

A Mentoring Manual for
Volunteer Industry Professionals

of the

Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program 2009

at

Sydney Community College Inc.

Prepared by

Hellas Maroulis

This program is a NSW Government initiative
funded through

The Department of Education and Training

and

NSW AMES



Contents:

1. Mission Statement
2. What is the Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program?
3. Why a mentoring program?
4. Aims and desired outcomes
5. Your role as a mentor
6. The first meeting
7. Your obligations as a mentor
8. Mentoring Process
9. Tips and Ideas for mentoring

Sydney Community College Inc.
PO Box 247
LEICHHARDT NSW 2040
Ph 02 8752 7555
Fx 02 8752 7500
Wb www.sydneycommunitycollege.com.au

This manual is copyright to Sydney Community College Inc

1. Mission Statement:

Congratulations on your decision to become a volunteer mentor for the Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program, delivered by Sydney Community College! The following information has been compiled in order to provide you with some insight into what mentoring entails and the benefits it gives to mentors, mentees and the community.

2. What is the Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program?

The SMM Program is a government-funded program, designed to assist skilled migrants in overcoming employment barriers such as cultural difference, communication, and English language skills.

Candidates require a minimum of 15 hours of mentoring from local professionals from a variety of industries, who can offer them some insight into the local job market, industry bodies, networks, and share their knowledge and experience.

Participants in the program also need to undertake 70 hours of unpaid work experience with local companies and organisations in order to acquire some knowledge of Australian workplace practices. Mentoring is an excellent way to equip skilled migrants with some useful industry knowledge before sending them into the workforce to undertake work experience.

3. Why a Mentoring Program?

Mentoring is an effective way of improving the skills and career development of professionals. It is a process in which the more experienced members of a particular group offer support, advice and assistance to the less experienced. Mentoring is beneficial for all persons involved, as it increases skills, flexibility, enhances morale regenerating enthusiasm, gives insight into other cultures and unwritten rules, gives networking opportunities, and improves self-confidence and empowerment.

Why Mentor?

Mentoring is the oldest form of human learning. Mentoring is a method which is more broadly based and more intuitive than coaching, focusing more on developing capabilities than specific skills and being mutually beneficial to both participants.

A successful mentoring relationship is an interactive results-centered partnership. Engaging in this relationship provides:

- Mutual influence and learning.
- A confidential, non-threatening sounding board for ideas, questions and concerns.
- An opportunity to actively give/seek information, perspective, personal insights, support and guidance.
- A supplement to other methods for skills based development.
- A chance to receive objective feedback.

Mentoring helps the participants to strengthen their adaptability, creativity and insight.

It is important to recognise that mentoring is a mutual agreement- the power of mentoring derives from its spirit of volunteerism and generosity. Both parties should be able to benefit from the relationship.

- Confidentiality is key to the success of the mentoring relationship, and it is crucial to maintain trust.

The story of Mentor

The story of Mentor comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. When Odysseus, king of Ithaca, went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted the care of his household to Mentor, who served as teacher and overseer of Odysseus's son, Telemachus.

After the war, Odysseus was condemned to wander vainly for ten years in his attempt to return home. Eventually father and son were reunited.

In time the word *Mentor* became synonymous with trusted adviser, friend, teacher and wise person.

Gordon Shea: Mentoring a Guide to the Basics

4. Aims and Desired outcomes:

To increase professional experience of skilled migrants to include knowledge of Australian workplace contexts, in order to assist them in finding employment in their field of expertise.

Skilled Migrants will have a better knowledge and understanding of job seeking processes and workplace culture in Australia, along with access to networks, enabling them to find employment.

5. Your role as a mentor:

To share your experience, knowledge and understanding of the Australian workplace, by guiding your mentee and making regular face to face contact as well as emailing and telephoning one another.

It is important to note that Mentoring is not aimed at setting a vision or a particular direction for the mentee and their career. Mentors are encouraged to listen to mentees and work with them to develop their own options.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is an alliance of two people which creates a space for dialogue that results in reflection, action and learning for both.

Too often mentors are characterised as being older, wiser and higher up in terms of status, than mentees. This image places an unfair burden on mentors, and may have unhelpful implications on the nature of the mentoring relationship.

One partner may have more experience than the other in some areas but age and status are not necessarily relevant to the value one brings to mentoring.

A mentor is a person who will listen and give information, advice and counsel when requested.

They may:

- support a transition and help assimilation into a new environment.
- act as a source of information and insight.
- counsel regarding career development or strategies for achieving professional goals.
- teach specific skills.
- facilitate self-directed learning.

What Mentoring is not:

- one person dominating, directing or controlling another's decisions.
- becoming dependant or reliant on someone else.
- using or taking unfair advantage of someone.
- gaining favours that are expected to be returned or paid back.
- working outside of the system.
- best friends – while friendship may develop, it is not the primary goal of the relationship.

Mentoring should be viewed as an opportunity to provide the mentee with useful information in regards to your specific industry background, ranging from the process of job-seeking through to employment responsibilities.

Simple things that we, as Australians, take for granted in our day to day working lives may be a great obstacle or cause for distress for our skilled migrant population.

This may include but is not limited to:

- knowledge of companies in one's industry.
- knowledge of colloquial language/industry lingo.
- cultural differences.
- socialising.
- industry networks.

- phone/email etiquette.
- vocational training.
- professional development opportunities.
- industry professional bodies.
- recruitment processes.

Most of our skilled migrants have been in Australia for a short period of time. Though they may be qualified and experienced in their specific industries, they lack the knowledge and experience of working in Australia.

Think about your current or previous work environment. Try to list a few common expressions that you or a colleague would use on a daily basis. Below are a few examples to start you off:

1. She'll be right
2. No worries
3. You right?
4. Do you need a hand?
5. Bbq at my place, bring a plate

Consider how this might come across as strange to a person who has a high level of English language skills, however, has not had much exposure to Australian colloquial English. These sayings would most likely even sound strange to a migrant from Britain or the United States of America.

Such small incidences can lead to misunderstanding and cause embarrassment and confusion. It should be noted that in many cultures, especially eastern cultures, there is a huge emphasis on 'saving face'. People would rather hide the fact that they have not understood something and pretend that they did understand in order to save face for both themselves and the interlocutor. This is especially likely when speaking with a superior such as a manager or supervisor.

As a volunteer mentor, it is in your interest to make yourself familiar with the cultural background of your mentee. This will help you to understand why Australian ways may seem strange for them, and assist you with your explanations. Mentors will be given a brief information sheet on the cultural background of their mentee.

6. The First Meeting

Things to do:

- A) Make contact with your learner and agree on a time, date and place to meet. Meetings should take place in a public place eg. Library, coffee-shop or park.
- B) Prior to the first meeting, take some time to look at your mentee's profile and cultural background.
- C) Discuss goals, expectations and needs of your mentee. Try to identify gaps in their knowledge of the Australian industry.
- D) Read through the Mentoring Agreement and ensure that you both have a mutual understanding of availability and suitable means and hours of contact.
- E) Establish a friendly and supportive relationship.

You might also want to organise to take with you some paper, pens and any general documents or information relevant to your industry.

At the first meeting, exchange information about your work experience and background. This will help to build up a relationship. By the end of the first meeting, your mentee must feel that you are there to support and not judge them.

After the first meeting, contact the SMMP Coordinator (Hellas Maroulis – 8752 7523, hellas.maroulis@scc.nsw.edu.au) to advise how the first meeting went and to forward on your mentoring agreement.

Don't forget to start filling out your session reports. These reports are to be submitted to the SMMP Coordinator at the completion of the 15 hours of mentoring.

7. Your Obligation as a Volunteer Mentor

- A) Attend an interview with the SMMP coordinator.
- B) Complete Mentor training.
- C) Provide a minimum of 15 hours of mentoring per client.
- D) Ensure that the SMMP Coordinator is contacted after the first meeting with the mentee, and the mentoring agreement is submitted.
- E) Ensure that the session reports are completed after each session, and submitted to the SMMP Coordinator at the completion of 15 hours of mentoring.
- F) Where possible, provide the mentee with valuable contacts who may be able to assist them with their career development.
- G) Where possible, provide the SMMP Coordinator with contacts from companies who may be willing to offer work experience placements for SMMP clients.
- H) Where possible, encourage other experienced professionals to follow your example to help improve the situation for both skilled migrants and the Australian workforce and community.

8. The Mentoring Process

It is important to develop and use good listening techniques when your mentee participant has an issue, opportunity or problem, using professional:

- **listening skills**

- **open questioning skills**

| Action |
|--|
| 1. Focus attention. <i>Don't interrupt or complete what they are saying for them.</i> |
| 2. Use minimal encouragers <i>e.g. nod, smile, "Yes", "Uh-huh", "I see"</i> <i>These encourage without interrupting</i> |
| 3. Watch for body language <i>e.g. person may have arms crossed indicating they are defensive, they may agree but frown. Body language helps you understand their total response.</i> |
| 4. Listen for tone of voice <i>They may be talking fast, or angrily, or defensively. Tone may be an important message.</i> |
| 5. Use mirroring skills <i>Mirror their posture, tone, speed to begin with. This is a powerful technique to establish rapport.</i> |
| 6. Use open questioning skills to guide and probe <i>Don't ask questions that have a yes or no answer, use questions to make your mentor participant explore own ideas rather than be guided by your questions</i> |

9. Tips and Ideas for Mentoring:

- A) Encourage Mentees to keep a diary or journal of meetings and discussions
- B) Let the mentee share something with you that they are an expert about.
It can be anything, for example, a cultural celebration. Allowing the mentee to be the expert shows genuine interest, and gives the mentee a sense of competence and self-worth
- C) Work on skills the mentee wants to improve
- D) Assist the mentee with writing their resume, tailoring it to improve and emphasise skills and qualifications that are well regarded in the mentee's chosen field.
- E) Assist the mentee with interview processes. Discuss and rehearse questions that may be asked and arm them with the best possible answers they can give.
- F) Use the list from section 5 (obstacles for migrants pg. 5) as a basis for your mentoring sessions. Use these examples to help you identify the gaps in your mentee's knowledge.

