

IT'S A
BLOG!



The Value of Mentoring

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Firstly, let me explain what mentoring is, and is not. Mentoring is a positive, supportive relationship between two people, that allows the mentee to develop to their fullest potential, and overcome roadblocks in their working life and career. The role of a mentor is to promote personal and career growth, and to develop new and advanced skills.

Mentoring can be confused with coaching. Coaching is generally associated with assisting someone with their performance in their current role. In both cases ideally the individual being mentored or coached needs to come up with their own answers to their current or future development. The Mentor or Coach is there to support, guide and challenge their thinking to arrive at potential ideas or solutions.

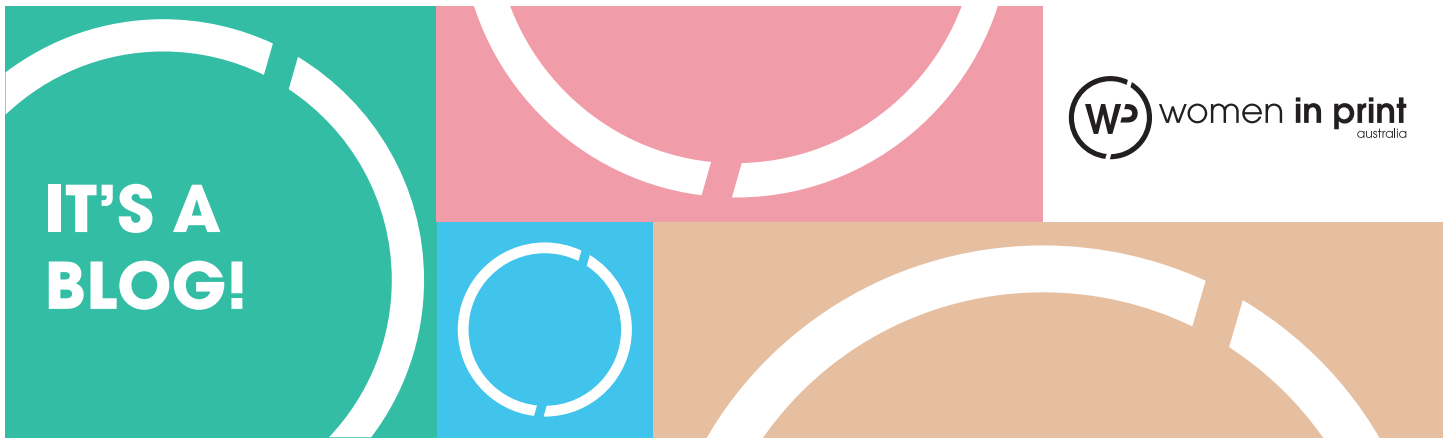
Many very successful business leaders credit their early success to having strong mentors who helped them establish their careers. People such as Bill Gates and Richard Branson state that their mentors were significant in their career development. So mentoring is shown to support people from when they first start out in their careers to when they are leaders and mentors themselves. Different mentors are likely to be engaged at different stages of the career.

Mentoring is particularly appropriate for increasing employee engagement and retention, and increasing the ability to succeed as a leader in an organization.

WHAT DOES THE MENTOR DO?

The mentor can be in the organization or industry where they both work or can be completely disassociated with the business. They need to listen objectively, ask questions that encourages thinking outside the traditional square, and using different perspectives to view situations to gain a broader view.





THE MENTOR LISTENS OBJECTIVELY AND ASKS QUESTIONS THAT ENCOURAGE MENTEES TO LOOK AT ISSUES FROM A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES AND FOCUS ON PROBLEM-SOLVING, DECISION-MAKING AND SOLUTIONS.

A mentor needs to:

- Be willing to commit the time to work with their mentee, and meet regularly,
- Find the right fit. It is important that there is a trusted relationship between both parties,
- Ask thought provoking, open ended questions,
- Listen closely and challenge thinking, and
- Provide honest feedback.

The mentor should also be the champion and cheerleader of the mentee, offering encouragement and support to try new things, and celebrate successes along the way.

THE ROLE OF THE MENTEE

The mentee is responsible for identifying the skills, knowledge and goals they want to achieve, and communicating them with the mentor. The mentee needs to:

- Set goals and develop an action plan to achieve these goals,
- They need to be respectful of the mentor's time, and be accountable for progressing the actions
- Be open and seek feedback, and
- Follow through on commitments and take informed risks as they try new options and behaviors.

IT IS IMPORTANT IN THE FIRST MENTORING CONVERSATION THAT YOU DISCUSS AND CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS FROM BOTH PARTIES AND THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Mentoring relationships can last for months, or even for years. Changing mentors can happen due to a change of jobs, change of location or simply it is time to find a new mentor to provide a new challenging relationship.

About the author

Sue Threlfo has held a number of positions with digital print equipment suppliers both in Australia, USA and Asia, currently with Konica Minolta Australia. She has been working with commercial printers for over 27 years, so has a wealth of knowledge and experience in this market. Sue attributes her growth and success to having had both outstanding mentors and role models throughout her career. At times these have been a formal mentoring relationship, and others more casual.