

WNY - Unlocking Success Through Mentoring

#career

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1 - INTRO (Who am I, fun fact - how I was asked about this recently - teased about eating 4 types of oats every day, role in Barclays, link to WNY, role as mentee in mentoring relationship with Allan + personal experience)

INTRODUCTION

Hi, I'm Guy. I work as an infrastructure engineer within GTIS, where I support and maintain a platform called BCP (Barclays Container Platform) where we host a large number of applications around the bank. I was asked recently for a fun fact about myself, and I got teased for it. My fun fact is that I eat 4 different types of oats every day. Yes, 4 types. That is porridge oats, oat milk, oat biscuits, and granola.

In terms of the "Why Not You" mentorship scheme, I connected with Allan, I believe back in April this year, and it's been amazing. I'm the mentee in this relationship I've got so so much from working with Allan over these past few months.

- Light joke to Allan about "haven't told you about this Allan, but I've had multiple mentoring relationships before... sorry you had to find out like this.."
- Recently finished the graduate scheme. Just over 2 years ago. Have had multiple mentors since starting at Barclays.
- Light joke to Allan about "haven't told you about this Allan, but I've had multiple mentoring relationships before... sorry you had to find out like this.."
- Some of these mentoring relationships were just necessary for a short time, and others have been ongoing. They've been everything from building confidence in presenting, to giving and receiving feedback in 121s, to free therapy sessions (thanks Allan!).

Why is mentoring important to you personally?

I think everyone's always had a mentor. Even if that's not a formal agreement. We all have someone that we look up to, or someone we call when we're stuck or struggling, or someone who can really listen to you. For me, this has always been my parents.

Though when I first started the grad scheme back in 2023, I quickly realised that whilst it was great that I could chat to my parents about my work, they didn't work at Barclays, they weren't always able to suggest options or understand everything. So I sought a mentor at Barclays. And it was the best decision I'd made. When I had just started as an anxious and unconfident graduate, I really really benefitted from first, being able to listen to someone else's story. It was really comforting to know that I wasn't alone in feeling quite overwhelmed when first joining the company, and then to be able to ask questions, and find things that I could try to build this confidence. Since then, as I've mentioned, I've had many mentors, and

it's helped me find my direction in my career. There are a lot of things that I probably wouldn't have been either bold enough or courageous enough to do without the support from a mentor.

How do you think mentoring supports inclusion and diversity? (4)

Firstly, when there's a mentoring relationship that's between two people, mentoring gives people an opportunity to deeply listen. And that alone can be incredibly powerful for someone who is struggling with feeling heard or understood. And when I first started working with and speaking to mentors, it was a huge surprise to me about how much I had in common with the people I was speaking to. Even though they were often at a much further stage in their careers, they'd done things that I was really interested in doing, and had been looking for similar advice or opportunities when they were at my stage. I think mentoring can be real comfort to people who feel a bit lost, and like an outsider at a large company. It also provides a very natural way for people of similar cultures or backgrounds to connect, without it needing to feel forced at all, because mentoring offers great benefits for both the mentor and mentee.

How do you respectfully close a mentoring relationship that's run its course? (2)

Not every mentoring relationship is meant to be. Some mentoring relationships will be short and serve their original purpose, and others can last for a long time, and evolve much more throughout. If one is working out, it's not necessarily a problem on either side, it might just not be the right time or place for either the mentee or mentor. So I think firstly, it's not worth overanalysing a mentoring relationship that doesn't work.

In terms of practical steps I would take if one wasn't working out, I would have an honest and open conversation about what it is that I'm trying to achieve through the mentoring relationship, and the progress I've made. I don't believe in failed mentoring relationships (or relationships for that matter), because any amount of time in mentoring is learning for both people. I would then give the other an opportunity to respond and provide any further input. If we discover that there is actually more that we'd really like to discuss further that we can help one another with, then that would be a nice surprise. But there wouldn't be a point to continuing a mentoring relationship for the sake of it, if it's already achieved what it set out to do.

What's the best way to manage a mentoring relationship that's ending awkwardly? (3)

I think the reason mentoring relationships can end awkwardly is because there are no expectations. It's really important to have some kind of tangible goals that the mentoring

relationship is aiming to work towards. You might want to set these initially, and they might also change as you go through a mentorship.

But if you do find that it's ending awkwardly, it's worth addressing it, having an open discussion, and thinking about what didn't work. And if it seems like it won't continue in an effective way, then that's fine. It doesn't need to continue, and you can accept that not every mentoring relationship will work out.

What strengths or skills were you looking for in a mentor?

For me, I look for two types things in a mentorship.

The first is skills that I'm keen to develop. For me, these are things like effective communication and leadership skills.

And the second strength I look for is how well we get on. If you're both able to relax and just have a normal conversation, then that's a good sign that you'll be able to connect more. Sometimes mentorship might just be having a conversation about a topic that you're struggling on, or discussing how to best approach a current situation.

What are the warning signs of a mentoring relationship going off track, and what can you do to bring it back on track?

Warning Signs:

- Frequently rescheduling, often last minute
- Short meetings without a goal/focus in mind

To bring it back:

- Think about having a personal development plan - if you don't already. And if you already have one, check whether the mentorship has a goal that aligns with this plan.
 - Essentially, think about what the aim of the mentoring relationship is, and setup a meeting with your mentor to discuss this.
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What would you do to ensure colleagues are more aware of the mentoring opportunities available to them?

- Share the Barclays mentoring app - which is a very simple way to connect with potential mentors.
- There's no need to be worried about asking someone to be your mentor. If they think they're not right, or that they don't have capacity, that's fine, and it's nothing to worry about.

- Most of the time, people love trying out mentoring relationships, because there is so much that both people can get from it.
- Think about people who you look up to - people who have skills you're interested in developing, or in areas you would like to become better acquainted with, then reach out to them. Either email, or if you know them well, you could approach them in person and ask.