

WOKINGHAM SPEAKERS: GUIDE TO MENTORING

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

Joining Toastmasters and getting started with speeches and roles can be quite daunting! A mentor is a member – a more knowledgeable and experienced Toastmaster - who will support you and help you on your path to becoming a better speaker and leader with Toastmasters International. Additionally, if you are approaching a major milestone or just feel that you have lost your way, you can benefit from the support and experience of a mentor too.

A MENTOR HELPS YOU GET STARTED

Most new members join Wokingham Speakers because they have needs that relate to speaking and leadership. You may believe that improving your speaking and leadership skills will help you to advance in your career and offer you greater personal satisfaction. A mentor will help you:

- **Learn the programme**

A mentor will help you to become familiar with the Competent Communicator (CC) and Competent Leader (CL) manuals, club meeting roles and other development opportunities available through membership.

- **Understand our club standards and customs**

These can often be confusing until you become familiar with how the Toastmasters programme works. Ask your mentor for tips and guidance on how to do it well.

- **Develop confidence**

A major part of a mentor's role is to help you build your speaking and leadership skills and confidence through the Toastmaster programme.

- **Participate more fully**

New members are sometimes reluctant to 'put themselves' forward for new roles. A mentor can help guide and encourage you to take on new challenges.

THE MENTORING PROCESS

- **Matching new member with a mentor**

The Mentoring Manager (MM) or VPE will contact you and offer you a mentor. The MM may ask if you have any particular requirements or thoughts on the kind of mentor you would find most helpful. If you have noticed someone you would like to work with, please do ask if they are available. The MM will agree with a mentor and inform both of you of the arrangement and contact details. Then it is over to you both.

- **Initiating contact**

Your first step is to think about what you would like to achieve through the club, and then to contact your mentor and arrange to meet or talk by phone or skype. It's good to initiate the first conversation face-to-face, so before or after a club meeting often works well.

You may find your mentor is quicker to initiate than you and they will send you an email to arrange getting started, outline expectations and give you their contact details and availability. The sooner you get started the quicker you will make progress.

- **First meeting**

Spend some time getting to know each other; this helps you to relax into the relationship. Then discuss your needs and goals and agree how you will work together.

- **How a mentor can help you**

- Review 'A Toastmasters Promise' and what we expect of club members.
- Explain how the various parts of the meeting fit together.

- Explain how the VPE puts together the schedule and allocates roles and help you decide what roles to do and when to ask for your first speaking slot.
- Help you to prepare your Icebreaker speech, they can help with the flow of the speech, watch you deliver the speech in rehearsal and give feedback, give detailed feedback after your speech on club night.
- Explain how the CC manual works and how to prepare for giving speeches.
- Explain the different roles and encourage you to read the CL manual for more detailed information.
- Share their own experience as an example.
- Introduce you to members, to get to know people quicker or who may be able to help too.
- Show you the various additional resources available and any external ones they know of.
- Explain club officer roles, the TI Area, Division and District structure.
- Explain other club activities such as contests etc. and how you could get involved.

Your mentor will provide helpful feedback as you progress and act as a sounding board for questions and ideas you may have. They will be encouraging and supportive. You should regularly keep them up to date about your progress, both in terms of what you are doing and how you feel you are progressing towards your goals. The more you put into your learning, the more you will receive.

- **After your 3rd Speech (or end of agreed period)**

You should discuss with your mentor how you would like to proceed. If you feel you still want support and help, and they are happy to provide it, please let your VPE or Mentoring Manager (MM) know what you have agreed. This should be for a finite period e.g. 3 more speeches, 6 months etc. Should your mentor be unable to commit to a further period, please contact your VPE (or MM) who will assign you a new mentor.

PROBLEMS

In the unlikely event of problems e.g. unavailability of your mentor or a personality clash, you should contact the MM or VPE. Occasionally, the relationship just doesn't work out – this is no-one's fault – and you are under no obligation to explain the details. If necessary, the MM will find you a new mentor.

PROGRESSING YOUR TOASTMASTER JOURNEY

Mentors are not only useful for new members. Many of our more experienced members can benefit from having a mentor too. Perhaps you feel that your skills have become a bit 'dull', or you have reached a skill plateau or you need guidance upon approaching a major milestone e.g. your 10th speech for your CC award. Maybe you feel you would benefit from working with someone with a specific talent, or just feel you need some inspiration! A mentor will help you:

- **Refine your skills**

A mentor can provide you with helpful feedback and specific suggestions.

- **Learn new skills**

A mentor may be a specialist in a particular area you want to improve e.g. entering contests or leadership.

- **Choose a direction for advanced speaking and/or leadership**

People often feel they have 'completed' when they finish their first CC manual. This is just the start of your journey! Talking with a mentor who is an advanced member can help you to review the options available.

A 'progressing' mentor is usually assigned for 6 months, depending on what goals you want to achieve.

ANYONE can ask for a mentor at any time! Just let the MM (or VPE) know.

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WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A MENTEE:

- **Eager to learn.** Willing to take on new challenges
- **Receptive.** Open to feedback, viewing it as an opportunity to improve
- **Open to new ideas.** Able to see things from other perspectives
- **Loyal.** Keep confidences
- **Grateful.** Your mentor is volunteering their own time to support you: be appreciative
- **Pro-active.** Your mentor is a resource for you; this is *your* learning journey so it is your responsibility to initiate meetings and conversations
- **See things through.** Follow up with your mentor on actions and update them on your progress
- **Ask.** Feel free to ask, the only dumb question is the unasked one
- **Committed.** If you struggle with your motivation, have a chat with your mentor to get back on track or tweak what you're doing
- **Realistic.** Don't take on more than you can achieve *and* don't hold back, take the opportunities to learn and perform when you can.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A MENTOR:

When working with your mentee, remember that your function is to help the mentee learn to think and act successfully and independently. Don't tell them what to do or do the mentees work yourself. Simply guide and offer feedback. A good mentor:

- **Listens** actively
- **Gives** guidance, encourages and motivates
- **Sees potential** in the Mentee
- **Encourages self-esteem** and boosts confidence. VERY IMPORTANT
- **Has empathy** and ability to see the world through the eyes of the Mentee
- **Asks open questions;** who, where, why...
- **Suggests,** not tells
- **Shares knowledge,** anticipate the mentees needs and ensure you share accurate information
- **Is available,** both at club meetings and for conversations/emails
- **Is patient,** let the Mentee set the pace and push a little
- **Is tactful,** take care to express feedback to encourage and motivate. Be loyal and keep any confidences
- **Is respectful** and flexible. Accept that it's the mentee's choice in how they do things.
- **Supportive of the club,** proud of its achievements and members
- **Is confident,** self-assured and friendly

Getting started with your mentee

When you have been allocated a mentee, please email them to introduce yourself as their mentor. Give them some idea of what to expect and what you expect of them and provide your preferred contact details. Give a clear call to action, so they know what the next step is, e.g. to contact you to arrange the first conversation. If you haven't yet met your mentee at a club meeting, make a point of searching them out and introducing yourself.