

CHAPTER 9

Measuring and Monitoring the Programme

The mentoring programme needs some system of feedback and evaluation in order to know whether mentoring is functioning efficiently and successfully. For example, one large UK manufacturing company holds a graduate workshop at least once a year so graduate mentees can get together and produce a report recommending changes in the system.

There are three main reasons for measuring:

- to troubleshoot individual relationships
- to provide information for quality improvement of the mentoring programme
- to demonstrate to top management that the investment in mentoring has been worthwhile.

One of the paradoxes of formal mentoring programmes is that the essence of the relationship is its *informality* – the ability to discuss in private a wide range of issues that will help the mentee cope with and learn from issues he or she encounters, putting aside any power or status differences that might operate outside the relationship. So the idea of measurement and review is, on the face of it, to some extent at odds with the need to retain a high degree of informality and ad hoc responsiveness.

In practice, a certain amount of measurement provides the foundation on which the informal relationship can grow most healthily. It allows:

- scheme managers to recognise where additional support is needed and to improve the operation of the scheme – not least the training.
- mentors and mentees to work together to build the relationship, understanding more clearly what each can and does bring to the discussions. Programme managers frequently report that contacting participants for feedback can provide a stimulus for re-examining and revitalising the relationship.

Where attempts to measure mentoring become unacceptable, they usually involve:

- an attempt to assess and report upon mentees' performance to a third party
- a link between the mentor's opinion and a specific reward for the mentee (a promotion or a diploma, for example) – here the role has become more that of a tutor
- disclosure of the content of mentoring discussions.

In such circumstances, measurement is likely to make the mentee – and sometimes the mentor – less open, less willing to admit weaknesses and less trusting, hence limiting the potential of the relationship to deliver high quantity and quality of learning.

By contrast, effective measurement in mentoring is:

- relatively unobtrusive
- valued by all parties as helpful
- timely
- straightforward and easy to apply.

THE MEASUREMENT MATRIX

Mentoring measurements fall into four categories, illustrated in Figure 12:

- Relationship processes – what happens in the relationship; for example, how often does the pair meet? Have they developed sufficient trust? Is there a clear sense of direction to the relationship? Does the mentor or the mentee have concerns about their own or the other person's contribution to the relationship?
- Programme processes – for example, how many people attended training? How effective was the training? In some cases, programme processes will also include data derived from adding together measurements from individual relationships, to gain a broad picture of what is going well and less well.
- Relationship outcomes – have mentor and mentee met the goals they set? (Some adjustment may be needed for legitimate changes in goals as circumstances evolve.)
- Programme outcomes – have we, for example, increased retention of key staff, or raised the competence of the mentees in critical areas?

Measuring all four gives you a balanced view of the mentoring programme and allows the scheme manager to intervene, with sensitivity, where needed.

Figure 12 Categories of mentoring measurement

Programme process	Programme outcome/goals
• How often do they meet: at least five meetings? • What phase have they reached in the relationship? • Are people networking more?	• Is there clear evidence of progress towards diversity objectives? • Is retention for mentees higher than for non-mentored peers? • Do we have a clearer idea of who our emerging talent is?
Relationship process	Relationship outcomes
• Do they trust each other/work together well? • Are they dealing with real issues? • Are they enjoying mentoring?	• Has significant learning taken place? • Has the mentee gained in competence in an area they wanted to work on? • Does the mentee have a clearer personal development plan?

WHAT SHOULD BE REVIEWED WHEN?

AT THE PROGRAMME PLANNING STAGE

There is a need at both programme and relationship level for a clear purpose upfront and a clear idea of what behaviours are expected from both mentors and mentees. It is good practice to involve potential participants and other interested parties (eg line managers, top management) to agree measurements at the beginning. At the very least this discussion will establish the extent to which measurements can be 'soft' (qualitative) or 'hard' (quantitative).

Many organisations now begin the programme with a short research project to establish likely barriers and drivers to mentoring.

IN SELECTING/TRAINING MENTORS AND MENTEEES

Mentors and mentees can benefit from greater self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as developers of others. Mentees often need to have some ideas about the areas of interpersonal behaviour they can work on with the mentor.

AFTER THE FIRST FEW MEETINGS

This is the opportunity for mentor and mentee to review whether the relationship is going to work. Key questions here include:

- Have we established strong rapport and trust sufficient to work together?
- Does the mentee perceive the mentor's input as relevant and stimulating?
- If not, what sort of person does the mentee need to work with?

The scheme manager will want by this point to know whether people are meeting and whether they have discussed the future of the relationship.

AS THE RELATIONSHIP PROGRESSES

The scheme manager will want as a minimum to know what further support is needed, if any, in the form of further, more focused skills training, or general encouragement to participants. Good practice typically involves a short survey of participants, followed by a review session during which some ad hoc training can be provided.

AT THE END OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Assuming the relationship achieves its objectives and winds up, it is useful for both parties to review the following:

- What did we expect to achieve?
- What did we actually achieve?
- What else did we learn on the way?
- How will we use what we have learnt in future developmental relationships?

AT THE END OF THE PROGRAMME

Assuming the programme assigns an end to the formal mentoring relationship (many relationships will, of course, continue informally thereafter), the outcomes can be measured against the original goals.

SUMMARY

It's important to establish programme measures in the early planning stages – if only so participants know what success looks like and can bear that in mind in how they conduct the relationship. Robust measurements can prove decisive in protecting the programme, too. For example, a new head of learning and development at a multinational company was determined to make his mark by clearing away all the established people development programmes and starting again. Mentoring was one of a handful of programmes that survived unscathed – the result of very clear and unambiguous data about its positive impact and representation from the mentor community.

