

FACT SHEET 5 - USING A MENTOR

“Behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth; somewhere, somehow someone cared about their growth and development. This person was their mentor.” (Dr Beverley Kaye, *Up is Not the Only Way*, 1997)

Mentoring in sport is not new. Most people in sport have been influenced or sought advice from coaches, officials, and other experienced players to help them develop. Indeed, mentoring is a very effective way of developing coaches and officials and sport is increasingly introducing more structured opportunities for mentoring. Using a mentor to develop skills and experience in leadership and management is also an effective way to progress as a leader in sport. Mentoring benefits everyone, you, the mentor and the sport.

Mentors can help you to;

- set goals and develop a personal action plan
- gain insights and examples of another person’s experience and expertise
- identify your strengths and weaknesses and areas for further development
- express ideas, problems and challenges by being a sounding board
- identify new opportunities and introduce you to new contacts and networks
- stay motivated and enthusiastic

Choosing a mentor is the important first step. They do not need to come from your sport or indeed from sport at all. The person you ask is a person you respect and one that;

- is willing to be a mentor and has sufficient time to commit to the relationship
- has the appropriate experience and knowledge you need
- has good communication and interpersonal skills to provide support and feedback
- is trustworthy and can maintain confidences
- has strong networks and contacts

“A mentor provides information, shares their experience or expresses an opinion. However it is always the mentee that decides, acts and produces the outcomes.” (Anne Rolfe, *Synergistic People Development*)

You drive the mentoring process and take responsibility for your actions!

Once you have chosen a mentor who is happy to take on the role, your responsibility is to;

- establish the structure, time commitment and timeframe of the relationship
- identify the goals and expectations for both of you
- develop a plan of action and organise meetings or communications (meetings, emails, phone etc)
- review the mentoring relationship at regular intervals
- acknowledge and show appropriate appreciation for their efforts

Formalising the nature of the relationship in the form of a simple agreement will help to clarify when the relationship starts and ends, time commitments, how you will communicate and establish agreed ground rules. Having an agreement also enables you to review the outcomes of the mentoring relationship.