

ILPO55 Mentoring Method

for Intergenerational activities in the FSS

(ILPO55: Output 6, Activity 1 O6-A1 Develop methods and tools for competence evaluation)

Introduction

The Mentoring Method is one of the 3 main Tools for Competence Evaluation and the Improvement of Employability of over 55 Employees within the ILPO55 Reference Framework. The ILPO55 Consortium identified guidance as the best form to aid in the career progression of the Older employees within the Financial Services Sector, and they felt that Mentoring is the best form of support which can be given to these individuals.

Mentoring is a training system whereby senior employees or more experienced staff members act as advisors or counsellors to more junior staff. In this regard, one can conclude that mentoring takes the form of relationship-building between the mentor and mentee where the latter feels safe enough to share whatever issues are affecting his or her professional and personal development.

Distinction between mentoring and coaching

In contrast to mentoring, **coaching** is task-oriented. This means that the focus is on concrete issues, such as time-management and delivering effective presentations etc. This requires a content expert (coach) who is capable of teaching the learners how to develop such skills.

Coaching is used when:

- a company is seeking to develop its employees in specific competencies;
- a company has a number of talented employees who need further development;
- a new leader or executive needs assistance in acquiring a new skill as an additional responsibility.

In turn, mentoring is used when

- a company is seeking to develop current staff complement for succession planning;
- a company seeks to retain its internal expertise and organisational history to develop younger staff, building on the synergies of creating personal relationships.

Benefits of Mentoring

- Better prospects for career development and advancement of the mentee;
- Enhanced career and job satisfaction both for the mentee and the mentor;
- Increased managerial productivity for mentees;
- This may in turn lead to better compensation packages to the mentee;
- Increased employee retention for the Company.

Key Qualities for Effective Mentoring

The ILPO55 Consortium recommends that the Ideal Mentor should have the following characteristics:

- **Good Control of Emotional Intelligence** – The ideal mentor needs to have good control of his/her emotions and that of his/her mentees. The mentor might be assigned different

individuals as mentees with different characters and different emotions, beliefs etc. A good possession of emotional intelligence will allow the mentor to adapt to these different characters and enable the creation of a relationship which is essential for the successful completion of the mentoring process.

- **Active Listener** – during mentoring sessions the Mentor needs to listen to the mentee as s/he shares his/her experiences and discusses the way forward, expressing his/her goals and suggesting possible options for their achievement.
- **Ability to provide Effective Feedback** – The ability to provide effective and constructive feedback is central to the entire Mentoring Process. Feedback will be at the core of all the activities planned by and for the mentee and any improvements or amendments will be based on the feedback provided by the mentor. Feedback will have a huge input in the success or failure of specific activities taken up by the mentee and it is sure to be a motivating factor throughout the entire process. Moreover, the mentor needs to provide feedback which is customized to the mentee and his/her skills and formulate it in such a way which encourages the mentee to improve further.
- **Good Questioning Techniques** – Asking questions for the sake of asking them is something which every individual is capable of. Asking questions which trigger thoughts, self-reflection and self-evaluation is a skill which not many possess and it's a skill which the ideal mentor should have. In the various mentoring sessions there will be multiple occasions where the mentor will have to ask questions to the mentee. Therefore, it is imperative that the questions s/he asks have a purpose such as eliciting discussion. The mentor needs to know when to ask different types of questions in order to achieve his/her pre-set aims. Close ended questions; rhetorical questions; open questions; filtering and probing questions; leading questions etc. all add value if applied correctly. It is the responsibility of the Mentor to identify when and where to use them.
- **Approachability and Availability** – Being approachable is an important characteristic of any mentor. An approachable mentor will make it easier for the mentee to open up and share his/her thoughts. Similarly, s/he needs to make him/herself available as much as possible for the mentee. This will ensure that the mentee goes through with his/her mentoring plan/process.
- **Ability and willingness to share Knowledge and Expertise and Commitment to the Mentoring Process** – The mentor needs to have behavioural features similar to those of a teacher/lecturer and/or trainer. Pedagogical skills or the ability to train will be helpful and an asset since s/he will be expected to share his/her knowledge and expertise. The ILPO55 consortium recommends that the mentor should, as a minimum, be in possession of the ILPO55 Adult Trainer Certificate or equivalent. The Mentor needs to be willing to draw on his/her experience/s and use him/herself as an example if it is relevant to the situation. Moreover the mentor needs to be seriously committed to the mentoring process and be well prepared for each, and every mentoring session scheduled as part of the mentoring plan.
- **Openness to Suggestions** – the mentor needs to be someone who is open to suggestions and values the opinions of his peers and subordinates. Whilst his role requires him to guide

mentees, s/he should not impose his views on the mentee but encourage him/her to share opinions and be proactive.

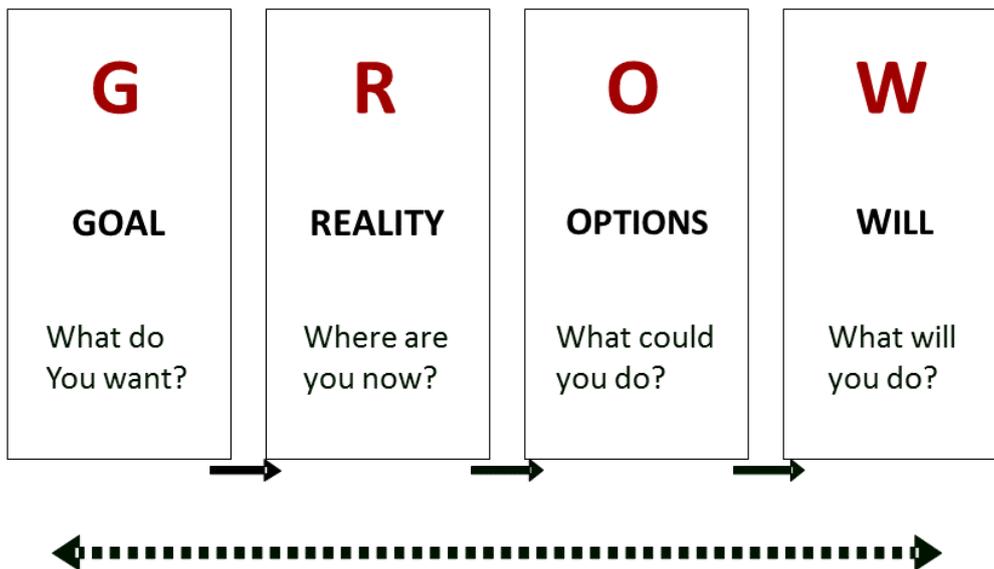
- **Team Player** – The concept of mentoring is built on the idea of collaboration between individuals within an organisation. The Mentor needs to be comfortable working within a team taking an active position and demonstrating a positive attitude which inspires others.
- **Values Intergenerational and on-going Learning** – The ideal mentor needs to be someone who believes in intergenerational learning and bridging the gap through the collaboration of older and younger employees. S/he needs to be someone who values continuity within the organisation and who understands and believes that the best way to achieve this is through intergenerational learning. The mentor also needs to be someone who values on-going learning and career progression. This is of utmost importance since his/her role will be requiring him/her to guide mentees through a process of professional growth which is tied to on-going learning.
- **Is Honest yet Diplomatic** – Throughout the mentoring process there will be a number of occasions in which the mentor would need to highlight opportunities for improvement to the mentees. In these occasions the mentor would need to be honest yet diplomatic in order to ensure that his/her message reaches the mentee with the intended positive effect.
- **Objective and Fair** – The role of mentor gives an individual the responsibility of guiding another individual on a path of progression. Most of the time the mentor would be validating the options and prospects of an individual and providing advice which should lead him/her to achieve present goals. There might be instances where the mentor is helping more than one individual to reach a similar target. A good mentor needs to be objective and fair in the way he treats all the mentees under his care and any advice or actions planned must always be in the best interest of the mentee/s.

Plan and Prepare formal mentoring session

The role of the mentor is to support the mentees, helping them to take better decisions, solve problems and possibly learn new skills that would eventually provide them with career prospects. To achieve his objectives, the mentor should adopt a structured approach based on the GROW model. The GROW model is a powerful framework for structuring mentoring sessions. The model was developed in the 1980s by Sir John Whitmore with the support of other coaches, namely Alan Fine and Graham Alexander. The use of the model is not intended to provide advice or direction. The mentor must act as facilitator, providing guidelines to the mentee in selecting the best option available.

The model is like a journey, starting with the setting up of a goal for the mentee, establish the current reality, and explore possible options available and finally his willingness and commitment to achieve the set goal/s. The mentor has to be prepared to handle difficulties and problems during the course of the journey.

Grow Model



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Address the Importance of confidentiality in mentoring

Confidentiality in mentoring is extremely important and fundamental for the mentoring programme to be effective and for the desired results to be achieved. Indeed how can the mentor and mentee be able to share information with each other if there are doubts as to whether this information can be kept confidential or otherwise? Within this context, it is therefore essential that the ground rules of confidentiality are set at the outset so that there will be no ill feeling in the event that certain information is disclosed to third parties. Examples of what the ground rules should cover:

1. Mentor and mentee should observe confidentiality on what is discussed during the mentoring session at all times.
2. The mentee must acknowledge that this duty of confidentiality is not absolute and in certain cases the mentor (and or mentee for that matter) has a duty and an obligation to break confidentiality commitments e.g. in the case where something unlawful comes to light such as physical, sexual or emotional abuse, a crime is going to be committed or in the case where the mentee's or others' health may be in jeopardy.
3. Mentor and mentee must decide whether the mentoring arrangement is to be made public. This may be desirable in certain cases (e.g. a middle-aged manager mentoring a relatively young official of the opposite sex) but each case has to be discussed and treated on its own merits.

4. Mentor and mentee should agree and commit themselves that the confidentiality of the mentoring sessions should survive the completion (for whatever reason) of the mentoring arrangement.
5. Where a meeting with line management to discuss the mentee's performance etc. is necessary, it would be desirable that the mentoring session prior to this meeting should be used as a forum to clearly set out what is going to be disclosed about the mentee and what the boundaries are for the mentor to disclose information gathered in the course of the mentoring sessions.

Breaking confidentiality commitments in a mentoring arrangement may lead to termination and in such a case it can be, in a worst case scenario, very acrimonious.

Using the Grow model – Instructions for the Mentor

1. Establish the Goal

Establishing the Goal is the most fundamental step of the entire Mentoring Plan/Process. Setting up goals which are realistic and which the mentee can achieve is important in order to ensure that the mentoring plan is successful. In order to set up such goals it is important that as a mentor you get to know the mentee in terms of his personality; skills and competences; strengths and weaknesses. Following this you, the mentor, will be in a position to:

- 1) draw up a plan by which the mentee can meet the pre-set goals
- 2) identify the elements of his/her behaviour which s/he will be required to improve in order to ensure that the goals are met. Such change needs to be structured according to the goals which the mentee aims to achieve.

The goal has to be S.M.A.R.T., i.e.;

1. Specific
2. Measurable
3. Attainable
4. Realistic
5. Time-bound

When establishing a goal you (as a mentor) need to ask yourself the following questions

- How can I assess that mentee has achieved the goal? How will I know that the problem has been resolved?
- Will the goal set fit with the mentee's overall career objectives? And does it fit within the team's objectives?

2. Examine the current Reality

Discussion is an essential element of the mentoring process. As a Mentor, it is mainly your responsibility to find ways in which you can build a stable relationship, with the mentee, which is built on trust and mutuality. Such a relationship is vital for the success of the Mentoring Process and the establishment and successful fulfilment of mentoring goals.

One way of building such a relationship is to dedicate the first sessions, of the Mentoring Process, to getting to know the Mentee, first as an individual, and then as an employee, focusing on his/her goals and aspirations. The mentee needs to be made to feel at ease and as an active participant in the mentoring process. This will facilitate discussions on topics which s/he would not feel comfortable discussing such as:

1. his/her strengths and weaknesses;
2. problems within his current position/role and organisation;
3. personal issues which affect his/her willingness to progress etc.

Once this relationship is built it will be easier to analyse the current reality of the Individual and use it in order to design a process in which to address any gaps identified and plan towards the pre-established and agreed goals.

When developing a plan, you (as a mentor) should ask yourself the following questions:

- What is happening now (what, who, when, and how often)? What is the effect or result of this?
- Has the mentee already taken any steps towards the set goal?
- Does this goal conflict with any other goals or objectives set for the mentee and/or his/her team?

3. Explore the Options

Once you (as a mentor) have explored the mentee's current reality, you have to discuss and determine what is possible, through a process of evaluation all of the possible ways and options which could lead to the successful achievement of the objective.

As a mentor, you will be expected to recommend proposals to the mentee, however the mentee himself is also required to share his views and put forward suggestions. The mentee needs to be kept active throughout the entire mentoring process. Therefore it is imperative that mentoring sessions do not take the form of lectures but rather of interactive discussions. The mentee should be encouraged to lead the discussion and do most of the talking whilst the mentor should take the role of a guide, guiding the mentee accordingly. It is imperative that the mentee is guided in such a way that it is him/her who makes the final decision/s.

Typical questions that you can ask yourself (as a mentor) to reflect on the options:

- Based on the current reality examined earlier and the goals established at the start of the process, what else could the mentee do?
- Are there any constraints limiting the Mentee's options? Can these be removed? In which way? What if any constraints were removed? Would that change things? What are the alternate options?
- What are the pros and cons of each option?
- What factors or considerations are to be used to weigh the options?
- What change in behaviour is required in order to achieve the set goal? Are there any obstacles standing in the way?

4. Establish the Will

As a result of the first 3 tools in the GROW model the mentee will have a clearer idea of the way forward for career progression. At this point of the model a number of mentoring sessions should have passed and both the mentor and the mentee should have:

1. Developed a strong relationship built on trust;
2. Drawn a detailed picture of the Mentee's reality and confirmed the set goals and the path leading to their achievement.

All that is left is for the Mentee to commit him/herself to the specific actions identified within the mentoring plan and work towards achieving his/her goal. At this point of the plan, the Mentor takes up the role of a motivator and a source of support for the mentee as s/he is working through to the present goal/s. The ILPO55 consortium suggests that meetings should be held regularly in this phase of the plan. The mentee will require feedback and encouragement to power through the difficulties s/he might encounter whilst working on the agreed actions and therefore it is a delicate period where the mentee might decide to quit. It is in the Mentor's interest to keep the Mentee motivated and to drive into him/her the will to move forward. In addition, through process review meetings, the mentee can be led to develop a sense of accountability for his/her progress and led to identify possible areas for improvement and changes in the approach to obtain a better result.

Constructive Feedback (preferably positive) is key at this point of the mentoring plan and therefore it is imperative that the mentor is capable of providing Feedback in a way which is best suited for the mentee as an individual. In doing so s/he will be assisting the mentee helping him/her to establish his/her will and keeping him/her motivated.

Some useful questions to ask yourself as a mentor in this stage of the plan are:

- What is the way forward selected by the mentee? How can you, as a mentor, help him/her in achieving his/her goal? Is there something else which can be done?
- What could stop the mentee from moving forward? How can you help him/her to overcome this?
- How can you keep yourself and the mentee motivated till the end of the process?
- How often does the progress of the mentee need to be reviewed? Daily, weekly, monthly?
- Are there any changes which need to be applied to the process based on the level of achievement and progress demonstrated by the mentee?

5. Planning the follow-up

The Mentoring Plan is a process which is based on good communication. Therefore the frequency of meetings/ communication is an important aspect of the mentoring process which should be designed on a case by case basis, according to the needs of the mentee.

In the case of the ILPO55 Employability Portfolio, the mentoring process is an on-going process which should accompany the mentee throughout the execution of the various tools forming part of the ILPO55 Employability Portfolio. In fact the tools within the Employability Portfolio should be used as a source of information: to feed the development of the mentoring plan; to validate and confirm the goals set for the mentee and to inspire more tangible options for the acquisition of any goals set.

In view of this, mentoring sessions/communication should be planned strategically in line with the other tools within the ILPO55 Employability Portfolio. The ILPO55 Consortium recommends the frequency of communication for mentees following the entire ILPO55 Employability Portfolio Process should be on a bi-weekly basis so as to ensure that the mentee has the necessary support to fulfil the requirements of the various tools within the Framework. Moreover, having more frequent communication would give the Mentor and Mentee the opportunity to build a stronger relationship which will result in a more successful mentoring process.

In the case of mentees who are not following the entire ILPO55 Employability Portfolio Process the frequency of communication can be lower and should be determined by the Mentor and Mentee according to the needs.

Communication can happen in various ways. Mentors and mentees may decide to communicate via face to face meetings or remotely using various communication media available today. The ILPO55 Consortium recommends that Mentoring Communication should happen through mixed methods i.e. both face to face as well as using communication media. Of the 2 meetings per month recommended by the ILPO55 Consortium, for Mentees following the full ILPO55 Employability Portfolio Process, the Consortium also recommends that one meeting is held face to face whilst the second either via telephone, video conferencing or, if possible, face to face. Email, and/or similar communication media should be used as necessary in the time between scheduled meetings, to tackle quick issues arising from time to time.

The ILPO55 Consortium would like to once again stress the importance of communication and relationship building for the successful completion of the Mentoring Process. In view of this, the planning of meetings, communication channels and frequency should not be taken lightly and should be given primary importance by both the mentor and the mentee at the early stages of the process. This will ensure a positive experience for both the Mentor and the Mentee and a productive Mentoring Process.