RECRUITMENT

Recruiting the 'right' participants is essential to the success or failure of mentoring.

> Mentors who can really help a company solve challenges are usually people who have solved similar problems before. It is really important for mentoring programs to recruit and build on high-quality mentors, otherwise bad advice spreads around.[24]

Best practice to ensure high-quality mentors and mentees includes:

1 Refine pre-set criteria for the ideal mentor and mentee participants

When recruiting, essential factors to evaluate for include, but are not limited to:

Mentor selection essential criteria

Find specific business-related skills, experiences and proven successes: A mentor's background allows for an emotional relatability that helps strengthen mentoring relationships.

> The best mentor-mentee relationship is when that mentor has run an MSME or been an entrepreneur and has that shared experience. 'I've walked in your shoes. I have felt that pain or loneliness. I lived through all these pain points and growth.' That is where the magic happens.[25]

Find a balance of supportive behaviors and challenging leadership experiences: there is a belief among many practitioners that mentors should focus their approaches on the twin functions of 'support' and 'challenge'. Dr. Laurent A. Daloz argues that it is only when the mentor provides both a 'high challenge' and 'high support' function that the greatest development of the mentee is likely to occur.[26]

MSMEs and mentor selection criteria

Find a commitment and openness to mentoring: A key success factor for effective mentoring is that both sides are committed to the relationship. Common criteria to assess this are around time and the emotional capacity of all parties.

For mentees, ensure they have the capacity to participate actively and work towards their goals. A significant risk to success is if mentees participate with the wrong intentions. As mentoring is often a free resource, entrepreneurs sometimes participate as a 'check-box' exercise rather than a genuine learning opportunity.[27] For mentors, ensure they have the capacity to learn, give their time, and follow through on agreed expectations.[28] As heard in expert interviews, a mentor who is successful and highly accomplished may be able to offer great guidance, but might not have the time to make a mentoring relationship successful.[29] Furthermore, it is generally recommended to avoid taking on mentoring in the middle of professional or personal turbulence.[30]

Find the best interpersonal skills of the individual(s): Successful MSMEs are generally led by a dynamic leader with an aptitude for learning and a resilient attitude. While seniority is often ascribed to traditional mentors there is

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[24] Correspondence with Lili Torok, Endeavor Insight, 2020, [25] Interview with Caren Holzman, Enabling Outcomes, 2020, [26] Daloz, 2012,
[27] Interviews with Bury, 2020; Alexandra Salas, Bpeace, 2020, [28] Interview with Jaime Vargas, Swisscontact, 2020, [29] Guttentag, 2020, [30] Bury, 2020

no conclusive evidence that specific ages matter. In fact, there is growing literature proving that the more life and work experiences the mentor and mentee have in common the more likely the mentoring is to be effective.[31] Consider the differences in the communication styles faced by male and female MSME leaders as well as those from different cultural contexts. With an established study of mentoring within larger organizations, researchers assembled a list of essential mentor emotional skills and characteristics.[32]

- Personal security, confidence
- Willingness to trust
- Ability to communicate
- Introspective and open

- Innovative
- Patient and tolerant
- Accessibility

2 Set aside enough time for the recruitment process

Despite having a clear sense of recruitment parameters, not having enough time to thoroughly conduct the process can hinder effective mentoring. Most often, this occurs when mentoring programs underestimate the amount of time it takes to recruit quality mentors and mentees, though funder pressures sometimes play a role. Whether on an open rolling basis or with cohorts, there should be quality controls in recruitment (e.g. protect data, ensure dignity). Spending enough time conducting recruitment leads to 'quality in, quality out,' with mentoring results.[33]

3 Provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to 'get-to-know' mentoring

Where possible, setting up learning opportunities to experience mentoring is recommended. This could include setting up in-person or virtual sessions for potential participants to understand what mentoring is and is not, the benefits, and a typical interaction. This will give a clearer sense of what they are getting involved with and help decide on whether to continue.[34] These experiences can also ensure those who participate bring positive momentum to the program.[35]

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[31] Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills, 2013, [32] Cunningham and Eberle, 1993, [33] Bury, 2020, [34] Bury, 2020, [35] Interview with Anita Ramachandran, MicroMentor, 2020,