

The value of mentoring to employers

Before we advocate the value of mentoring it is essential to define this process

Mentoring is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person.

Mentoring involves the use of the same models and skills of questioning, listening, clarifying and reframing associated with coaching.

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Mentoring in the museum sector takes many forms from being an Accreditation Mentor, to the Philanthropy Mentor as part of the South East HLF Catalyst project and with the Museums Association Associate scheme (AMA). Whatever route is it essential to demonstrate how being a mentor adds value to the host organisation. Here are some suggestions:

- **Mentoring is a two way learning process.** The mentor brings experience and knowledge. However the mentor will learn from their mentee, from their experience and knowledge. This new knowledge provided by the mentee will be beneficial to the mentor who will be able to use it in their work place. Therefore it encourages the **development of new skills and** knowledge on both sides. **It also focuses the sharing expertise** which benefits both the mentee and mentor in terms of improving knowledge and capability
- **Mentoring supports a positive learning environment.** It enhances partnership working between museums bringing a wealth of new opportunities and collaborations.
- **Mentoring reinforces the value of peer learning.** This happens at all levels of an organisation. If senior managers were mentors then they lead by example, giving their workforce the clear message that they value their skills and knowledge and encourage the sharing of practices across the sector. **It reinforces advocacy for learning within the participating museums and by sector bodies and stakeholders.**
- **Provides access to networks and networking opportunities.** It builds a stronger sector which supports the exchange and development of professional knowledge
- **Improves confidence in how to communicate and listen effectively.** This may sound obvious however it is about consciously focusing attention on supporting the mentee to achieve their goals. In turn this makes people with these skills value for the organisation as it is important that to achieve wider objectives it is essential be able to communicate confidently. Effective listening is an essential skill as it enables clarity on information received. It will ensure the organisation is one which values its audiences by listening and responding to needs as well as its employees.
- **Cost effective training and development opportunities.** There is an opportunity for individual and group mentoring. With technology such as Skype, video conferencing and mobile phone technology the mentor and mentee(s) do not need to travel long distances to get the most out of this relationship. It also complements other development opportunities such as training courses or studying for qualifications.

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