

Mentor Beacon Program Playbook



Mentoring Program for Agile Professionals

Playbook Version: 16th July 2023.

Program purpose

This program offers an engaging platform where seasoned agile professionals and those just embarking on their Agile journey can cultivate an enduring relationship. By scheduling meetings to discuss professional development within a well-structured and supportive environment, the program seeks to foster growth and mutual learning.

These guidelines have been crafted to create a foundational framework that facilitates the engagement between mentors and mentees in the program. Recognising the unique dynamics of each mentor-mentee duo, we encourage open communication, interaction, and the achievement of mentoring program goals in a manner that best resonates with each pairing. The program's objective is to empower, not to confine, the participants, thereby stimulating the growth and exploration that unfolds when two diverse minds come together.

It's crucial to remember that while the structure provides a roadmap, the journey itself is defined by your unique interactions and the bonds you foster. We're here to support that journey, providing guidance and resources, but the power of this mentoring relationship is truly in your hands. Let's embark on this exciting voyage of professional growth and discovery together.

What is mentoring?

Career mentoring can reveal some of the most prized traits employers appreciate: savvy industry comprehension and first-hand perspectives on the complexities of the workforce.

A mentor acts as a pillar of support, an open forum for ideas, a sounding board, a wellspring of knowledge, a beacon of encouragement, a navigator providing guidance, and a critical eye offering constructive feedback. Their commitment lies in nurturing a genuine interest in the mentee's growth, honing their abilities and enhancing their talents.

A mentee, on the other hand, proactively seeks guidance and support in their career and professional development from an experienced guide. While the mentor provides invaluable insight, it's important to remember that the mentee ultimately holds the reins to their career and professional progression.

The foundation of this relationship is built on encouragement, constructive feedback, openness, reciprocal trust, respect, and a shared eagerness to learn and grow. This mentor-mentee dynamic thrives on the willingness of both parties to impart knowledge and experiences while fostering a spirit of mutual growth.

Roles and responsibilities

Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities

- Uphold ethical standards and show respect towards all program participants.
- Preserve professional boundaries.
- Strictly maintain confidentiality, given the potential for sensitive or personal discussion topics.
- Commit to attending all pre arranged meetings.
- Outline expectations in the first meeting and regularly reassess them as the relationship progresses.

Mentor's Role

As a mentor, you are tasked with specific responsibilities, including:

- Negotiating a commitment for sustained communication.
- Facilitating initial meetings with mentees.
- Supporting mentees in identifying their individual needs and promoting their career development.
- Actively contributing to discussions and helping resolve any issues that arise in sessions.

You can fulfil these responsibilities in various ways, such as:

- Encouraging mentees to question their assumptions.
- Inspiring the exploration of novel ideas and innovative thinking.
- Remaining open-minded and non-judgmental.
- Listening attentively to the mentees' queries and challenges.
- Assisting mentees in identifying and solving problems.
- Offering relevant and timely advice.
- Facilitating understanding of potential career paths and outcomes.

- Sharing your professional experiences to provide a fresh perspective on the topics discussed.

An effective mentor exhibits the following:

- Respect and consideration for the mentee.
- A genuine interest in the mentees' growth and development.
- A solid commitment to the mentoring program.
- Exceptional communication skills, particularly in listening, questioning, and providing constructive feedback.
- The capacity to exert a positive influence on behalf of the mentee.

Mentee's Role

As a mentee, your responsibilities are to:

- Negotiate a commitment for ongoing communication.
- Take the initiative to organise all meetings (e.g., develop a meeting schedule that works for both parties).
- Prepare a list of discussion topics (informal or formal) for each meeting.
- Contribute to discussions and collaborate in resolving issues raised in meetings.
- Discover your strengths and areas for development.

You can fulfil these responsibilities by:

- Reflecting on your experiences as a young professional in the workforce.
- Discussing and shaping your career goals.
- Maintaining an openness to share your hopes, needs, and expectations.

A successful mentee will:

- Take charge of scheduling all meetings with their mentor.
- Show dedication to the mentoring program.
- Take ownership of their personal and professional development opportunities.
- Seek constructive feedback and embrace new responsibilities and challenges.

Benefits for mentors and mentees

As a mentor, your participation in this program offers a range of benefits, including:

- Elevated professional visibility.
- Recognition and respect from peers for your dedication to nurturing others' growth.
- Amplified personal satisfaction and professional gratification.
- Opportunities for honing your leadership skills, communication abilities, feedback provision, and relationship-building acumen.

- Expansion of your professional networks.
- Knowledge and skill transfer, enriching your mentee and reinforcing your understanding.
- Acknowledgment of your skills and expertise.
- A chance to gain fresh perspectives and stay current with emerging trends.
- Boosted self-esteem and confidence through the act of empowering others.

As a mentee, your active involvement in this program offers the following benefits:

- Cultivation of various skills and knowledge, including work-life balance, communication, interpersonal skills, and organisational knowledge.
- Expansion of your professional network.
- Heightened professional profile.
- A confidential space to discuss workplace issues.
- Receipt of supportive guidance to help achieve your career aspirations.
- Insight into the organisation's culture, facilitating smoother integration and growth.
- Building professional networks and a supportive environment, fostering both personal and professional development.
- Enhancement of professional self-confidence and self-esteem, leading to more assertiveness and effectiveness in your role.

Program structure

This program is designed to provide a flexible framework rather than strict guidelines, acknowledging that each mentor-mentee pair will have unique needs and ways of achieving their goals.

Setting Expectations and Goals

- Preparing and attending the First Meeting
- Decide if the 'fit' is right

Building the Relationship

- Familiarise with each other, fostering rapport and understanding.
- Discuss career/work history.
- Identify areas for development.
- Mentor to share practical work examples for context and insight.

Tackling Developmental Needs, Gaining Knowledge and Advancing Careers

- Exchange thoughts on mutual topics of interest.
- Identify the mentee's personal strengths and 'development needs'
- Conduct a career path review.

- Exchange and discuss each other's CV, with a focus on reviewing the mentee's CV.

Maintaining the Relationship

- Stay connected! Regular communication nurtures the mentoring relationship.

Matching Mentors and Mentees

The matching of mentors and mentees is undertaken by the Mentoring Program

Team. Mentors and Mentees complete an online questionnaire to assist in matching compatible participants with similar interests to maximise the program's benefit.

If either the mentor or mentee is uncomfortable with the pairing at any stage during the program or decides the mentorship is not successful, the Early Mentorship Closure section of this handbook explains the process for ending a mentorship between a mentee and mentor.

Meetings

The First Meeting

The initial meeting is pivotal in laying the groundwork for a fruitful mentorship, even though it may initially appear daunting for both the mentor and mentee. The cornerstone of a successful mentorship lies in both participants having aligned objectives and expectations for the program. It's essential to approach these openly and engage in a mutual negotiation to ensure a synergistic partnership.

Organising the First Meeting

The responsibility for reaching out to the mentor to arrange the timing and venue for the first (and following) meeting lies with the mentee. Both parties should find the arrangement suitable.

Discussion Points

Time Commitment: Maintaining regular contact is vital to the mentorship's success. We encourage you to schedule 3-4 meetups spanning 3-6 months. Deciding if the 'fit' feels right should be a joint resolution between the mentor and mentee— aim for a casual 30-minute to 1-hour meetup. Some pairs may favour monthly face-to-face interactions, supplemented by emails or phone chats.

Preferred Style of Contact: Both participants should agree on whether their interaction will be formal or informal during the mentorship. This discussion should also cover whether they plan to follow the recommended program framework, discuss pre-prepared topics during their meetings, or prefer spontaneous talks.

Location: It's crucial to agree on a preferred meeting place for the mentorship duration. Options can range from the mentor's or mentee's office to a local café or park. If distance is an issue, why not have a virtual coffee.

Goals: Both parties should engage in a dialogue about their aims for the Mentoring Program and the strategy they'll employ to achieve them.

Concluding the Relationship: We advise that both mentor and mentee discuss the terms for concluding the relationship and agree on a 'zero blame' exit strategy, allowing the relationship to end on good terms at any time if either party requests it. By addressing the relationship's end at the outset, you can minimise potential stress when the time to conclude the relationship comes.

Next Meetings

In the subsequent meetings, the mentor and mentee can concentrate on strengthening their relationship, identifying and tackling development areas, engaging in shared learning experiences, and offering invaluable career guidance and support.

- Mentors and mentees can build a foundation of trust and mutual understanding by getting to know each other's interests and perspectives beyond the professional realm. Casual conversation starters offer a friendly gateway into deeper discussions about professional growth and career development. It's natural to find these relaxed conversations weaving their way back to work-related topics. And, of course, mentees should always feel comfortable seeking advice from their mentors on current job-related issues, career opportunities, and professional development.
- Mentors can start by sharing highlights from their career journeys and significant work experiences. Similarly, mentees can share their work history and impactful life events. Both parties should reflect on what fuels their personal and professional motivations. From this discussion, mentees, guided by their mentors, should aim to identify their strengths and areas needing development. They should focus on up to three areas where the mentor's assistance would be most beneficial over the upcoming months. Brainstorming can then occur, exploring ways for the mentee to cultivate these skills. This may involve reviewing their CV or job applications or discussing specific work samples for targeted feedback. Remember, discussions aren't restricted to these development areas alone.
- Of course, certain issues and intriguing topics of discussion will naturally surface and can be explored as needed. This might encompass ongoing work projects, hot topics in the professional sphere, unique workplace dilemmas, guidance on job hunting, interview skills and so on. Mentors and mentees may also discover it's advantageous to touch upon all areas of growth at once, instead of assigning each meeting to a single development area.

- Mentors and mentees can pivot their focus onto the mentee's career trajectory. Mentees might find it valuable to seek their mentor's guidance in defining their ideal career path or crafting a robust career plan. It's crucial to discern a fitting career direction that harmonises with the mentee's likes/dislikes, strengths and areas for development, as well as their skills, values, and interests. Together, mentors and mentees might explore career placement opportunities or work experiences, delve into specifics of project experience, ponder further study options, work on broadening networks, or investigate other paths to kick-start or enhance their career.

Tips on avoiding potential pitfalls

While mentors may anticipate that the mentee will take the lead in organising and driving the program, mentees might be hesitant to appear overly assertive. To circumvent this, it's a great idea to collectively plan the next point of contact at the close of each meeting.

If either party cancels a meeting, don't let it dishearten you; just keep rescheduling. Remember, mentors can be incredibly busy individuals, but they're dedicated to the program and will always strive to make time for their mentees. If rescheduling becomes necessary, mentees should promptly offer the mentor three to four alternative meeting times and places. This allows the mentor to pick a convenient option or suggest something different.

Mentors, on the other hand, should be conscious not to inadvertently monopolise the conversation, exercise undue influence, or quickly dismiss different viewpoints.

The mentor's role is to guide and empower the mentee to take charge of their own problem-solving process and form their own opinions independently. Rather than supplying 'the' solution, mentors should assist mentees in thoroughly examining all facets or alternatives of a topic, helping them to see the 'big picture'. Playing 'devil's advocate' can often be beneficial, helping mentees to question their opinions and assumptions. However, mentors should first help mentees to delve deeper into their ideas before presenting an alternative perspective or argument.

Sustaining relationships

As the mentorship progresses, it's essential to pause and ponder on what's been successful and pinpoint areas ripe for enhancement. A self-assessment of both the mentor's and the mentee's involvement plays a vital role in gauging the growth and success of the mentorship, as well as the personal and professional evolution of both parties. Here are some guiding questions to help mentors and mentees assess their participation and the progress of the mentorship:

- Have both the mentor and mentee consistently attended all meetings and mentoring program events?
- Do both parties bring a positive attitude to each meeting?
- How open is the mentor/mentee to new ideas and suggestions?
- Has the mentee formed realistic career aspirations?
- Have both mentor and mentee completed the agreed-upon tasks?
- Are both parties punctual and well-organised?
- Has the mentee shown professional growth?
- Has the mentee's professional network expanded?
- Have both mentor and mentee actively nurtured a trustful relationship?
- Has the sanctity of confidentiality been upheld?
- Is there discernible progress towards the mentee's goals?
- Have there been instances of cancelled meetings?
- Are both parties fully present and attentive during the meetings?
- Is there a concerted effort to minimise interruptions during the meetings, such as phone calls, office visitors, etc.?
- Is there a comfortable rapport within the mentorship?

Reflecting on these questions will provide valuable insights and steer the mentorship towards fruitful outcomes.

Early closure/parting ways

There may come a time when the mentor-mentee relationship may need to wrap up ahead of schedule. The reasons can be numerous, and it's completely okay. We have a 'zero blame' closure policy for such occasions. This approach allows either party to initiate closure without providing a detailed explanation. The main idea is to ensure a win-win situation, leaving no room for blame on either side. If necessary, the program team can facilitate a smooth wrap-up.

You can conclude the relationship directly with your mentor/mentee or seek the mentor program team's help. If you opt to handle it directly, remember to do so with respect and professionalism. We recommend setting up a final meeting to discuss the wrap-up and its reasoning.

Here are some pointers for your final conversation:

- Start on a high note: Discuss the highlights and positives you've experienced together.
- Explain why you're ending the relationship: Being honest can be challenging, but it's a sign of respect and maturity.
- Offer honest feedback: Even if this pairing didn't work out, it doesn't mean future mentorship relationships won't be successful.

Above all, ensure the conversation remains respectful and professional. It's a learning opportunity to reflect on what worked and what didn't. Once the decision is made, please notify the program team about the relationship's closure.

If you're uncomfortable wrapping things up yourself, our program team is here to assist. They can step in to facilitate the closure professionally. As soon as you've made the decision, reach out to the program team so they can quickly and smoothly conclude the relationship. They'll contact the other party to notify them about the closure.

Remember, not all mentor-mentee relationships pan out, and that's alright. Factors like differing interests, scheduling conflicts, or personality mismatches can lead to an early wrap-up. In such scenarios, no blame is placed on anyone. We still encourage participants to explore future programs, keeping the doors of opportunities wide open.

Conclusion

This program celebrates the power of the relationship that blossoms when two minds connect. It's about exploration, growth, and creating future agile leaders. Remember, this program is here to facilitate your development journey, not to restrict it. Let's grow together, enhancing our skills, knowledge, and passion for agile.

Contact

The program team has created a Slack channel for program participants to collaborate, network and have a safe place to ask questions.

Open Group: <https://scrumcraftnetwork.slack.com/archives/C05HY9NCHKJ>

If the need arises to discuss more sensitive topics directly with the program team please use this private email.

Private contact: hello@scrumcraft.com