

## Benefits of having a mentor

Everyone starts out as a beginner in whatever they do. Project Management profession can sometimes be a tough place to learn and develop skills. During my time working I have had a number of mentors that have guided me at different levels and times throughout my career.

If I had to summarise them I would say there are two categories:

- Category one: “The own your direction” camp – those who highlight career progression, industry understanding and professional associations
- The other, the importance of building your experience, skills and self.

As I reflect on the topic of mentoring, I think of the great lessons I have learned along the way: One mentor taught me the importance of career planning and the concept of your “brand”; that is knowing and understanding what it is that you want your customers to know and think about you and your work. Another taught me the important skill of being about to communicate at an Executive level, the necessity of being succinct, keeping to the facts, explaining the issues and most of all how to get an outcome! The most influential of all my mentors taught me the importance of “predictive thinking” ; thinking about the next steps, the “where to from here?”. The same mentor taught me the importance of dealing with project problems ; if presenting a problem always have a solution (three are best that way they become options and then one can be selected as a solution). The greatest piece of advice I was given was don’t shy away from internal politics, they are everywhere the sooner you understand and deal with them the easier your project life becomes!

All of these lessons I would not have learned, but for a handful of talented professionals who took the time to give me some tips along the way. Without them it would have definitely been a long road.

So if you have the time and have been presented with an opportunity to mentor someone starting out in their career I urge you to think about it! Mentoring is a great opportunity to give back to the profession and as a mentee the benefits are endless. I’ve done my best to summarise the main ones below but there are of course many more:

- Opportunity to develop skills and expertise
- Getting great advice on how to approach difficult and uncharted project territory
- Increasing your confidence in dealing with project issues and or challenges
- Assisting with setting professional (or personal) development goals
- Increasing individual visibility and recognition in the profession
- Providing support during times of change
- Most significantly, someone who has “been there” and “had that experience” can give you great career advice and direction based on experience

Think about it.