



MicroMentor Toolkit

GETTING STARTED

- › What is Business Mentoring?
- › The Mentoring Lifecycle
- › Printable Mentoring Roadmap



WHAT IS BUSINESS MENTORING?

Business mentoring is a process in which experienced entrepreneurs and business professionals provide council, advice and support to emerging entrepreneurs in a structured relationship. This can take a variety of forms, ranging from helping to organize ideas and providing encouragement to resolving a specific technical issue.

On MicroMentor all mentoring relationships **should** possess the following qualities:

- › Mutual respect, trust and honesty
- › A sincere and voluntary interest in business growth
- › Clear expectations and well-communicated goals
- › An agreed-upon timeframe for meetings and a plan for concluding the relationship
- › Patience and an open mind

Equally, on MicroMentor, relationships **should not** possess:

- › Solicitation of any kind
- › Financial exchange
- › Disclosure of confidential information
- › Delivery of advice or information that one is unqualified to give
- › Unrealistic expectations about what the other party is able to contribute, including deliverables, time commitment and overall timeframe



THE MENTORING LIFECYCLE

Many mentoring pairs go through phases of their mentoring relationship, this is called the **Mentoring Lifecycle**. Paying attention to these phases can guide the relationship and create a more rewarding experience.

The phases of the Mentoring Lifecycle are as follows:



Phase One: Building the Relationship

- > Getting to know your partner
- > Discussing communication preferences
- > Setting a schedule

Getting to know your partner is a critical yet often overlooked phase of the mentoring relationship. It requires patience and dedicated effort put towards building a foundation of trust. Begin by sharing your experiences, background and motivations for owning a business and engaging in a mentoring relationship. Learning about your partner allows you to ensure they are a good fit and increases the likelihood that the relationship will succeed.

This phase also includes setting some ground rules for the relationship and discussing your communication preferences. For example, you may only wish to speak with your partner between certain hours, or perhaps you would prefer to communicate via email only. It is also necessary to specify any confidentiality concerns in order ensure that both parties are comfortable sharing information with one another.

Finally, it is important to set a meeting schedule during this early phase in the mentoring relationship. Make sure you pick times and dates that are realistic and will absolutely work for both of you. We recommend using an online calendar app like Google Calendar to ensure that both parties have a record of your agreed upon schedule. Meeting more frequently at first can help to ensure that both of you are actively involved in the mentoring process.



Phase Two: Exploring Possibilities

- > Identifying needs
- > Setting goals
- > Negotiating agreements

After you have had a chance to get to know your partner, the second phase of the mentoring relationship involves setting goals and managing expectations. To do so, we recommend all mentoring pairs engage in a diagnostic conversation in order to identify the mentee's needs and the business problem(s) you will work together to solve. You can use the 'Printable Mentoring Roadmap' at the end of this section as a guide.

After you have identified a set of business problems, proceed by creating a list of time-bound objectives for just one easily attainable business goal. Doing so will give you an opportunity to celebrate an accomplishment early on in the relationship. Remember what you agreed upon regarding time commitments and try to remain realistic when you are exploring possibilities. In each meeting, clarify and restate the goal to each other and identify the next steps related to the goal.



Phase Three: Navigating Rough Spots

- > Improving communication
- > Renewing commitments
- > Seeking support

Inevitably, you will run into a rough spot or two over the course of the mentoring relationship. When this happens, we recommend having a quick check-in with your partner to take a moment and see how things are going, both within the mentoring relationship and in your mentor’s personal/business lives. Discussing any issues that exist and brainstorming solutions is generally enough to jump-start the relationship.

If you are encountering a challenge that you don’t know how to address, it is advisable to seek outside support. Always feel free to contact the MicroMentor support staff if you experience an issue you can’t handle yourself. We’re happy to [help](#).



Phase Four: Completing the Cycle

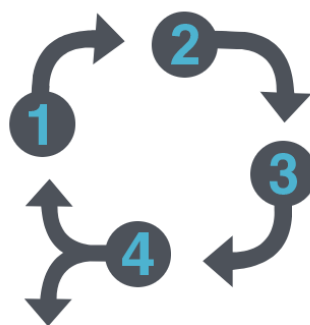
- > Celebrating accomplishments
- > Identifying next steps
- > Formally closing the relationship

As your mentoring relationship progresses, you’ll find that the Mentoring Lifecycle tends to repeat itself. As goals are reached, new challenges come to light. It is at this phase that it is important to step back, review what you’ve accomplished, and decide how to continue. If you have completed some or all of your goals it may be time to end the mentoring relationship, or you may both feel that there is still a lot of work to be done.

If you do decide to end the mentoring relationship, we recommend scheduling a formal closing conversation, at which time you can celebrate your accomplishments and plan for the future. A formal ending prevents the relationship from dwindling without focus or disintegrating from inactivity. It also gives each mentoring partner a needed sense of closure and a transition into a less formal partnership or a new mentoring arrangement. **We encourage you to share your MicroMentor success stories on social media using the hashtag #MicroMentor or send your stories to support@micromentor.org.**

Phase Two: Exploring Possibilities

Phase One:
Building Trust



Phase Three:
Navigating Rough Spots

Phase Four:
Completing the Cycle

PRINTABLE MENTORING ROADMAP

This document is intended as a guide for your first few mentoring conversations. By filling out this worksheet together, it can help you narrow the focus of your mentoring engagement, map out a plan for addressing a business challenge, and locate potential opportunities for future projects or other advising relationships.

1. Diagnose Need

Outcome:

A succinct “need statement” summarizing the specific challenge the entrepreneur is trying to address.

Mentors should focus on:

Asking questions and listening for the root cause.

- › What is the challenge the entrepreneur faces?
- › What is driving the entrepreneur to explore this challenge at this time?
- › What, if anything, has the entrepreneur already done to address this challenge?
- › Tip: Keep asking “why” to drive to the heart of the problem

Entrepreneurs should focus on:

Being candid and avoiding the jump to potential solutions.

- › Tip: Focus on providing context and thoughtful analysis
- › Tip: Stick to the problems and not the solution(s) at this time

Write the entrepreneur’s need statement here:

Example: *My marketing strategy is unclear and I’m not sure how to attract clients to my business.*

2. Explore Possible Solutions

Outcome:

A list of relevant projects that might address the identified challenge.

List the solutions or approaches that might address the need here:

Example:

- › *Develop a marketing strategy based on market research*
- › *Pilot the product or service with a group of new clients and solicit feedback*

3. Select an Approach

Outcome:

A clear description of what the final result of the project will be. This project can be pursued by the entrepreneur with or without the mentor's direct support, but the mentor's role should be made clear in this document as well.

Of the potential solutions listed in the previous section, which is the most effective solution to pursue?

Example:

- › *Develop a marketing strategy based on market research*

4. Develop Scope

Outcome One:

A list of project activities and deliverables

What is in the scope of the project?

Example:

- › *Brainstorm who the clients are and describe their needs*
- › *Survey clients to discover how they found the product or service and what need it addressed*
- › *Research the channels that can be used to promote the product or service*

Outcome Two:

A list of what will NOT be accomplished

What is outside the scope of the project?

Example:

- › *Writing messages, developing content and graphic design for an advertising campaign*
- › *Selling the product to potential clients*

4. Develop Scope, Continued

Outcome Three:

A list of what must be accomplished for this project to be considered complete

What is the list of criteria needed to complete the project?

Example:

- › *Complete client surveys*
- › *Define the elements of the brand*
- › *Deliver a marketing plan supported by your findings*

Outcome Four:

A list of what support might be needed in order to achieve the objectives?

What outside expertise is needed?

Example:

- › *Advice on identifying target markets and conducting surveys*
- › *Introductions to new networks so that you can collect unbiased feedback*
- › *Marketing and branding expertise*