

# MODULE THREE



## THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR Supplementary Material



VERSION

# ENGLISH



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# Module Three – The Role of the Mentor

## Supplementary Material

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 What is Mentorship?

Mentorship is defined as “a professional, working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of the relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support” (1).

A mentorship is a relationship between two people where the individual with more experience, knowledge, and connections is able to pass along what they have learned to another less experienced individual within a certain field.

### 1.2 Roles of a Mentor

Mentors have different roles including facilitator, coach, and development supporter. As a facilitator, a mentor can offer support and resources to the learner. The mentor can advise and provide direction to the mentee. As a coach, a mentor can help guide the individual to evaluate different learning opportunities. The mentor can help the mentee in the decision-making process. Finally, as a development supporter, a mentor can ensure that the person doing the learning feels comfortable, supported and motivated while they go through a sometimes-uncomfortable time of learning a new skill, behaviour etc.

### 1.3 Objective

What can the reader expect to gain from completing this module?

This module will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of identifying and engaging with the correct mentor to suit the needs and style of the business of the mentee.

### 1.4 General Information

As part of this project a survey has been disseminated to people in the agri-food sector in Ireland, the UK, Belgium, Italy and Poland.

The survey asked a number of questions relating to mentoring and findings have helped to shape this module.

Some of these questions included:

- (a) If given the opportunity, would you engage with a mentor?
- (b) Please comment on what might prevent you from engaging with a mentor. Tick options that might prevent you engaging with a mentor.
- (c) Do you currently have access to a mentor? If yes, how is it impacting you and your business?

- (d) What is the most important traits a mentor should possess?
- (e) How do you feel a mentor would help you succeed?
- (f) Is it important for you to have a gender specific mentor?

## 2. Learning Objectives

On Successful completion of this module the learner will be able to:

1. Identify the core characteristics of mentoring
2. Define the role and benefits of a mentorship agreement
3. Recognise the importance of matching a mentor to the correct mentee
4. Communicate and address mentoring barriers
5. How to engage with a mentor
6. Evaluate different mentoring approaches and discover what approach and mentor/mentee relationship suits their needs and stage in business

Module 3 will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of identifying and engaging with the correct mentor to suit the needs and style of business of the mentee.

## 3. Module Sessions

### Session 1: Characteristics of a Mentor/Mentee

#### 3.1 Characteristics of a Mentor

It is important for the mentor to know exactly what they wish to achieve by mentoring an individual. The mentor should be clear on what the mentee needs help with. The timeframe of the mentoring agreement should be clear from the start. Survey results reveal the most important traits for a mentor to possess are being able to give constructive feedback (14.7%), honesty (13.1%), trust and confidentiality (11.1%) (2).

It is important for the mentor to have the following characteristics:

- Supportive: support the mentee with making decisions to help their business/idea.
- Encouraging: encourage the mentee to take positive steps forward.
- Motivating: motivate the mentee to take action.
- Empowering: empower the mentee to have self-belief
- Knowledgeable: transfer relevant knowledge to the mentee to improve their business/idea.
- Active Listener: listen carefully to the mentee in what they wish to gain from this mentoring experience.
- Good Communicator: communicate effectively with the mentee.

- Offer Advice: offer any advice you have to the mentee that may help them reach their goals in the most effective way.
- Challenge the Mentee: challenging the mentee is important to push them a little outside their comfort zone to reach their goals (3).

### 3.1 Characteristics of a Mentee

It is important for the mentee to have the following characteristics:

- Honest: Be honest with your mentor and tell them exactly what stage your business is at and what goals you would like to achieve.
- Open/willing to share: Be willing to share where you need help with your business. What areas are you struggling with?
- Good Listener: Listen carefully to your mentor and be willing to take their advice on board.
- Drive to succeed: Demonstrates the drive or ambition to succeed; have clear ideas of what you want in a mentorship.
- Positive attitudes: Be positive; this will help things run smoothly and result in a more enjoyable experience.
- Open to learning: Be prepared to try new things or adjust your current way of doing things.
- Flexibility: Be willing to make changes or re-assess your goals.
- Curiosity/engagement: Be interested and apply what you have learned (4).

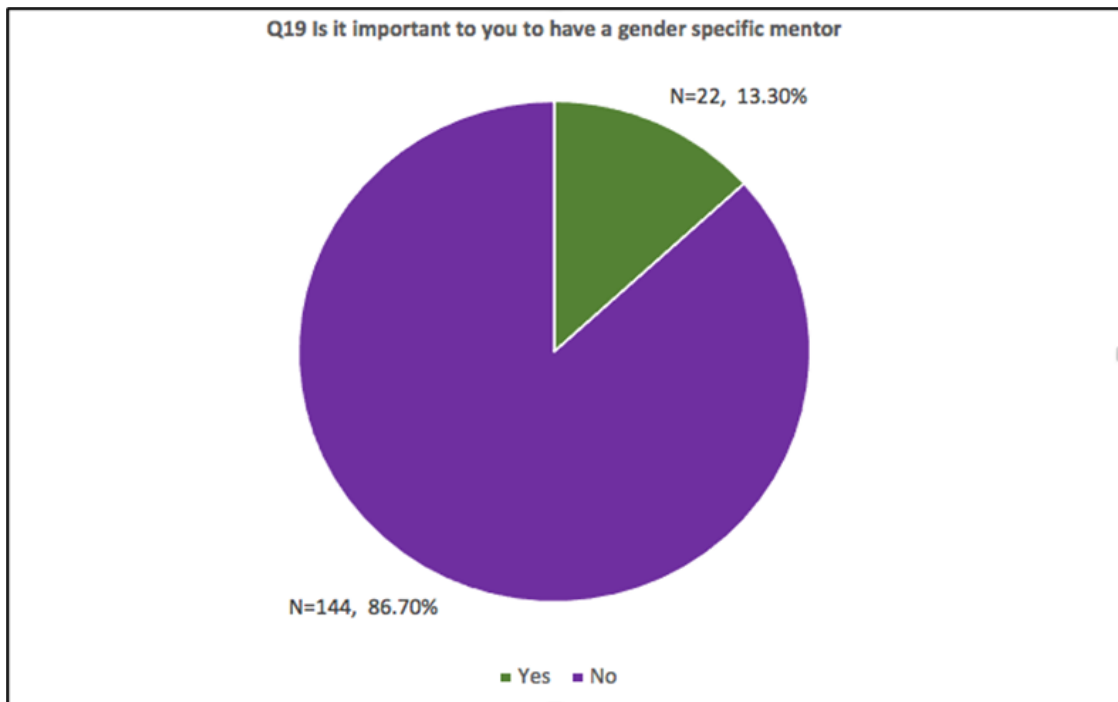
### 3.1 Matching Mentor and Mentee

When matching a mentor with a mentee, the following need to be considered:

- Where they are based: location is important and if distance is an issue, consider if the meetings take place online.
- Time Commitment: consider if both the mentor and mentee have sufficient time for the mentoring agreement.
- Gender Preference: Some mentees may have a gender preference and others will have no preference. Some woman entrepreneurs can find it easier to open up to a woman mentor. If this is the case, then it is important for the woman to be paired with a woman mentor in order to get the most benefits out of the mentoring agreement. This question was asked as part of the survey distributed during this project. The question asked if it was important to have a gender specific mentor and 86.7% responded no, while 13.3% responded yes. This is displayed in the chart below. This shows it may not be important to everyone to have a gender specific mentor however it will be of high importance to some entrepreneurs. If respondents answered yes to this question, they were asked to comment on why it is important to them. Some responses included being more comfortable with a specific gender, women

understand the barriers other women face in business, gain more confidence with same sex mentor, two answers contradict each other one entrepreneur finds women more understanding while another finds men more understanding and one entrepreneur believes male mentors have more contacts.

To sum up gender preference could be an important factor to consider when matching a mentee to a suitable mentor.



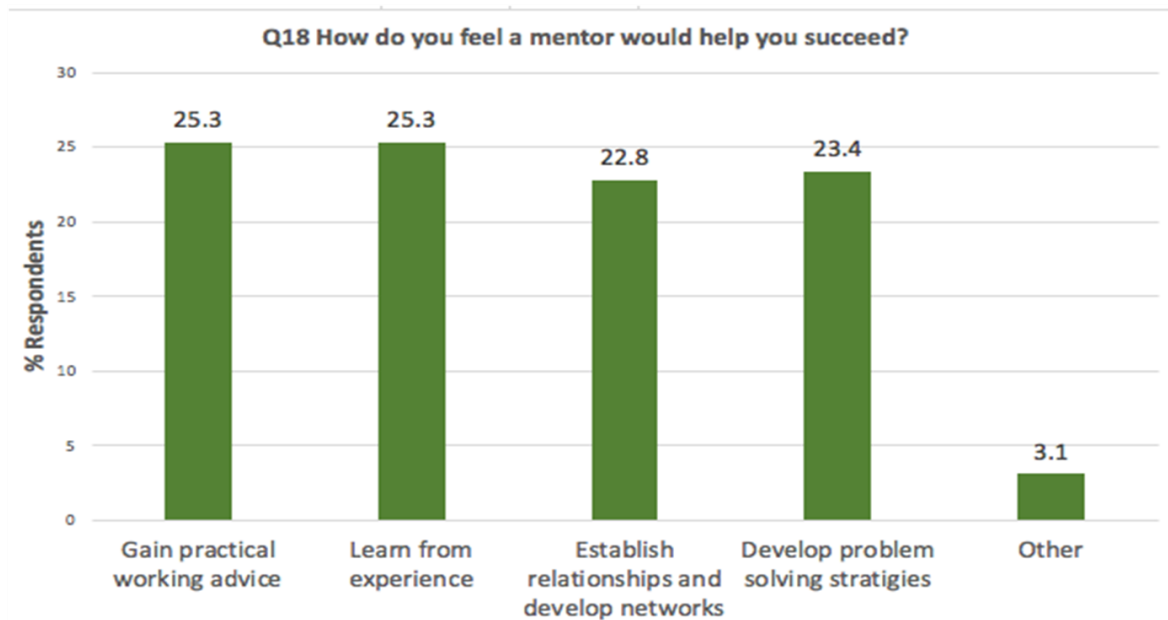
“There are many successful entrepreneurs and industry leaders in the UK who would love to mentor emerging woman entrepreneurs; it’s just about matching the right people and setting clear expectations” (6)

## Session 2: Benefits of Mentorship

### 3.2 Benefits of a Mentor

There are many benefits of mentoring for example learning from the experience that a mentor brings to the agreement. A mentee can gain confidence by learning about aspects of the business they may have been unfamiliar with. A mentoring experience can give the support needed to drive the business to a new level. Mentoring can also give opportunities to network with other entrepreneurs in the sector. Mentors can give entrepreneurs practical working advice and develop problem solving strategies together. The survey distributed as part of this projects asked entrepreneurs how they feel a mentor would help them succeed. The chart below displays the findings that 25.3% commented on gaining practical working advice, 25.3% said learn from experience, 22.8% said establish relationships and develop

networks, 23.4% commented develop problem solving strategies and 3.1% entrepreneurs selected the other option.



## Session 3: Barriers in Mentorship

### 3.3 Barriers in Mentorship

Some entrepreneurs can lack confidence when it comes to approaching a mentor and also when it comes to becoming a mentor after a number of years in business.

There is often a concern around the cost of a mentor which leads to entrepreneurs failing to seek a mentor. Many entrepreneurs don't know where to go to find a mentor. It can be difficult to find mentors. Sometimes for unique business ideas there a little to no mentors in some specific business areas. Some mentees have requests for gender specific mentors which can be a barrier to finding a suitable mentor for specific business ideas. Some countries have cultural backgrounds that differ in contentment to sharing ideas and helping one another out.

### 3.3 How to address barriers in mentorship

More communication around benefits of mentoring. Some people may be unfamiliar with the benefits of mentoring, particularly the benefits for mentors. Mentoring is a learning and career development opportunity for everybody involved, and it's important to articulate that value.

Seeking for social proof. This can be done by gathering individual success stories of the positive impact of mentoring from people within the business from previous mentoring cohorts.

Avoiding poor communication. Clear communication helps to keep the mentoring relationship flowing and creates a stronger bond between mentor and mentee.

Attending educational and professional development events on mentoring. Educational events are useful for both, a mentor, and a mentee; the special programmes will promote a shared understanding of what makes up effective mentoring practices, produce a high-quality and evidence-informed training for new mentors, produce an ambitious ongoing professional development for experienced or qualified mentors, raise awareness of what mentoring looks like and promote best practice for mentoring.

Avoiding over dependence. It's important to take initiative as a mentee in any way you can. An important aspect of mentoring is to develop skills, and independence in those skills.

Unrealistic and mismatched expectations. Work with each other to set realistic goals. If a mentor or a mentee expects too much or too little of the other, it can cause problems. Have an open discussion at the beginning of your mentoring program about what you are expecting from the sessions and the relationship as a whole.

## Session 4: How to Engage with a Mentor

### 3.4 How to Engage with a Mentor

- Proactively act to find and engage with a professional mentor. Great mentors can be found in a variety of places, so try looking outside your immediate circle. Seek out mentors at business and women's associations in your area, non-profit organizations, within your family, church groups, even community groups such as business chambers of commerce.
- Clarify what you want. Be clear to yourself regarding what you are looking for in a mentorship relationship. Write down your specific expectations and the role you want mentors to play.
- Networking. Networking can provide you with relevant contacts to approach a suitable mentor for your business needs.
- Make a Move and suggest a meeting to get the ball rolling.
- Be clear about your expectations. Once you've found someone who agrees to be your mentor, make sure you share the same commitment to your expectations. Be clear on the time required and the availability of your mentor and establish a regular meeting schedule with topics you'd like to discuss (8).

In our project survey, 87.3% of survey respondents said they would engage with a mentor if given the opportunity.



## 3.4 Access to Mentor

### Ireland

In Ireland there is access to mentors through Local Enterprise Office who have a mentoring programme. Empower Woman Entrepreneurship has two programmes; Empower Start (for early-stage woman-led business) and Empower Grow (for woman-led businesses in business for 18+ months).

### UK

In the UK there is access to mentors through Cherie Blair Foundation Mentoring Women in Business Program, Mentorsme.co.uk which is an online gateway for businesses looking for mentoring, Santander Mentoring Program, The Mentoring Foundation and WFA and Alltech' annual programme connecting women across the agri-food industry with mentors.

### Belgium

In Belgium there is access to mentors through Project Management Institute Belgium Grow Mentoring Program.

### Italy

In Italy there is access to mentor through WIIS Italy Mentoring Program.

### Poland

In Poland, there is access to mentors through the following organisations. LeaderShe is an association of exceptional women - women leaders. In LeaderShe entrepreneurs share experience, exchange views, inspire each other and learn from each other. The support given pays off in companies and organisations. Without pathos or arrogance, entrepreneurs gradually expand their sphere of influence in positions and professional roles that until recently were inaccessible to women. There are no taboos, no hostility, jealousy, or competition. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust, empathy, and shared values. There are interesting discussions, free exchange of ideas and honest feedback, which creates a unique community giving the feeling of belonging to a group of extraordinary women.

The VIVE Women's Association (Stowarzyszenie Kobiety VIVE) is an organisation created by women for women. It was created out of the passion of mature women and their need to support their personal, social and professional development. Both their own and those women who need it. Their mission is to raise the social awareness of women. They help to build a friendly environment for women leaders.

The Association operates, among others, in the field of organisation of trainings, conferences and motivational meetings for women.

Women Leadership in Business Foundation (Fundacja Liderów Biznesu) Mentoring Program is an extensive project that supports ambitious people - both women and men - in conscious career development, developing self-awareness, and also supports them in continuous acquisition and improvement of leadership competences. They believe in the power of mentoring. Especially during these turbulent times mentoring can be invaluable support for many people and organizations. Moreover Mentor & Mentee relationship combined with workshops and belonging to our community, allows entrepreneurs to face the current challenges as leaders.

Mother Empower Mentoring Programme. The aim of Mother Empower mentoring programme is to strengthen women seeking employment after a break due to childcare, including those seeking employment after a change of industry and in the process of re-branching, as well as women who have lost their jobs due to pandemonium. Participants in the programme will receive mentoring support in finding their place in the labour market after a break, successful recruitment, as well as reinforcement on the path of re-branding. The Mother Empower programme is aimed at women from across Poland and will take place online. If there is a possibility, we will try to organize at least one off-line meeting.

Network of Entrepreneurial Women (Sieć Przedsiębiorczych Kobiet) is a relationship between Mentor and Mentee which develops the skills and competences of Mentors and supports women (Mentees) in building their professional careers. In particular, on the way to setting up and developing their own business. Business mentoring programmes are an inseparable element of projects realised by the Network of Entrepreneurial Women. It is a key factor in their success. Mentoring relations give an opportunity to develop comprehensive competences. You can learn a different point of view and receive valuable tips and advice on running your business or professional development.

### 3.4 From Mentee to Mentor

Many entrepreneurs can start off as a mentee and after several years in business become a mentor. Transitioning from mentee to mentor can begin from mentors encouraging their mentees to become mentors. There are some important skills that mentees need to consider before becoming a mentor. These include good communication skills, mentoring skills, evaluation skills, IT skills, creative thinking, flexible/adaptable approach, practical learning approach, relevant certification/qualification may be necessary. Developing from a mentee to a mentor can give the opportunity to share your experience and knowledge with more entrepreneurs.

## 4. Case Studies

### *Case Study 1:*

#### Woman Entrepreneur: Julia Brightman – CremeBrewlait, UK

Julia Brightman, UK is a woman entrepreneur with a food business specialising in dessert tables and buffets using locally sourced homemade foods. Julia is four and a half years in business and would have interest in becoming a mentor if the opportunity arose.

Did Julia have a mentor when she started out in business? According to Julia there were few opportunities for mentoring when she was starting up her business. She believes there are more available now especially since covid. Julia added that if there is no mentoring/networking group in your area for woman entrepreneurs then go about setting up a group yourself. There is much to gain from having a network of people you can gain knowledge and experience from.

<https://www.cremebrewlait.co.uk/blog/a-special-thankyou-to-your-clients>

### *Case Study 2:*

#### Woman entrepreneur: Malinówka – Gospodarstwo Agroturystyczne, Poland

Magdalena, Poland is a woman entrepreneur in the bread business. The business has now extended to include bee keeping, bee rescuing and workshops for children. Since Covid 19, Magdalena and her family adapted and started selling vegan boxes. They continue to sell their bread to the local shops.

According to Magdalena there are no mentors in that area of Poland. Some people are not willing to share their experiences and skills. This is believed to be a cultural background in the country. However, Magdalena is willing to share her experience, knowledge and would become a mentor. This was interesting and positive to hear that Magdalena and her family are willing to share their experience with new entrepreneurs in the area.

### *Case Study 3:*

#### Elena Salviucci – Cantina Carnpotondo Farm, Italy

Elena Salviucci is a woman entrepreneur running a winery in Tuscany, Italy. The vineyard was planted by Elena's father when she was five years old. Before Covid there were wine tasting opportunities in the vineyard, however they have adapted to Covid by sending out wine tasting boxes to people's homes to enjoy the experience from their own home. Elena believes mentoring is very important especially financial mentoring and business specific

mentoring. According to Elena there is a need for more 1 to 1 mentoring (specific to your business). This may have helped Elena in the earlier stages of her entrepreneurial journey.  
<https://www.cantinacampotondo.it/en/about-us/>

#### *Case Study 4:*

##### **Aisling Roache – Velvet Cloud, Ireland**

Aisling Roache, Ireland is a woman entrepreneur in the sheep milk yoghurt and cheese business. Velvet Cloud has a high percentage of customers with allergies to cows' milk and supplies to 120 shops in Ireland. Since Covid the business has adapted and is now selling online and delivering to people's homes. According to Aisling there were few mentors in the sheep milk industry when they were setting up their business. The one mentor available was based a considerable distance away and had little time for small businesses. Aisling and her family had to seek mentorship/networking from other countries for example the UK and France where sheep milk was more popular at the time.

<https://velvetcloud.ie/blogs/news/last-night-i-was-working-at-ashford-not-the-worst-gig>

#### *Case Study 5:*

##### **Sarah Alder – Kitchens Titbits, UK**

Sarah Adler, UK is a woman entrepreneur in the meal planning and family mealtime mentor business. Sarah is three years in business and expressed concern about mentor costs. Sarah believes there are lots of mentors for start-ups and well-established businesses, however, a lack of mentors for businesses in the middle. Sarah said she would benefit from a mentor but finds it hard to find a mentor and doesn't know who to approach.

<https://kitchentitbits.co.uk/stressfreefamilymealtimes/>

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