



Mentoring a Leadership Roundtable Project Team

A Guide for the Leadership Roundtable # 3 Mentors



Pickard & Laws Consulting Group Inc.

Mississauga, Ontario

905 824-2446

lpickard@pickardlaws.com

Mentoring A Project Team: An Overview (1)

What is a Mentor?

- A trusted counselor or guide who can pass on knowledge and experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities.

Mentoring Tools and Skills

- Listen and ask questions. Follow and keep track of threads of conversation.
- Help the team to source its own authority and decision making power.
- Assist the team to identify issues and barriers and to find its own solutions.
- Promote reflection and reframing of an issue. Redirect the team toward productive and constructive thinking.
- Help the team to move forward to a plan of action.

Twelve Habits of the Toxic Mentor

1. Start from the point of view that you know better than the mentees what is in their best interests. After all, your vast experience and broader perspective qualifies you for this position!
2. Be determined to share your wisdom with them, whether they want it or not; remind them frequently how much they still have to learn.
3. Decide what you and the mentees will talk about and when; change dates and themes frequently to prevent complacency from sneaking in.
4. Do most of the talking; check frequently that they are paying attention.
5. Make sure they understand how trivial their concerns are compared to the weighty issues you have to deal with.
6. Remind the mentees how fortunate they are to have your undivided attention.
7. Neither show nor admit any personal weaknesses; expect to be the role model in all aspects of the team project.
8. Never ask them what they should expect of you. How would they know anyway?
9. Demonstrate how important and well-connected you are by sharing confidential information they don't need (or want) to know.
10. Discourage any signs of levity or humour. This is a serious business and should be treated as such.
11. Take them to task when they don't follow your advice.
12. Never, never admit that this could be a learning experience for you, too.

Source: Adapted from David Clutterbuck, founding director of the *European Mentoring Centre* and an acclaimed author on mentoring and organizational learning. He can be contacted at 01628 661919 or via david@clutterbuckassociates.co.uk.

Why Mentor?

- To assist the team to scope its project realistically
- To help the team find resources and contacts
- To assist the team throughout the project, for example, with team dynamics and staying on track
- To role model how a leader mentors

Mentoring A Project Team: An Overview (2)

What is Important to the LRT Project Team?

Availability - Be accessible to answer questions and give insights.

Feedback – Offer constructive comments. Ask questions so that the team can discover their own answers.

Attention – Treat the team with respect. Honour the team's contribution to the organization.

Opportunity - Give team members an opportunity for greater access to senior management than is typically available.

Insight – Encourage all stages of the learning cycle. Share your own relevant experiences.

Time – Make time, even if it's for half an hour over coffee. Answer emails and phone calls promptly.

Confidence - Show faith in the team's ability to learn and to grow.

Encouragement - Encourage each team member to be a full participant in creating the joint work product.

Patience - Have patience with the learning that is taking place. Let the team chart its own course.

Questions to Ask the Project Team

- What are you learning from the project?
- How are you handling decision-making processes? What's working/not working?
- What are your issues and roadblocks? What is causing them? How do you propose to resolve them?
- What do you need from the organization?
- What contributions are you making to the organization?
- How is this contributing to your learning and growth?
- How are you mentoring others?
- How is my mentoring helping or hindering you?

A Mentoring Plan

Early in the LRT

- Help the team clarify the project purpose, scope, goals and milestones.
- Ensure the team's project is linked to Council's vision and goals and corporate strategy.
- Assist team in developing strategies to find appropriate resources.

Throughout the LRT Project Work Period

- Schedule face-to-face meetings with the team on a regular basis.
- Co-mentors identify the skills you bring to the team and how you will help.
- Create opportunities for the exchange of "best practices" with other teams.
- Acknowledge the team's accomplishments.
- Ask about the team's challenges and issues. They may include project scoping, project planning (chartering, etc.), being efficient and realistic in its research, managing team dynamics and team performance, learning from other project teams (sourcing and sharing information) and developing recommendations in line with CMT's expectations for costing and implementation.
- Help the team to work through its challenges. Take a "coach approach" asking questions, following lines of thought and enabling the team to find its own answers.
- Share tips, tools and relevant personal experiences that would assist the project team.
- Encourage your team to do a "Project Rehearsal". Attend the rehearsal and provide constructive feedback.
- Provide guidance to individual team members in meeting their personal learning objectives.

At the End of the LRT

- Attend the "On Stage" project team presentations - final session.
- Collaborate with other Commissioners in evaluating and recommending the next steps for all projects.
- Commit CMT to steering and monitoring project implementation post-LRT. Integrate into CMT agenda and individual Commissioner's goals.
- Acknowledge the project team's efforts (handwritten notes, team dinner, etc...)

Expectations of Mentors (1)

This is what we would like from you (Comments of LRT Graduates)

- Guidance and direction throughout the project: scope, CMT expectations, realistic recommendations, scheduling and time management, pitfalls, tips for success and feedback/critiquing
- Clarify format of report and presentation. Provide presentation tips
- Help keep us focused
- Share project contacts/resources (particularly non-obvious ones) with project teams - best practices/research suggestions
- Share experience: your “war” stories
- Keep us on track with Council’s Business Plan
- Be open and honest with us. We would rather have the “unvarnished truth”.
- Let us know if we are “drilling too deep”. Alert us to the dangers of getting “bogged down”.
- Give us some guidance and feedback for project recommendations and costing
- Clarify CMT’s expectations for the project presentations and reports
- Help us “sell” the project to CMT. What tools and techniques would you recommend?
- Counsel us on working through the “political” challenges and building relationships in the network of people who will enable and add reality to our project ideas.

Expectations of Mentors (2)

Common Issues Project Team Confront: A “Heads Up” for Mentors:

- Handling the different stages of team development: forming, storming, norming and performing). See Quick References from the “Revving Team” module which will be posted by May 30 on <http://niagara.myleadership.com>.
- Team members who do not “pull their weight”.
- Not scheduling regular meetings: the team as a whole and the team with its mentors. Successful project outcomes are typically compromised.
- Not collaborating with other project teams on any and all aspects of project development. This is a missed opportunity for creativity and ultimately innovation.
- Lack of communication among mentors: What’s working? What’s not working? How can the insights be applied to each project team now?
- Poorly crafted and unrealistic recommendations, particularly on costing, human resources and logistical implications.
- How to keep a project “alive” post-LRT. Teams are often keen on continuing to steer the projects forward. Partnership with CMT is essential at each step of the way.
- Mentors who get stuck and are unable to help the team through a particular issue. We encourage mentors to reach out to each other for coaching.

Benefits of Mentoring Journey

Benefits of Mentoring for **Mentors**:

- Continuing own leadership development
- Helping your department enact its own priorities
- Better understanding the perspectives and priorities of other departments
- Enhancing CMT's leadership "intelligence"
- Strengthening staff and partner relationships...culture-building in action

Benefits of Mentoring for **Mentees**:

- Speedier and easier "induction" into the formal and informal work of organization
- Ready access to senior managers' wisdom and coaching that may otherwise not occur in the natural course of day-to-day operations
- Improved understanding of how to work through the "swamp" issues: navigating organizational politics; networking and building relationships; tools, techniques and processes for confronting the unexpected and the uncertain situations
- Helping your work group and department with making progress on its priorities on behalf of the whole
- Becoming more inspired about the purpose and important work of the region for the benefit of the community

Benefits of Mentoring to the **Organization**:

- Crafting and testing new ideas for the corporation and region as whole
- Adding value to the effectiveness/efficiency of staff and the programs they oversee
- Accelerating the implementation of Council's priorities
- Developing the next generation of leaders: sustaining the leadership agenda
- Enabling more creativity and innovation in support of community prosperity and health
- Building a more positive climate and engaging working environment

In Summary: Mentors...

- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen actively and reflectively
- Pick up on and follow themes
- Be open. Share experiences and skills
- Be clear and relevant
- Be brief---let the team have the floor
- Give the work back to the team
- Help the team to be accountable
- Encourage the team to think about its thinking
- Coach the team in “systems thinking” and collaboration
- “Be there” for the team