

Mentorship and Coaching

How do I support employees in their growth journey?

Mentoring and coaching are vital tools in the employment relationship, particularly in the food and fibre sector.

- The relationship is between a more experienced person and a less experienced person, where guidance and support is given for the purpose of personal development.
- This relationship is mutually beneficial, with both parties free to ask questions and learn from each other.
- By fostering these connections, mentoring and coaching help to create a more satisfied workplace culture where everyone feels valued and encouraged to grow.

Mentoring and coaching can be an informal approach to training and development. For more details on informal training and development, see our website.

These methods also share similarities with a buddy system, which is discussed further in chapter 3, Workplace Wellbeing and Coaching.

What is the difference between a mentor and coach?

Below defines the 'classic' style of mentoring and coaching. It also outlines what role buddies play in the workplace.

Mentoring and coaching can be provided to someone by the same person but they take different views and approaches to achieve different objectives as outlined below. It is more common for mentors to be found outside of a workplace (external) than coaches. It will depend on the individual situation as to what set-up is most appropriate.

Mentor

What does it achieve

Focuses on long-term career development, goal setting, and personal growth through supporting someone's career journey usually across a medium-long period of time in an industry.

It focuses on career networks, sharing similar experiences, and providing guidance on longer-term career pathways.

Key activities

Mentors listen, share their insights, and help mentees navigate their career paths. They connect the mentee with resources including experiences or networks.

Who

Involves a more experienced person providing advice, guidance, and support to a less experienced team member. Often from outside of the organisation.

Pros

- Long term focus.
- Personal growth.
- May have infrequent check-ins.
- Can be as part of a formal programme.

Cons

- Time intensive.
- Can be unstructured.
- Mentee can sometimes have solutions given to them and not think through independently.



Coach	
What does it achieve Interactive process where the coach uses questioning and active listening to help the coachee find their own solutions and 'a-ha' moments. It focuses on improving specific skills, performance, and achieving short-term goals.	
Key activities Coaches guide individuals to set clear goals, develop action plans, and stay accountable.	Who Involves a senior person from within the organisation.
Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular check-ins.• Structured approach.• Skill improvement.• Personalised feedback.• Frequent check-ins.• Encourages independent thinking and confidence.	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short term focus• Relies on coachee to work problems through for themselves

Buddy	
What does it achieve A buddy system is a simple and effective way to support new employees as they settle into their roles throughout their first few weeks or months on the job.	
Key activities Answers questions, introducing the new team member to others, and sharing tips on workplace practices to help them settle in.	Who Someone similar in age / work experience (two to five years).
Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides immediate support.• Eases transition into work.• Peer connection.	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited in ability to support with some issues• Temporary• New employee may become over reliant, hindering their independence