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Mentor briefing

Thank you, it is great that you are thinking about or are going to help someone start or grow their career in the screen industries. Mentoring is a professional partnership and a powerful way to support people as they focus on their development or start to make important decisions about their future. As a mentor, you will be a role model of success, inspiring your mentee to work hard and develop by providing access to support, advice, information and opportunities. This brief guide outlines mentoring and how you can give and get the best from the partnership.

What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who gives help and advice to a less experienced person. A mentor can help a mentee make the most of career opportunities and support their personal development.

Mentoring can:

- Help boost confidence of the mentee
- Give the mentee clarity and an opportunity to focus on their goals and career objectives
- Provide a safe space for the mentee to reflect, develop and grow

Will I get anything from being a mentor?

Whilst mentoring focuses on the mentee, there are lots of benefits for mentors too, they include:

- Develop communication, leadership, coaching and mentoring skills
- Increase your network
- A feeling of 'giving back' to the industry
- It is good for the CV
- Reflect on your own skills and achievements
- An opportunity to use your creativity skills
- To learn from the ideas and experiences of someone who could be from a different generation, background or have different life experiences, expectations, stage of career, sector etc.

What a great mentor does

As a mentor, you share your skills, knowledge and insights with the mentee to help them develop personally and professionally in their career. You can encourage and support the mentee to achieve their goals and help them to think for themselves. It is not about you having all the answers and telling the mentee what to do.

Great mentors help the mentee to focus on their own career goals and challenges by:

- Providing an outside and non-judgemental perspective
- Actively listening to the things that are creating barriers or worrying the mentee
- Sharing their own experiences, giving unbiased advice, support, feedback and challenge
- Acting as a confidential sounding board for ideas
- Facilitating decision making by helping the mentee to generate ideas and actions of their own
- Providing contacts and introducing the mentee to networks to further their personal and professional development

Mentoring programmes

Mentoring programmes can vary in a number of ways – it is important and helpful to know:

- How much guidance is given to the mentor and mentee – a document or some formal training
- The duration of the programme which can range from a few weeks to a few years
- How formal the partnership is e.g. number of hours over a specified period of time or if this is for the mentor and mentee to decide; paperwork to record activity/outcomes/evaluation
- The overall purpose of the programme
- How the programme is managed and how the matching of mentors and mentees is achieved

Mentoring meetings

Where? Face to face mentoring meetings should take place in a suitable environment – an office or coffee shop, somewhere where both parties feel comfortable - never in someone's home.

Meetings can take also place on the phone, via Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom or FaceTime.

Setting the agenda: It is usually the mentee who is expected to drive the partnership by organising the meetings and preparing for each meeting so they have a question or a goal to focus on.

First steps: At the first meeting you will spend some time building rapport, getting to know each other and talking about how you will work together. This should include sharing contact details; talking about and agreeing confidentiality and boundaries; discussing what mentoring is and is not; duration, frequency of meetings and length of partnership; the mentee's achievements, challenges and career and personal development goals.

Their goals: Mentoring meetings focus on what the mentee wants to achieve, develop, or change. As the mentor, you help them identify a specific goal or objective to achieve or a challenge they wish to overcome. This gives each meeting a clear focus – an agenda. Then, using listening and questioning skills, you can help the mentee explore the situation and what they can do to achieve their goal. It is good to get the mentee to think for themselves before sharing your ideas/advice/expertise as this helps the mentee to develop problem solving skills, confidence and creativity. Finally from the list of ideas you have both come up with you can help the mentee to identify one or two actions they commit to do which will help them move towards their goal.

Their progress: At the beginning of each meeting you can review the actions agreed at the previous meeting and the progress made.

Review how it is going

It is good practice to regularly review the partnership itself. Talk through any challenges and agree how to move forwards. You could use the following questions to ask each other:

- What is working well that you or I do or bring to the partnership?
- What could you or I do differently, keep doing, do more/less of to improve the partnership?

Don't let the partnership just fizzle out. If you have tried to make it work and are still facing challenges – discuss this and if necessary agree together to end the partnership early.

Ending the partnership

The partnership may end when the mentee has achieved their goals, overcome their challenges, or when the number of hours/meetings/duration of the programme has been reached. At the final meeting spend some time discussing the overall outcomes and the progress made; celebrating success and to identify what you both learned. You may decide to continue to stay in touch in a less formal way.