth in their field

No matter your experience level, or how many years you have under your belt, there will always be new things to learn.

Great mentors are open and committed to continuous learning regardless of where they're at in their career - whether it be learning a new piece of technology or methodology and/or refining soft skills like presenting to an audience.

In fact, the best mentors recognise that they don't know it all.

Mentors are in a position to illustrate how their field is growing and changing and that, even after many years in the industry, there are still new things to learn. Anyone who feels stagnant in their current position will not make a good mentor. That's because when someone is starting out in a new career, they want to feel that the time and energy they spend learning will be rewarded and ultimately provide them with career satisfaction. Good mentors are committed and open to experimenting and learning practices that are new to the field.

These mentors often read a lot, whether it be journal articles, audiobooks, or podcasts. Some may even contribute on subjects where they have developed some expertise and write their own articles. These are the mentors who are excited to share their knowledge with new people entering the field and take their roles seriously when imparting that knowledge to others.

These individuals may also choose to share knowledge in team presentations or attend classes to further develop their knowledge and skills. They enjoy taking workshops and attending professional conferences provided through their membership in professional associations.

Finding a mentor who is committed to such continuous learning is important. You want someone who truly believes in the power of professional development, regardless of where they're at in their career.

3. They set and achieve ongoing personal and professional goals

Good mentors continually set a good example by showing how their habits are reflected by achieving personal and professional goals and ultimately enjoying career success.

That being said, your mentor is busy, and you have to respect that. They aren't always going to be able to drop everything to speak with you. Make sure you don't abuse the relationship—pick and choose what you bring to your mentor so that they still have the time they need to dedicate to themselves and their own development.



Finding a mentor who is committed to such continuous learning is important because not only are they excited to share that knowledge with new people entering the field, they take their roles seriously when imparting that knowledge to others.

You want a mentor who truly believes in the power of professional development, regardless of where they're at in their career.



Building Quality Feedback into Mentoring

Now that we know the most effective mentors are lifelong learners, it's time to look at how mentors can successfully build quality feedback into their mentoring.

Quality feedback is priceless because it clarifies expectations, helps people learn from their mistakes, and builds confidence. It also allows mentees to more effectively take what their mentors say and turn it into action.

Let's see how the best mentors are employing this technique in their everyday mentoring relationships.

"Millennials want feedback. They want it now and they want it consistently, or they'll simply leave. Giving Millennials feedback is a very different game from what we knew in the past."

– Karl Moore, Forbes



#08

They provide quality feedback

1. They bring honesty with diplomacy

Any questions that aren't addressed can lead to concerns and problems, so you owe it to your mentee to be candid and straightforward. Dispense with formalities and really help facilitate an open, even lively dialogue—a give-and-take—and don't beat around the bush in offering your constructive feedback, good *and* bad. Say what you know your mentee needs to hear, not what you think they want to hear. Be willing to debate and discuss, but in a tactful way. Provide useful, honest guidance while ensuring that your mentee takes the reins and makes their own decisions as to next steps and/or the best course of action for themselves.

2. They provide guidance and constructive feedback

One of the key responsibilities of a good mentor is to provide guidance and constructive, S.M.A.R.T. feedback to their mentee. This is where the mentee will most likely grow the most—by identifying their current strengths and weaknesses, they'll learn how to use them to make themselves successful in their respective fields. Good mentors possess excellent communication skills and can adjust their communication to the personality style of the mentee. A good mentor will also provide the mentee with challenges that foster professional development and a feeling of accomplishment in learning the field. As the mentee, it's crucial that you listen to this feedback, don't take it personally, and consider it with a level head. Remember, your mentor's feedback is coming from the right place.

3. They maintain appropriate boundaries

Remember that a mentoring relationship differs from a friendship. Yes, you can like and care about your mentee and want to see them succeed, but that doesn't mean you have to socialise with your mentee or follow or friend them on every social media site. LinkedIn, specifically designed for business networking, may be a more appropriate connection to establish with your mentee. Also, ensure that there's no hidden agenda or ulterior motives involved in this relationship: Outside of the mentor-mentee relationship, you don't owe your mentee any favors, and they don't owe you anything except their gratitude. You can be an advocate for your mentee while still retaining your objectivity and fairness and not unjustly influencing any process either of you may be involved in.

4. They dish out encouragement

Effective mentors possess the ability to build up mentees' self-esteem and encourage them. This is a quintessential trait of a mentor and helps them embody the role of both coach and advocate for their mentees. Mentors should not give false or inflated praise, but they should always be encouraging.



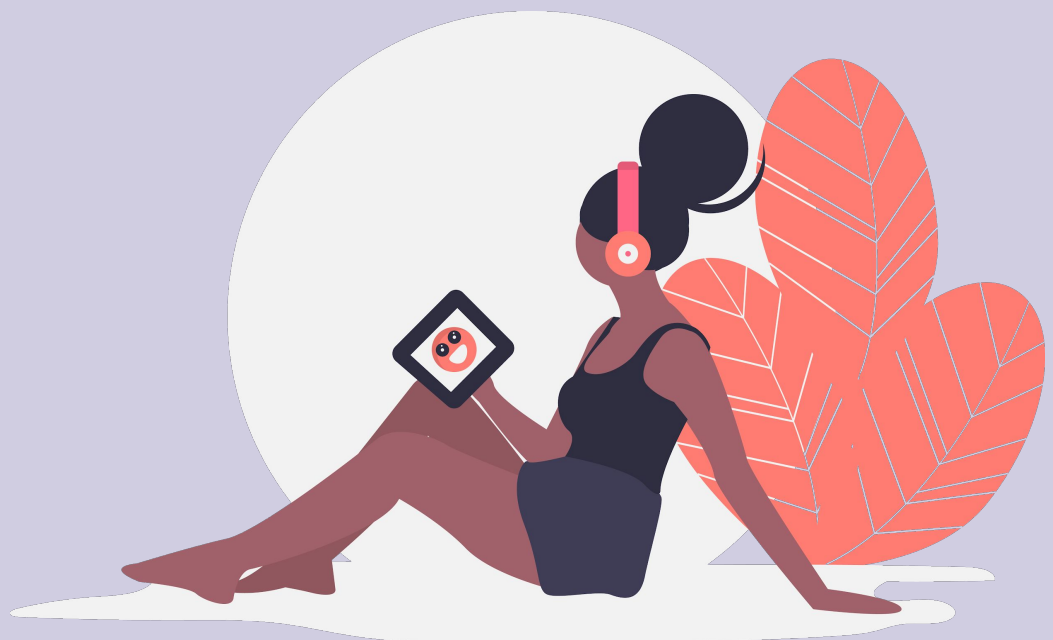
Harnessing the ability to be diplomatic while honest, provide feedback and guidance, and maintain boundaries all while continuing to give encouragement can be a delicate balance, but the best mentors find a way!

If you're lucky enough to have a mentor like this, cherish them; they are truly a rare breed.



Active Listening: The Most Important Skill for Effective Mentors

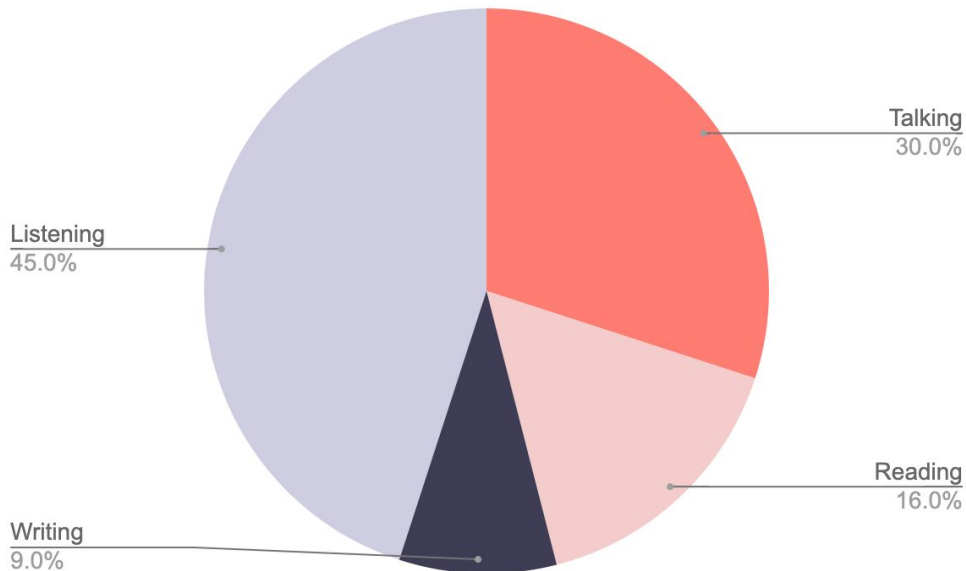
The most important part of any relationship is communication, which is why it's especially important for both mentors and mentees to take note of their own communication styles and ensure that they work for their mentoring partner.



#09

They're active listeners

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) there are four principal methods that we use to communicate (with the exception of non-verbal behaviour).



It's curious to note that unlike talking, reading and writing, we are not taught how to listen.

CIPD notes that although we spend a lot of time 'hearing', experts estimate that only 25-50% of this time is spent actually 'listening'.

So how do we learn how to listen, and more specifically, become active listeners?

When it comes to mentors specifically, an active listening approach is key; after all, mentors and mentees spend much of their relationship talking and listening to one another. Active listening is a technique in which the listener must fully concentrate in order to understand, respond, and remember what is being said. Like any skill, it must be developed. Here are some ways you might notice that your own mentor is an active listener (and how you yourself can become one!).

1. They stop talking

This may seem like common sense, but it can be harder than you might think! When some people stop talking, it's only because they're thinking about what they want to say next. But not with active listeners! Active listeners suppress the urge to focus on how they want to respond and first actually *listen* to what you have to say.

2. They approach listening as a learning experience

As we said in Chapter 7, the most effective mentors are life-long learners. This goes hand-in-hand with them also being active listeners, as a trademark of active listening is to approach the listening experience as a learning one. Oftentimes, these listeners think of the speaker as someone who can teach them something—no matter who that speaker may be! For them, there's always something to learn.

3. They guide the conversation

Active listeners are rarely happy with a “yes” or “no” answer. Instead, they avoid close-ended questions altogether and instead choose to employ open-ended ones, using broad queries to guide their mentees to discover solutions for themselves. Some examples of leading questions may be “What other alternatives have you considered to X?” or “How do you envision your career changing once you do Y?”

4. They make you think

While active listener-mentors use guiding questions to get their mentees where they need to be, they don't let them off the hook with lofty responses. Instead, they ensure they pull out actionable items from every conversation. These may be discovered after asking questions like “Tell me how you plan to accomplish X,” or “How did you decide that Y was the best choice?” These direct, specific questions can help focus the conversation while bringing to light important insights and next steps.

5. They take into account more than just what you say

These mentors aren't just paying attention to the words you're saying, but how you're saying it and what your body is doing while you speak. That's because oftentimes, the real message we want to convey doesn't take the form of a verbal response, it may be less cerebral and more emotional, expressing itself through our body language. Active listener-mentors know to look for this in order to truly understand what you want to get across.

6. They pay attention, summarize, and provide positive feedback

Ultimately, these mentors will pay attention and respect what you have to say, even if they don't agree. In order to ensure they understand correctly, they'll also often summarize what you've said by using statements such as “If I'm understanding you correctly, you...” or “Tell me if this is what you're saying...” Last but not least, they'll use positive feedback and body language—such as a nod, smile or positive “uh huh”—to encourage you and signify interest and understanding.

It's important to note that active listening takes energy. People who listen actively don't simply sit back and allow words to hit their eardrums. They sit up straight, take notes, ask questions, and repeat or "mirror back" what they've heard in order to ensure they've understood it properly.

If you notice this type of behaviour from your own mentor during conversations, you've hit the jackpot! Your mentor is fully invested in you, what you're saying, and helping you grow. The world would surely be a better place if we were all active listeners.



Mentors Build Networks

Networking has some *major* benefits, and it's likely that given their experience and years in the industry, your mentor has a good one, which means you mentees do now as well! Let's take a look at some impressive statistics around networking ([via Review 42](#)):

- 85% of positions are filled through networking
- 70% of people found a job through connections in a company
- 95% of professionals consider face-to-face communication vital for long term business
- The close rate for face to face meetings is 40%

It's likely that, by this point, you and your mentor have established some great rapport, you've already discussed some opportunities for growth in your field, and your mentor may have even already connected you to someone in their circle. That's because mentoring partnerships often lead to both mentor and mentee becoming a part of each other's extended professional networks. Here's what you can look forward to as part of this new professional community.



#010 They extend their network

1. They've built a network

Effective mentors enjoy a positive reputation and are held in high regard by colleagues at various levels in the organisation and in different functions. What's more, their network's advice is as valuable as their own, and they know it. No where is the phrase "it's who you know" more pertinent than it is in mentoring.

Individuals being mentored are looking for advice and guidance, but chances are, they might not find one mentor with all the answers they're looking for. This is where a well-connected mentor comes in. Your mentor can help you find someone who can better assist you by simply extending a helping hand: "If I don't have the experience in dealing with a specific issue, it's likely that someone within my network does." These connections are truly priceless!

2. They teach you *how* to network, and how to build your own

The role of networking in business itself may be a new concept to some mentees. This is why mentors should take the time to teach their charges how reciprocal relationships can help support business growth. These mentors will encourage mentees to get out of their comfort zones and reach out to people beyond their existing network of friends, family and loved ones to create networks comprised of new and unknown people, especially professional alliances.

This may even include helping mentees identify local business associations or groups that provide networking opportunities and encouraging them to explore these networks to see if they're a good fit. Mentors may even offer to attend a local business breakfast club or an informal meeting with another professional to help mentees build up their networking chops.

Remember, networking is a skill that needs to be developed. If your mentee isn't very versed in networking, mentors may want to role-play potential networking scenarios to help their mentees increase their confidence and comfort.

3. They're resourceful guides

Effective mentors can help broker new, interpersonal connections for their mentees. Knowing their mentees on a deeper level means mentors better know who to connect them with in order to get them to where they want to go. With more time in the industry, mentors can also act as resources who provide insights into where mentees can go for additional information, advice, and just-in-time learning.

A bolstered network of professionals looking to expand their business services or simply bounce ideas off of new people means a whole new well of opportunities for mentees! Mentors can also use their mentee's introduction to their own network as an opportunity to brush up on new and current happenings in the field and make new connections themselves.



Conclusion

After outlining all of these traits effective mentors embody, it's important to remember that it's highly unlikely that your mentor will embody *all* 10 of these things, because at the end of the day, they're only human! And while they might not hit every ball out of the park, their specific strengths will make your mentoring bond, stronger.

But despite their strengths and weaknesses, having or being this kind of mentor is possible only once a mentoring partnership is put in place at your organisation. Who knows, you may already possess the potential to be a great mentor, or someone on your team embodies these characteristics and is just waiting for their opportunity to shine! That's because the people that make up your organisation have a ton of experience—and therefore wisdom—to impart.

If having these types of players on your team sounds like something you're interested in, it's nice to know that you might already have hired them, which is why implementing a mentoring program at your organisation is so important.

A program of this type can help tease out these effective players and turn them into mentors that grow your business from the inside out.



If you're ready to create a culture of intentional mentoring at your organisation, Mentorloop can help.

We'll get you started by building a custom mentoring program for your business, with guidance on how to get the most out of it, step-by-step.

Now's the time to harness this incredible tool called mentoring and put it to work for your own organisation!

Start by sharing these **10 Key Qualities and Habits of a Highly Effective Mentor** with your HR team.

Ready to build a culture of mentoring in your organisation?

[Get in touch](#)



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