

A photograph showing a young man in a yellow high-visibility shirt and a blue shirt, and an older man with a white beard in a blue shirt, standing next to a green tractor. They are both looking at a manual or document held by the younger man. The tractor has a yellow wheel and a sign that says 'NEED CARE'. The background is a bright green gradient.

# SMART FARMS

MENTORING  
INFORMATION

SMART  
FOR  
BORN  
SUN



## MENTORING

If you're trekking through the jungles of Borneo, would you go it alone, or would you prefer to use a guide: someone who has been there before, has learned which animals are dangerous, and knows how to get where you're going?

Having a guide for your jungle adventure is much like having a mentor in your career.

A mentor is someone who's been where you are now, who's journeyed close to where you want to be, and who's made his or her own mistakes. Equally, it's someone who is willing to impart the wisdom of experience, and so help you avoid the same pitfalls. With this type of advice and guidance, you will be that much more likely to reach your career and/or personal goals.

Do you want to move your career forward? Would you like to develop your leadership skills as well as help others learn, grow, and improve their skills? Or would you like to find someone who can help you do these things? You can through a mentoring partnership.

More professionals these days are actively pursuing mentoring to advance their careers. And whether you're on the giving or receiving end, these types of partnerships can benefit your career.

A mentoring partnership can be rewarding to both people, personally and professionally. It's an opportunity to develop communication skills, expand your viewpoints, and consider new ways of approaching situations. And both partners can advance their careers in the process.





## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a relationship between two people with the goal of professional and personal development. The 'mentor' is usually an experienced individual who shares knowledge, experience, and advice with a less experienced person, or 'mentee.'

Mentors become trusted advisers and role models – people who have 'been there' and 'done that.' They support and encourage their mentees by offering suggestions and knowledge, both general and specific. The goal is to help mentees improve their skills and, hopefully, advance their careers.

A mentoring partnership may be between two people within the same company, same industry, or same networking organisation. However the partners come together, the relationship should be based on mutual trust and respect, and it typically offers personal and professional advantages for both parties.

## MENTORS VS COACHES

Mentoring is a unique combination. Coaches help you to explore where you are in your career, where you want to go, and how you might get there. A coach will also support you in taking action to move toward your goal.

Coaches and mentors differ in three main ways. First, a coach is generally paid, whereas your mentor will usually be making a voluntary commitment. This means that you can start working with a coach straight away, and that you can rely on them not to cancel sessions because 'Something urgent's come up.' Finding a mentor can take longer, and even when you do, your mentor may find it harder to keep space in their day for your mentoring appointment.

Second, while coaches tend to guide you in mapping out your future, mentors actually suggest several paths you might take, although the choice of where to go next remains yours.

**Beyond that, of course, good coaches are professionally trained and qualified.**

It's often the case that, within an organisation or a network, there are more people looking for a mentor than there are those offering to be one.

## BENEFITS TO THE MENTOR

**Becoming a mentor can enrich your life on a personal and professional level by helping you do the following:**

- Build your leadership skills – It helps you develop your ability to motivate and encourage others. This can help you become a better manager, employee, and Mentor.
- Improve your communication skills – Because your mentee may come from a different background or environment, the two of you may not 'speak the same language.' This may force you to find a way to communicate more effectively as you navigate your way through the mentoring relationship.
- Learn new perspectives – By working with someone less experienced and from a different background, you can gain a fresh perspective on things and learn a new way of thinking – which can help in your work life as well as your personal life.
- Advance your career – Refining your leadership skills can strengthen your on-the-job performance, perhaps helping you get that promotion to higher management – or into management in the first place. Showing that you've helped others learn and grow is becoming more and more essential to advancement in today's business world.
- Gain personal satisfaction – It can be very personally fulfilling to know that you've directly contributed to someone's growth and development. Seeing your mentee succeed as result of your input is a reward in itself.

## BENEFITS TO THE MENTEE

**A trusted mentor can help you do the following:**

- Gain valuable advice – Mentors can offer valuable insight into what it takes to get ahead. They can be your guide and 'sounding board' for ideas, helping you decide on the best course of action in difficult situations. You may learn shortcuts that help you work more effectively and avoid 'reinventing the wheel.'
- Develop your knowledge and skills – They can help you identify the skills and expertise you need to succeed. They may teach you what you need to know, or advise you on where to go for the information you need.
- Improve your communication skills – Just like your mentor, you may also learn to communicate more effectively, which can further help you at work.
- Learn new perspectives – Again, you can learn new ways of thinking from your mentor, just as your mentor can learn from you.
- Build your network – Your mentor can offer an opportunity to expand your existing network of personal and professional contacts.
- Advance your career – A mentor helps you stay focused and on track in your career through advice, skills development, networking, and so on.

## IS MENTORING RIGHT FOR YOU?

Even if you understand the benefits of mentoring and it sounds like a great idea, you have to decide whether it's right for you.

**To explore your reasons for mentoring and whether you want to take this type of commitment further, ask yourself these questions:**

- Do you have the time?
- Do you have the willingness to commit?
- Do you believe you can bring benefit to the mentee?

## HOW TO STRUCTURE A MENTORING SESSION

**The GROW Model is a simple yet powerful framework for structuring your mentoring sessions.**

**GROW stands for:**

Goal  
Reality (Current)  
Options (or Obstacles)  
Will (or Way Forward)

The model was originally developed in the 1980s by business coaches Graham Alexander, Alan Fine, and Sir John Whitmore.

A good way of thinking about the GROW Model is to think about how you'd plan a journey. First, you decide where you are going (the goal), and establish where you currently are (your current reality). You then explore various routes (the options) to your destination. In the final step, establishing the will, you ensure that you're committed to making the journey, and are prepared for the obstacles that you could meet on the way.

## 1. ESTABLISH THE GOAL

First, you and your mentee need to look at the behaviour that they want to change, and then structure this change as a goal that they want to achieve.

**Make sure that this is a SMART goal: one that is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.**

**When doing this, it's useful to ask questions like:**

- How will you know that your mentee has achieved this goal?
- How will you know that the problem or issue is solved?
- Does this goal fit with their overall career objectives?
- And does it fit with the team's objectives?



## 2. EXAMINE THE CURRENT REALITY

Next, ask your mentee to describe their current reality.

This is an important step. Too often, people try to solve a problem or reach a goal without fully considering their starting point, and often they're missing some information that they need in order to reach their goal effectively.

As your mentee tells you about their current reality, the solution may start to emerge.

**Useful coaching questions in this step include the following:**

- What is happening now (what, who, when, and how often)?  
What is the effect or result of this?
- Have you already taken any steps towards your goal?
- Does this goal conflict with any other goals or objectives?

## 3. EXPLORE THE OPTIONS

Once you and your mentee have explored the current reality, it's time to determine what is possible – meaning all of the possible options for reaching their objective.

Help your mentee brainstorm as many good options as possible. Then, discuss these and help them decide on the best ones.

By all means, offer your own suggestions in this step. But let your mentee offer suggestions first, and let them do most of the talking. It's important to guide them in the right direction, without actually making decisions for them.

**Typical questions that you can use to explore options are as follows:**

- What else could you do?
- What if this or that constraint were removed?
- Would that change things?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
- What factors or considerations will you use to weigh the options?
- What do you need to stop doing in order to achieve this goal?

## 4. ESTABLISH THE WILL

By examining the current reality and exploring the options, your mentee will now have a good idea of how they can achieve their goal.

That's great – but in itself, this may not be enough. The final step is to get your mentee to commit to specific actions in order to move forward towards their goal. In doing this, you will help them establish their will and boost their motivation.

**Useful questions to ask here include:**

- So, what will you do now and when
- What else will you do?
- What could stop you moving forward  
- how will you overcome this?
- How can you keep yourself motivated?
- When do you need to review progress  
- daily, weekly, monthly?

Finally, decide on a date when you'll both review their progress. This will provide some accountability, and allow them to change their approach if the original plan isn't working.



For further information contact:

**Racheal Fyfe**  
Teacher, Business Studies  
T: 5022 3633

**Warren Lloyd**  
SMART Farm Project Lead Horticulture Liaison  
T: 0429 368 966

**Nicole Byrnes**  
SMART Farm Project Lead Horticulture  
Innovation/Technology  
T: 0437 761 917

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