

WNY - Unlocking Success Through Mentoring

#career

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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!).

AND WHY MENTORING IS IMPORTANT

- 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.
 - But when I first started the grad scheme in 2023, I realised that it was great that I could chat to my parents about my work, but they didn't work at Barclays, they couldn't always fully understand things or suggest options etc.
 - So I looked for mentors at Barclays. Best decision I'd made. I started anxious and unconfident as a graduate, and I really really benefitted from first, being able to listen to someone else's story.
 - It was comforting to know I wasn't alone in feeling overwhelmed.
 - Have had many mentors, and they've been the tipping point for me being bolder and more courageous in my decisions.
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1 - What strengths or skills were you looking for in a mentor?

WHY:

- Look for 2 types of things.

1 = Skills I am keen to develop/work on currently.

- Communication
- Leadership
- Coaching

2 = How well I connect with someone.

- Relaxed, easy conversations
- Mentorship is sometimes just having relaxed conversations with others - things you're struggling on, or how to best approach a current situation.

Allan:

- Brilliant communicator - learnt a huge amount from him here.
- Really good leadership ability
- Even though we're in different fields of the bank, there's so so much I can learn from Allan, and it's been a real privilege to have him as a mentor.

2 - 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.

3 - 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.
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EXTRA OPEN QUESTIONS (FOR ALL PANEL)

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

FIRST (WHY):

- Reason mentoring relationships can end awkwardly = no expectations.
- Important to define tangible goals that the mentorship works towards.
- Need to be set initially, and may change through the mentorship.

NEXT (RESOLVE):

- Address the problem.
- Have an open conversation. What worked? What didn't?
- Now what? Does it seem possible for the mentorship to continue in an effective way? It doesn't need to. Not every mentorship will work out.
- Otherwise, start fresh and keep building.

How do you respectfully close a mentoring relationship that's run it's course?

WHY:

- Not every mentoring relationship should work.
- Some short. Others long. All different purposes.
- Not necessarily a problem.
- Firstly - avoid overanalysing a mentorship that doesn't work.
 - Of course, think about what might have been improved, but don't brood over it.

HOW (RESOLVE):

- In terms of practical steps...

- Honest, open conversation.
- What were we trying to achieve? What progress did we make?
- Don't believe in failed mentoring relationships - or relationships for that matter. Because any amount of time in mentoring is learning for both people.
- Discuss together, deeply listen.
- But no point to continue a mentorship if it's already achieved what it set out to do.

How do you think mentoring supports inclusion and diversity?

- Opportunity to listen deeply - mentorship between two people.
 - That alone can be really powerful for either person who doesn't feel heard or understood.
- You have so much more in common with people than you'd expect.
 - (Optional) - include story about going to university and crying on the journey...
- Comfort when people are lost, or feel like outsiders at a large company.
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- Natural way for people of similar cultures or backgrounds to connect, without it feeling forced at all.