

Evelyn Sepp

BRILLIANT MENTORS OF THE FUTURE

The Manual

LINKÖPING SCIENCE PARK

BRILLIANT MENTORS OF THE FUTURE

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Reversed Mentorship - The concept

Reversed mentorship is a concept that takes a twist on the traditional mentorship where more experienced people share their knowledge and support with a younger person. The key concept of reverse mentoring is exactly what it sounds like - reversed. The younger talent takes on the role as a mentor for the more senior person within an organization. The aim is to share experience and bring new perspectives and knowledge to decrease the gap between generations. It is an opportunity to learn from each other and share valuable experience between senior and junior people.

The first known example of reversed mentorship comes from General Motors in 1990, where this type of mentoring was used to get senior people in leading positions to learn about the internet from younger people within the company. This seemed to work well and it was later shown to also have a positive impact on strategic and cultural aspects in the company. Today, the concept has developed towards focusing more on leadership, innovative thinking and organizational perspectives, and there are several successful programs to be found within large companies, such as Saab and Cambio in Linköping. The programs are described as an important tool for the management to improve within various areas, while they simultaneously get to share experience and knowledge that they have acquired. All this, on a neutral playing field where good ideas can be shared informally.

Now it is time for you! This handbook is intended to support and help you throughout the process and function as a guide along the way in your mentorship.

Brilliant Mentors of the Future - about the program

In this program we are matching people in leading positions in companies, with students. This differs from previous examples of reversed mentorship in the way that this program aims at creating intercultural connections between universities and companies. The mentor and the mentee meet and discuss subjects that are relevant, interesting and developing for both parties. This is a chance for both professional and personal development for both company leader and student.



Roles

It is important that the mentor and the mentee share an interest in the mentorship and are willing to invest time and energy, to enhance both personal and professional development. In theory this is a reversed mentorship program, but nevertheless we believe that it is equally valuable for both parties and that both mentor and mentee possess abilities and experiences that can contribute to the other person's development.



The Mentor (student)

The mentor's role is essential, and aims at, contributing with knowledge, competence and experience to the mentee. A good mentor has great awareness of their own abilities, strengths and weaknesses and can communicate their thoughts and perspectives in a clear way. A mentor should be a good listener, open to discussion and interested in the mentee and their company's development.

We believe that students possess an ability to see potential and develop ideas that can be of great value to many companies. By contributing with the curious and analytical mindset of students, to the various challenges that company leaders face, you can overcome these challenges together. This is your chance to have an impact and contribute to the business environment of the future.



The Mentee (company representative)

It is the mentee's responsibility to express their wishes and goals for the mentorship. It is important to be aware that the mentor invests their time and energy in the mentorship. Do not waste their time, come prepared! The mentee and their challenges are in focus of the mentorship and therefore it is important that they are open minded and willing to listen to new perspectives. The mentee is there to develop and learn, do not be afraid to take the lead and actively seek advice and guidance from the mentor.

Form your own mentorship

To help you get started, we suggest that you take the first meeting to get to know each other and talk about your goals and expectations for the mentorship. Use the coming chapters and questions below to reflect upon your interest in this program and what areas you would like to explore. In order for you to get the most out of this mentorship program, we leave it open for you to decide on what subjects, areas or challenges you would like to focus. We are also very much aware of the pressed schedules many of you have, and in order to make this program work for all of you, we leave the organization of meetings up to you as well.

Your rules and guidelines

You should consider discussing and writing down your agreed framework for your partnership. This can for example include:

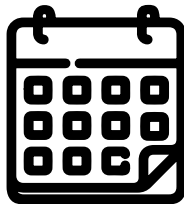
- Secrecy – do we need our conversations to stay between us?
- How should we take notes and share documents?
- How should we communicate? Through e-mail, texts, slack etc?
- How much time should be assigned for discussions during our meetings?
- Respect the right of the other person to limit what they share
- The tone of every interaction should be open minded and supportive



Scheduling meetings

It is up to you to organize your own meetings between kickoff and the end of the project. Maybe you want to meet at the company for the mentor to get better insight in the activities, next time you have lunch together, another time it is better to meet digitally... it is up to you! We strongly recommend you, however, to book all your meetings during the kickoff or at your first meeting. Calendars tend to fill up very quickly and therefore booking your meetings in advance seems to be a winning concept.

The timeframe for the meetings are also entirely up to you, but around one hour per meeting might be a good guideline.



Some questions that can be helpful:

- Do we want to decide the framework of each meeting in advance? Or should the mentee bring a plan and discussion material to the meeting?
- Should we meet at the office as a formal meeting? Or do we want a more informal setting; meeting in public places, for a walk, coffee etc?
- Do we need to take some meetings digitally?

Suggestions for meetings and activities:

- Take a tour at the company for the mentor to get to know the workplace better
- Meet for lunch and discuss a topic you decided upon in advance
- Meet for an after work activity and discuss prepared questions
- Decide on an article/literature that you both find interesting and discuss your views

Your area of interest

It is important to set the intentions and framework both for the program as a whole and for each meeting. You should talk about what you expect from this time spent together, what areas of interest you have in common and how you would like to develop your collaboration.

Some questions that can be helpful:



- What interest do we have in this mentorship program?
- What interests do we share?
- Is there a certain area that we would like to focus on? Can this be divided into sections that can fit into a plan for the meetings?
- Is there a certain challenge that the mentee would like to work on?

Goals and expectations

Alongside this manual you have received an Expectation Agreement for you to fill in together with your mentor/mentee. We suggest that you do this at your first meeting after discussing the prerequisites and expectations that you both have on this program. This aims at aligning your expectations so that you are on the same page when starting this journey together.

Discussion guide

For a good and evolving discussion to take place it is important to ask open questions. That is for example, questions that you have to develop beyond yes or no answers. This makes the conversation move further in a natural way and gives opportunities to ask follow up questions.

Suggestions of discussion topics:

The future work situation

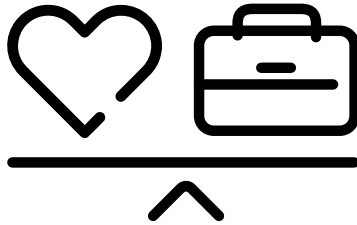
- How do you see your company developing post-pandemic?
- What are your thoughts on distance work?
- What are your thoughts on flexibility regarding working hours/remote work/shared office space/pay for results instead of hours etc?

Work relations, work climate and equality

- Responsibility around equality within the company/ within the sector
- How do we work for an equal and supportive environment? What can be developed and how?
- How do we wish to meet mistreatment, inequalities and conflict?
- How is our teamwork? Do we actively work on team spirit? Is this important? Individuality or team, what is most important?

Leadership

- Do you consider yourself a good leader? What are your strengths and weaknesses? What do you need to improve?
- What signifies a good leader for you? Can you share a story of a leader that influenced you? What have you learned from being a leader?



Work-life balance

- What is your ideal work-life balance? What do you need more or less of?
- When do you feel effective/stressed/overwhelmed/grateful etc? When do you get energy from work? Where do you get energy in life?

Career prospects

- Where do you see yourself after graduation/in five years/in ten years? What do you need to get there? Do you actively work towards a goal in your career?
- Do you sometimes consider changing your career? Why and to what?

Company actualities

- What projects are you as a mentee working on right now? What challenges are you facing? What do you need to overcome that?
- What is happening in the sector/in the world right now that affects your company or your work?

Work ethics

- What do you value at your company?
- What do you as a mentor look for in a future employer?
- What would you do if your colleagues/boss/future employer do not agree with your personal values?

