

The Partner at RSM Hong Kong, and a mentor in the Institute's Mentorship Programme, shares factors contributing to mentoring success



...be a good mentor

Why do we need a mentor?

People often ask, what is mentorship? Why do we need a mentor? How is a mentor different from all the other people, such as parents or relatives in the family, teachers or professors at school, friends in our social life, supervisors or colleagues at work, and pastors at church, etc. around us? These people – “advisors” – at one point or the other, will always be around us, shedding light on us as we grow up, teaching and helping us to gather knowledge and skill sets that enable us to find a decent job, developing an ethical value of life for us to contribute to making the world better, and strengthening our ability to live harmoniously with our neighbours.

However, nowadays the world is changing fast, and getting more and more complicated and technologically driven. Very often, we will come to a crossroads in our career that we need to make a choice that will have a significant impact on our future. Unfortunately, when we come to this situation, we may not always be able or want to seek advice from the “advisors” mentioned above, for the following reasons:

- The advisors may not have the knowledge or experience to understand our situation and to offer advice on the available options.
- We may not want them to know. For example, we may not want

to worry our parents with our problems.

- Some of these advisors may be in a conflict of interest with you. These may be the case with our supervisors, colleagues and even friends working in the same field.

The role of a mentor

Under the previously mentioned situations, a mentor fills in the gap. A mentor offers guidance, advice and support to a mentee to facilitate his or her learning and development. The Institute's Mentorship Programme's objective is “to offer aspiring CPAs the opportunity to learn from experienced members for the purpose of their career development through consultation and experience sharing.”

How to be a good mentor

Based on the above mentioned objective of mentorship, a good mentor must be able to help the mentees to identify options that are available to them when they are at their crossroads and help them make the “best” choice based on as much relevant information and experience as you can provide or help them to find. I believe the following are the key success factors to become a good mentor:

Quality approach

- Be empathetic and supportive to the mentee's concerns.
- Be committed and provide sufficient time and energy, and

be readily approachable and accessible.

- Have a strong desire to help younger professionals to advance in their career.
- Demonstrate yourself as a professional role model and stress the importance of respect from each other and keeping matters discussed confidential.

Coaching techniques

- Be an active listener and don't interrupt when mentees are talking about their problems.
- Appreciate the mentee's point of view and ask thoughtful questions.
- Provide constructive feedback, supported by real examples and experiences.
- Help mentees recognize the likely outcome of their plans, actions and behaviour, and remind them that they should be responsible for the decisions made.
- Be prepared to share personal experience and stories of mistakes and failures.

Important “don'ts”

- Don't act as a sponsor.
- Don't try to find jobs or carry out work for mentees.
- Don't try to be an expert in all areas, but instead offer to share contacts who can help.
- Don't create an unhealthy dependency on the mentor from the mentee.

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