

# Benefits of mentor guidance for engineering professionals



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1. At the start of the academic year, presenters from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers [IMechE] and Royal Aeronautical Engineering Society [RAeS] visited the University and explained how their organisations can help graduate engineers become registered with the Engineering Council UK. One of the services they offer is putting the graduate in contact with a mentor. Why is the support of a mentor offered? Identify at what stage(s) of the application process is it best to consult with a mentor, and explain why.

The differences between University and the work environment pose changes that can be considered as difficult in its transition stages, where knowledge and its application are of paramount importance to employers, being that need for accelerated rates of adaption by organisations are often challenging for graduates, when considering efficiency rates.

In order to encourage new employees to quickly adapt companies often implement mentoring schemes to ensure staff are fully trained and are able to work effectively and efficiently within a short period of being employed (Judy McKimm, 2007). Societies' such as the Royal Aeronautical society and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers often help final year and graduating students make the transition from University to a professional working environment by offering mentoring schemes. The main intentions of mentoring are to enable students to gain a better understanding of job roles and what will be expected of them, as well as finding the right fit for their needs, and developing their skills, expertise and performance. The mentoring relationship evidently is of benefit to the mentor, the mentee and potential employers, (Colwell, 1998)

The prospective performance of “mentee’s” may be impacted by the guidance of a mentor, helping to identify and improve the strengths and weaknesses of the mentee, leading to their own understanding of potential fits as well as passions in the industry (Judy McKimm, 2007), helping to ascertain probable career paths as well as assisting in the application process, confidence of the mentee and motivation to specialize in more specific fields as apposed to having a generic engineering background which is undesirable to many employers, (Clutterbuck and Lane, 2004). There is not only a benefit for the mentee but also for organisations and the industry as a whole as the knowledge base of the mentee would be enhanced, achieving organisational visions and missions at an unimpeded rate as well as improving organisational standards exponentially.

During the application process, undergraduates may seek guidance from their mentors on more general professional concerns, such as; networking, curriculum vitae or personal statement writing and integration into the working environment, mentees may also seek advice when trying to understand feedback from interviews and how to correct their mistakes going forward, (Matlay and Rae, 2007). With this in mind graduate student mentors can provide theoretical and editorial criticism on the mentee’s applications as well as samples of CV’s and cover letters as well as leading by example in professional attitudes and conduct. Educational sessions may also be used in the mentoring process in order to distinguish specific career paths for mentee’s as well as personal statement writing, preparing for interviews and recommendation requests, (American Psychological Association, 2007).

From my own experience there are four specific parts of the application process that mentee's should consult with their mentors, the identification of "best fit" careers, by this the mentee would often have a general field of interest, but does not know what roles best suit their knowledge and passion for their field of interest, at this stage the mentor could promote interests if the specification where the mentee has apt knowledge and desire as well as be suggestive of particular job roles that therefore suit the candidate.

Another stage of the application process where it is best for mentees to consult with their mentors is obtaining the correct application materials such as; CVs, cover letters, personal statements, interview techniques, aptitude test examples, and professional mannerisms and getting these up to industry standard. The reason for needing these materials is to show the level of knowledge and professionalism of the mentee is acceptable for employers and the role they are applying for.

Networking is another key stage of the application process, which is often dismissed by mentees and mentors alike, however one which could help secure a role and develop the mentee's ability to work alongside other teams toward a shared goal, something which is highly valued by any organisation, this also shows the mentee's potential to progress within the organisation.

The final stage which I have identified from research as well as experience that I would advance to be best to consult with a mentor would be the review stage, this is a key stage as the mentoring process is about learning and development, it also equips the mentee with the ability to accept rejection and move on with a positive attitude and learn from the experience,

(Clutterbuck, 2005). At the review stage the mentor would go through the feedback provided by the organisation and deduce what could have been done better by the mentee. On a final note, while it is important for mentors to encourage the Mentees to be successful in their applications, it is the responsibility of the mentee to seek guidance and prepare for applications and interviews in a timely manner. Mentors may be committed to their mentee's cause feeling that the accomplishment of the application process is a personal duty, (Murray 2002).

2. Imagine you have been asked to coach a team of first- year undergraduate students working on a project in your specialist area. What personal characteristics and skills would you need to carry out this responsibility effectively? Based on relevant publications and your experience of giving and receiving coaching, do you believe that coaching would be more effective, or less effective, when the coach is from a different country, culture or engineering discipline than the team? Explain your reasoning.

The comprehension gained from literature and experience in coaching is that it can take a variety of articulations, including; Leadership coaching, colleague coaching psychological coaching and several others (Knight, 2009). From reviewing recent literature on the effects of coaching, we can deduce that there are constructive effects on teacher attitudes, practice and efficiency (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Many types of coaching including peer based increase application rates of knowledge to professional development within student achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wenglinsky, 2000).

My own experience has shown that coaching is essentially about asking the right questions to and encouraging the coachee to find their own answers. Considering that coaching is based largely on generic goal oriented questions and possible pathways, I initially expected that culture and industry related knowledge wouldn't be needed, as this would be reflected by the coachee in their own culture, knowledge or traditions (Manuel, Mckenna and Olson, 2008), this encourages the coachee to better understand themselves and their potential, independent of their gender, age, or industry.

Tobin and Espinit (1989) found that the participation in coaching presents one critical barrier, poor content knowledge of undergraduate students when considering the implementation of change in teaching for professional development of students, by this coaches would tend to spend most of their time working collaboratively with lecturers and teaching staff to enhance the content and instruction to develop students professionally in engineering placement (Knight, 2007). The required level of technical knowledge for undergraduate students is adopted by the coach whom is considered to have relative expertise in the field, hence the instructor or in this case lecturer plays a fundamental role in the coaching needs of the graduate coach, often enhancing their threshold of technical knowledge, this then inflects the coachee's own level of specifications.

Reassurance and encouragement is also an area where coaching can be used as a tool in the case of ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups, where it is indicative of facilitating unimpeded transition into a new environment during the adaption period. The standardisation of coaching <https://assignbuster.com/benefits-of-mentor-guidance-for-engineering-professionals/>

cannot be used in this case, research shows that the adaptation of coaching procedures and applications is essential when considering influences such as culture, age and industry (Passmore, 2013). Countries and cultures pose different philosophies, in turn processes of learning are different from others, one example of this could be the Middle East, a region with a great economic growth and vast cultural differences when considering western ideals. Differences include ethics, societal concepts, hierarchy of society, legal, values attitudes and lifestyles.

The differences presented here are said to directly influence the values attitudes, behaviors and lifestyle or relationships, impacting greatly on the way in which they need to be coached, (Agarwal, Angst and Magni, 2009), the effectiveness of coaches is dependent on their ability to adapt their questions for the appropriation of the coachee's attention, with detailed focus on their practices, providing reassurance and confidence that the evaluation and analysis of the coachee's self is valuable to their own situation and their long and short term goals, ( Grant, Curtayne and Burton, 2009), something I have also found to be true from my own experience.

Motivation is another factor to consider and arises in several instances, the goals of the project should be associated with one or more societal need, demonstrating the applicability of the project to broader concerns of the coachee and adding intrinsic value to the overall project, (Silva and Yarlagada, 2014). The motivation of the mentees also stems from the consistent reassurance of the graduate mentor, including the recognition of the coach and establishing assurance in the coachee's own ability. Changes and necessities that have been presented ensure the efficiency of the  
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coaching process and project outcome as a whole. Overall I believe coaching can be effective, however would rely on the coaches ability to adapt their ways of thinking, their practices and processes in order to satisfy those of each different culture, country or industry.

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