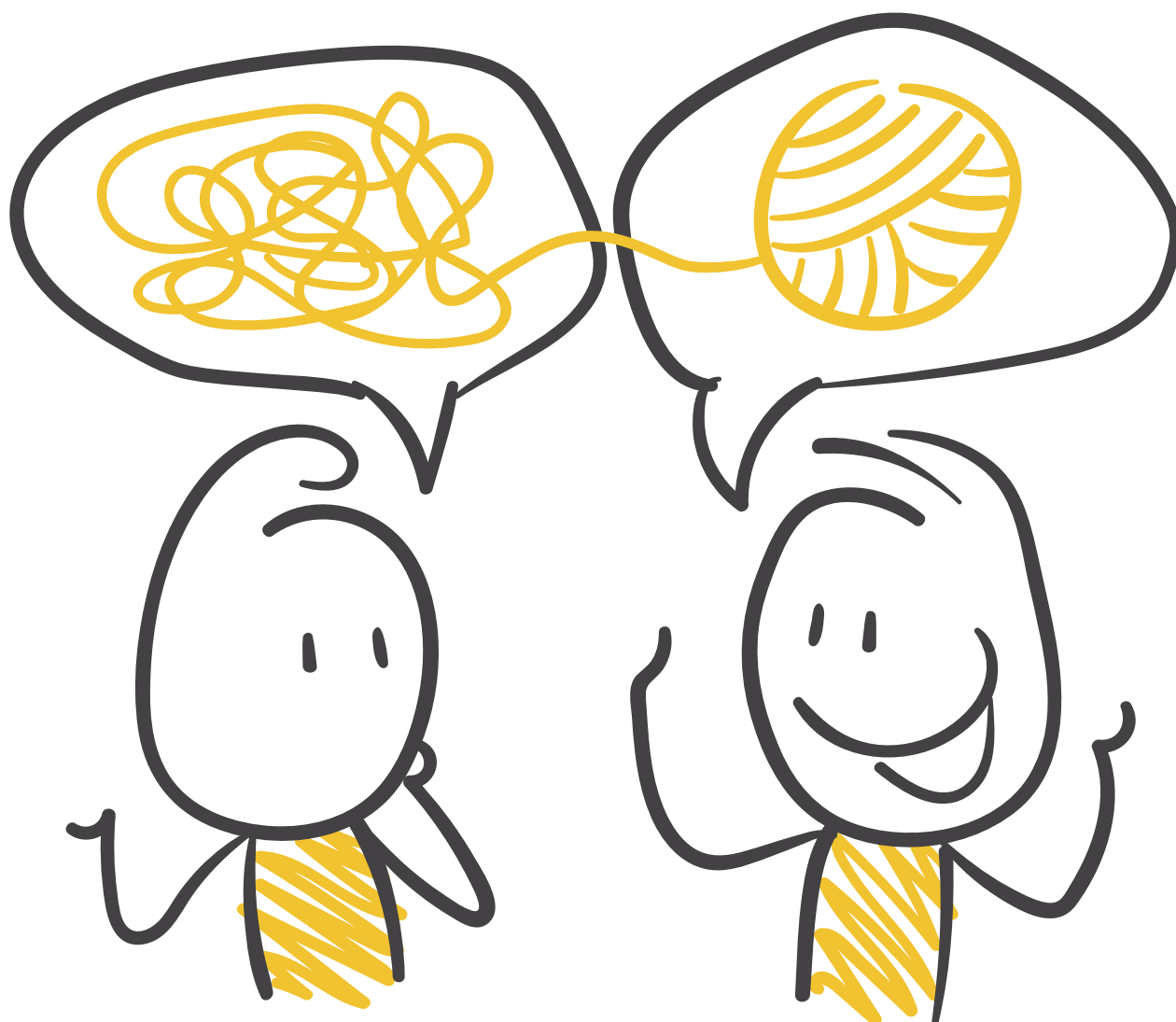




Information-based, skill-based and advocacy-based ... **Laura Francis** explores three different types of mentoring and reveals how each can help you clarify what you want to achieve with the process

HOW DO YOU DEFINE MENTORING?

Mentoring is a hot topic these days as organisations look to improve their leadership pipeline, increase diversity among their employee base, close skill gaps, address generational issues ... I could go on.

Added to that, employees want mentoring. Report after report captures

these sentiments. For example, a study by Robert Walters¹ found that 94% of women surveyed think mentoring programmes are valuable in helping them to develop their careers, but the same study found that almost half of employers (45%) currently do not offer any such schemes.

In a separate study from Heidrick & Struggles,² 27% of respondents said their organisations offer formal mentoring programmes, and 56% of respondents said they are motivated to engage with their primary mentoring relationship because they aspire to reach a similar point as

their mentor in their own career.

People often talk about mentors as their coaches, guides, teachers, advocates and advisers. They sometimes use these terms interchangeably with “mentor” because it helps give a fuller picture of all the roles a mentor can play for a mentee. Don’t get too hung up on the terminology – call it whatever makes the most sense to you. Far more important to your success in mentoring is making sure you focus on the outcomes you hope to gain through mentoring.

To help you decipher all the ways a mentor can support a mentee, consider these three types of mentoring: information-based, skill-based and advocacy-based. You may find that one of these categories, or a combination of these categories, helps clarify what you want to achieve with mentoring.

Information-based mentoring

With this type of mentoring, mentees simply need information or understanding about a particular aspect of their worklife. Mentors share their experiences and any techniques they think will meet the mentee’s immediate needs. The mentor performs three basic functions through informational mentoring:

- ▶ **Resourcing:** The mentor provides information based on the mentee’s needs.
- ▶ **Advising:** The mentor becomes a reliable living source of instruction by giving advice.
- ▶ **Enlightening:** The mentor illustrates and brings understanding to the mentee based on the mentee’s needs.

Skill-based mentoring

With this type of mentoring, mentees need to develop a specific skill. Mentors make themselves available to handle questions, consult on techniques, point out potential difficulties, set expectations, and report on how they have done it in the past. The mentor performs three basic functions through skill-based mentoring:

- ▶ **Teaching:** The mentor instructs the mentee in a specific skill development area using on-the-job teaching methods.

- ▶ **Coaching:** The mentor instructs the mentee by providing first-hand feedback on current performance.
- ▶ **Modelling:** The mentor becomes a living example for the mentee while they pursue a specific area of skill development.

Advocacy-based mentoring

With this type of mentoring, mentees need to focus on highly complex interpersonal behaviours. Mentors, although never taking responsibility for a mentee’s future successes, become a guiding influence, helping mentees develop the most effective behaviours for various situations. Mentors will assess what abilities mentees possess and help them plan appropriate learning



You may find your relationship moves between types of mentoring as it evolves

and development activities. Mentors also observe and provide feedback on the mentee’s performance. The mentor performs three basic functions through advocacy-based mentoring:

- ▶ **Guiding:** The mentor navigates the mentee through the personal development process.
- ▶ **Consulting:** The mentor becomes a sounding board and guide for the mentee while they develop a specific behaviour or ability.
- ▶ **Sponsoring:** The mentor advocates for the mentee’s recognition and promotion.

While these different levels of mentoring can exist, you don’t need to label your relationship. It can be enough

that you are aware of these variations, what they might look like, and what terms might be interchangeable with mentor or mentoring. You may also find your relationship moves between types of mentoring as it evolves, so being flexible in how you view the different types can make sense.

Trust and accountability

One last thing to keep in mind is that no matter what you call your relationship, you and your mentoring partner should talk about two critical relationship factors: trust and accountability.

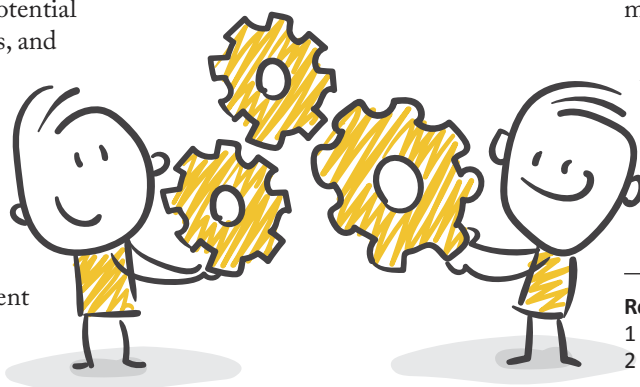
- ▶ **Trust** is the confidence both you and your mentoring partner need in each other’s character, ability, strength, maturity and truthfulness in the relationship. Mentoring is a mutual process. Trust has to be evident to both of you for the relationship to be productive.
- ▶ **Accountability** is the fuel that drives any effective mentoring relationship. It encourages you to plan deliberately, to keep agreements and to honestly assess your actions and attitudes. This level of honesty can keep your learning relationship focused and serious. Moreover, accountability supports commitment. If a lack of honest commitment exists, then there will be a lower-than-necessary level of personal accountability in the mentoring relationship. Many organisations implement mentoring software to help mentees and mentors track their relationship progress and hold one another accountable.

So, whether you call it mentoring, coaching, sponsorship, information-gathering, or some other term, ultimately, the labels don’t matter. The important thing is that you are engaged in the practice, no matter what you call it. **TJ**

Laura Francis is vice-president of marketing for River, a mentoring software company based in Denver, Colorado. Find out more at riversoftware.com/mentoring-software/

References

- 1 <https://bit.ly/2MdtG0>
- 2 <https://bit.ly/2xFg0ym>



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