

Business mentoring – five key questions

A mentor should ask the following questions when interviewing a prospective mentee.

1. What do you truly want to be and do?

This question is about aspiration and purpose – the reason why someone is doing what they are doing. The question also aims to ferret out the mentee's commercial goals and broader objectives. For example, they might wish to succeed in business so that they can do more to help others.

The answer to question 1 should reveal the mentee's driving passion: what is it they do, or wish they could be great at doing?

2. What are you doing really well that is helping you get there?

This question helps spotlight the mentee's core strength and their ability to use it to pursue their goal. What is this person naturally good at doing? Detailed and standardised operations? Leading and motivating staff? Numbers? What is it that they do better than the average person, which can help them achieve their ambition?

3. What are you not doing well that is stopping you getting there?

This is about facilitating an honest and critical assessment of the roadblocks, challenges or weaknesses that are hindering someone's ability to meet the goal defined in their answer to question 1.

4. What will you do differently tomorrow to meet those challenges?

Questions 2 and 3 help establish whether a prospective mentee is spending the right amount of time on the right things. You can't measure progress just by how hard a person is working. Someone may have a great work ethic but fail to focus on the correct priorities. In that case, they are making good time – but they are lost.

People also have a tendency to practise and repeat what they are already good at doing. It is human nature to show off your best side and hide weaknesses. A mentor should use this question to probe whether the mentee has the capacity to change behaviour.

5. How can I help, and where do you need the most help?

The answers to the first four questions – matched against areas where the mentor has particular strengths, relationships, or learning resources – should help determine how the mentor can best help someone achieve their goal.

I offer a one-to-one mentoring service to people who wish to enhance and progress their careers and those who want to become mentors themselves. For more details, [email me](#) or call me on **020 7099 2621**.