

# Discussion Guide

## 1. LinkedIn

### a. Advisor

- i. Tell me about how you got started playing a mentor role within LinkedIn
- ii. How do you think being a mentor has affected you? Has it?
- iii. Do you get to pick who you mentor? How do you make that choice?
- iv. Tell me about your last meeting with your advisee
- v. What was your first meeting like?
- vi. What do you think makes some mentorship relationships more fulfilling than others?

### b. Advisee

- i. How has your experience been with the mentorship within LinkedIn/Yahoo?
- ii. Tell me about your last meeting with your advisor
- iii. Has your experience with your mentor changed the direction of your startup?
- iv. How did you get to know your mentor?

## 2. AA/Big Brother

### a. Sponsor

- i. What made you want to engage in a sponsor relationship?
- ii. How has the process been for you, as a sponsor?
- iii. How could the process been made easier?
- iv. Have there been times where the being a sponsor was draining? If you wouldn't mind explaining those.

### b. Affected

- i. Why did you decide to come to this organization?
- ii. How has the relationship helped you since you began?
- iii. If you wouldn't mind telling me why you decided to get a sponsor?
- iv. Tell me about the bad relationships, why do you think they went sour?

# Observations

## Alcoholic Anonymous

setting: all 40s or 50s and older and majority of them are senior citizens.

- redwood city one - a lot more hispanic, reflective of local population
- **john can't publish this anywhere, conditioned on anonymity.**
- very kind, nicest people i've met, attitude of AA (possible), things that could become hostile, but made calm.
- start out with a moment of silence
- then serenity prayer - "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference -"
- Also end the meeting with serenity prayer.
- Hi I'm Avi and I'm a visitor, "Hi Avi" Everyone introduces themselves - visitor alcoholic
- Everytime you speak you start with that.
- Different types of meetings - *discussion\**, step, beginner.
- discussion meet - head person reads a piece and then the group discuss it. question this time was revealing dialog about third step ("turn your life to a higher power"). Asked others to share their stories of the third step.
- Bonding over disease and depression.
- Some new people, some had already been to other meetings.
- People felt on an upward swing. (positive experience) Bonding over negative things, and lead to positive experience. \*\*\*\*\*
- Remember what is said and what is not said. People choose what they say. People had disagreements (god, higher power, etc).
- Make light of the disease, humor is a big thing, taking situations and finding the humor in other ways.
- Ends with prayer, BUT you are holding hands, you must do it! (You don't have to do it?) Obligated to hold hands. (touching = higher connection)
- Interviews (All White)
  - Betsy and Barbara (60+) Tell me about your sponsor experience.
    - Sponsorship is not a requirement
    - sponsorship is when you have a mentor who has gone through the experience. Has been sober for a longer.
    - taking people from next level. From "here to talk" to "here to fix"
    - Good source to bounce ideas and just to talk, and you can put into it as long as you wanted. Day? Week? Monthly?
    - Ask someone else to be their sponsor.
    - sponsor give advice, ALWAYS optional. This is how I got through, this might help you.

- Betsy - From NY sponsor and sponsee. Sponsored girls from halfway house in heroine addiction, help them get through six months and then they left.
- The sponsee was one making the attempt to connect.
- Barbara compared it to playing tennis with good tennis people. Great program because it's easier when you connect to people on a different level. "Recircuits your head".
- Mindset of wanting things, changing that mindset
- Betsy walked with Sponsee for 3 hours and got the feelings out and become close friends.
- John - prison dude.
  - sponsorship, no one makes it without it. Highly encouraged. didn't know people without sponsors.
  - reason I like AA is consistency in meetings and acceptance from people, you can say things you normally don't say. Hear Hear Stays Here. Acceptance is hugely important. Anonymity frees you, with people you can trust. Sponsorship, 1 on 1 makes you closer.
  - Prison - got close with the guard. Corner them and get them to talk to them. "the words a person says + the knowledge of how they operate is the most useful thing you can use."
  - Mentor of prisoners.
- Michael - sponsorship is necessary. talked to 50 minutes.
  - Sponsor relationship - long story, friend before AA
  - sponsor shared what he did as a suggestion
  - sponsorship is a scale - from telling you to brush your teeth and get up, sponsor could call you and tell you to get up. Or they call once in a few weeks to check-in.
  - Michael's sponsor also worked in the same industry and he could identify with him. Sponsee fred also in the same industry. Fred has 2 sponsors.
  - Nobody can actually get someone else sober. He believed he could but he realized that he is just there to help.
  - Alcoholism is a disease of exceptionality - i believe i can make it through.
  - He shared things with his sponsee that he never shared even with his family.
  - Strength of humility - asshole genius. gets you through so much.
  - Sponsee must keep relationship going.
  - Alcoholism is a patient disease and it can hit you. 18 + years and still succumb.
  - very scared for sponsees at times
  - as a sponsee he knew these things happen and was scared
  - ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL
  - humor was best friend.
  - urinated in public places. in the 60s.

- Shared Experiences = Stories of Similarity.
- Learning the ability to trust.
- Selfish reason - joy of watching someone grow. or solving higher problems.
- Sponsor sees himself improving - if i don't do something right.

Jim - From Mentor for another group. Hour long skype conversation.

- Web developer at LinkedIn
- most recent experience - grooming junior webdevs within linkedin
- since they were growing quickly, needed to find leaders. Slide things in slowly for leadership development.
- call center in omaha - IT support guy who wanted to be a webdev
  - divide between coaching and mentoring.
  - Mentor - confidential person - to lean on. Skills or experience in the field, coach don't need the experience.
  - Coaches - motivation, framework of success, specific goal,
  - Coach gets the person being coached more involved.
  - Mentorship much more about sharing stories. mentee come with certain problems. glean insight from stories.
  - "Coaching done well is a little uncomfortable" felt honest. mentor, you can talk to, wouldn't really hold you accountable. Coach is much more honest in order to help.
  - mentorship is completely voluntary. he liked coaching over mentoring. why? he said he could present results.
  - Value for the mentor role. fulfillment HUGE, he felt great when people got promoted. Why? he said the ultimate success for a mentor is to grow the team so that can take over what you do now.
- Have them teach each other in a way.
- Reading - communal problem solving.
- Before you got to linkedin. At Yahoo, kind of underwhelming.
- Couldn't get too much out of it. Too peer, not enough experience. nothing concrete.
- LinkedIn much more unstructured, mentorship came from teams, people already seeing each other, grew out of linkedin's desire to have a community.
- Individual contributors - didn't want management positions.
- Bring a voice to the senior webdevs. bring a general culture of sharing and mentoring. Coaching is like a recurring service provider (like a barber or dentist).
- Getting people interested would be a huge problem. Low demand, a lot of issues with following up, great first meeting. people missing meetings and not telling them.
- A lot of noise, big company now, struggling with taking notes for himself. Hard to remain confidential.
- Overall he felt his role was to help younger people carve out career path. I still don't know what I'm doing. I know the past, but still not the future.

# Interpretations and Needs

**Interpretation:** The mentee dictates the level of involvement in the mentor-mentee relationship.

**Supporting Observations:**

- Sponsors in AA are involved as much or as little as their sponsees want them to be (“anything from telling you to brush your teeth in the morning to meeting to talk once a week”)
- Talking to AA sponsors, their roles range from being someone to talk to for the sponsee, to being someone who wants to find a fix for them
- AA sponsors also noted that the results from their sponsees directly correlated with how much effort **they** put in and not how much the sponsors tried to make them care.
- Within LinkedIn, there was a general low level of interest in terms of mentees (“I never had to pick or select who I would take on as an advisee”)
- Jim noted a general drop-off of commitment to regular meetings after the first, initial meeting

**How Might We?**

- How might we give mentors more control over the relationship? (Cannot escalate involvement).
  - How might we give mentees more of an incentive to maintain the relationships with their mentors?
  - How might we better match mentor-mentee pairs and how might we make changes more natural?
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**Interpretation:** There are different levels of mentorship. The more personal a relationship is, the less direct, goal oriented, and accountable the relationship becomes.

**Supporting Observations:**

- Jim viewed his role as a “coach” as someone who didn’t necessarily have to have the expertise of the person he was coaching
- For Jim, the coach’s goal was to try to get the person to make an effort for themselves
- “Mentors aren’t really there to hold their mentees accountable”
- According to Jim, he preferred to coach because he could present concrete results of the coaching to his bosses to show how his time, how the company’s resources had been spent (and to confirm that value was created because of this time)
- Coaching is a recurring process: mentors really try to set up regular times and dates to work and meet with their mentees
- Jim noted a clear divide between “mentorship” and “coaching”: the former involves being “there” for an advisee to check in an unstructured format without the need for anything concrete to arise from these meetings, the latter involved a series of structured meetings where coaches would work with their pupils to devise a plan and set realistic steps towards a concrete goal in a certain span of time

**How Might We?**

- How might we transform coaching relationships into mentoring relationships?
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**Interpretation:** People are brought together by extremely negative outside influences on their lives (i.e. alcoholism). They bond over shared suffering.

**Supporting Observations:**

- Something said by AA: “alcoholism is a patient disease”
- AA called alcoholism a “disease of exceptionality”

### How Might We?

- How might we leverage other negative situations to deepen social ties?
  - How might we get people to show vulnerability without the presence of the negative event?
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**Interpretation:** Superiors and direct evaluators cannot serve effectively as mentors as there is always a mental barrier for the mentee. They won't be as honest or open because the receiving person is going to judge them. However, confidentiality makes people comfortable and a respect for the privacy can create great conversation and bonding moments.

### Supporting Observations:

- Jim told us that to him, a mentor was someone to “lean on” for the mentee, someone who they could speak to confidentially and who could help the mentees solve their problems with their past experiences and through telling stories
- Jim said that it was sometimes “difficult to maintain confidentiality”
- “Hear here, stays here”
- “What is said and what is not said”

### How Might We?

- How might we give mentees a feeling of security and confidentiality when they are conversing with their mentors?
  - How might we make giving feedback and advice more transparent and honest?
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**Interpretation:** Mentorship relationships satisfy higher needs for the mentor and lower needs for the mentee on Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

### Supporting Observations:

- Talking to the sponsor, he noticed “lots of personal improvement” in his sponsee
- Talking to Jim, having fulfillment of seeing someone he mentored become successful was a huge reason why he wanted to mentor people
- “They're all on a positive trajectory” - in reference to AA sponsees
- Sponsors really enjoyed watching someone grow through participating in AA meetings

### How Might We?

- How might we enable mentees to feel the same pride and joy towards their mentors as the mentors feel towards them?
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**Interpretation:** Relationship is voluntary, mentors will offer their advice, and mentees can process as much as they like.

The key to a mentoring relationship is the mentees wanting to be a part of that relationship.

### Supporting Observations:

- AA sponsees ask someone to be their sponsor
- Mentors at LinkedIn try to help younger ICs at the company carve out a “career path” within the company
- Jim: “The ultimate goal of any mentor is to grow a team of mentees to fill their own capacity, so that they can take over for the mentor...and the mentor can move on”
- “Sponsorship is not a requirement, but is helpful”
- Mentorship at LinkedIn is voluntary and totally opt-in
- Mentors at LinkedIn share stories from moments in their own lives to help
- Many sponsees saw AA as “a chance to get better, like training”
- “Sponsor advice is only meant as a suggestion”

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we make the mentoring relationship more equal such that both parties will have comparable levels of motivation in participating?

**Interpretation:** Mentoring is a way for experienced people to pay-it forward and help others through their expertise.

#### **Supporting Observations:**

- Jim said that the reason LinkedIn developed a mentorship program was to “give a voice to senior web developers” who probably had a lot of value to give, but had no channel to distribute it through
- There are individual contributors (ICs) who want no part in management and who just want to spend their time coding

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we facilitate a culture of continuous mentorship and guidance?

**Interpretation:** It’s difficult to find people who can lead while a company is growing.

#### **Supporting Observations:**

- LinkedIn was growing very quickly in the time that Jim was working there and needed more people to fill management positions
- LinkedIn aimed to groom any Jr developers that showed any leadership potential to become managers; they did this by gradually adding people to their team to the point where they were already leading a group of people and adding the position merely became a formality

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we help companies identify younger employees that are more appropriate than others for management positions?

**Interpretation:** Coaching someone involves being upfront and personal with them, which can sometimes seem abrasive.

#### **Supporting Observations:**

- “Coaching is honest, coaching is uncomfortable” - Jim
- At the AA meeting, we heard deeper things that sponsees often didn’t/hadn’t wanted to share with people that they were supposed to be close with (e.g. family members)

- We heard from people's experiences that spending time one-on-one ultimately made them closer than group interactions
- Sponsees would take long walks with their sponsors to talk

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we enable coaches to interact with their advisees honestly and openly without risking rubbing them the wrong way.

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**Interpretation:** The individual is still important, even in a group mentoring session.

#### **Supporting Observations:**

- AA required individuals to introduce themselves to the group before sharing with everyone in group discussion
- "Hi, I'm Avi and I'm a visitor" "Hi Avi"

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we allow people to retain their individuality while interacting with others in a group context?

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**Interpretation:** Reframing the situation at hand often helps people bond over the change of perspective.

#### **Supporting Observations:**

- AA people would try to make light of the situation with humor, joking around about what they had gone through

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we help people jointly cope with a distressing situation by changing the context around it?

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**Interpretation:** Mentors share stories with their advisees because they represent concrete moments of learning for the mentor.

#### **Supporting Observations:**

- Jim, in regards to his "career": "I still really don't know I'm doing"
- AA members bonded through a shared experience
- AA members shared many interests and were involved in many of the same fields
- Acceptance of the current situation was an important part of the experience for AA
- AA members held hands at the end of the meeting to conclude the meeting
- There was a unified moment of silence during the meeting
- "The words a person says and the knowledge of how they operate"
- Sponsor for AA was always someone who had already gone through the experience themselves
- Jim: "I know the past, not the future"

#### **How Might We?**

- How might we bring mentors and mentees closer through story-sharing?

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**Interpretation:** Creating a familiar environment and context gave mentees a stable base while they changed other aspects of themselves.

Structure supports comfort in a mentorship context.



**Supporting Observations:**

- Members of AA noticed a “consistency” between meetings in that there was always a certain structure they always followed
- There was a diverse mix within AA members at the meeting we went to between new-comers and regulars
- There are different types of AA meetings with different purposes
- The AA meeting atmosphere felt extremely kind
- Jim noted that he encouraged communal problem solving within his mentee groups: for example, he would encourage his mentees to “solve problem for a group” and to share their solutions with others because he noticed that a lot of his mentees were coming to him with similar problems

**How Might We?**

- How might we allow mentees to maintain their self-identity as they are learning and growing?
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**Interpretation:** People find it difficult to commit to help themselves because they’re afraid of the thinking in the long term.

People find it easier to address short-term problems and make promises to fix problems without following through (i.e. New Year’s resolutions)

**Supporting Observations:**

- Jim said that getting people interested in the mentorship program was extremely difficult (especially because it was opt-in)
- AA sponsorships always occurred in the short-term and seldom in the long-term

**How Might We?**

- How might we enable mentees follow through and act on their mentoring sessions?
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**Interpretation:** The commitment of the mentee is critical to the existence of the mentoring relationship.

**Supporting Observations:**

- The AA sponsee is mainly responsible for maintaining the relationship with the sponsor
- “Nobody else can get someone else sober”
- The sponsee has to make the first contact with their sponsor and not the other way around

**How Might We?**

- How might we motivate people looking for someone else to help them to help themselves?

# People Profiles

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## The Coach

Johan



"Coaching is honest, coaching done well is a little uncomfortable"

Johan wants his clients to be more **involved and engaged** in their own growth and success. His purpose as a coach is to help them plan out **actionable steps** towards a realistic goal.

### About Johan

Johan is someone who does not necessarily have depth of experience in a specific field or area. His goal is to support the concrete goals of a possible advisee. The coach is someone who has to be very honest with his advisee when they meet on a regular basis to discuss current progress being made towards a goal. This goal was explored and discussed for feasibility at the beginning of the entire session. As a result, he often has to dish out some "tough love"; in some cases, this allows him to develop a closer personal connection with those whom he coaches. In most cases, however, this prevents him from developing a close relationship to his clients. His purpose is only to get his clients to reach a goal.

### Challenges Johan Faces

Johan's main goal in coaching is to educate his clients to a point where they can do his job and he can move on to greener pasture. Johan needs to be able to show his bosses that his time, the companies time, was well spent coaching someone. To do this, he has to take notes about his meetings with his clients, but this makes many of them feel self-conscious and unable to be completely honest.

# The Advisor

Mike

"I can be a shoulder for my advisees sometimes"



Mike tells his advisees **stories from his own experience** in order to help them **address problems** in a similar context that may be happening to them. Beyond this, he is an ear who his advisees **can trust**.

## About Mike

Mike is someone who has deep experience in a professional field or area who takes on an advisee or group of advisees within an organization to “teach them the ropes”. He doesn’t really have a defined goal with mentoring; actually, it’s completely voluntary within the organization he’s in. He does it because “it feels good” when his mentees get promoted and because he wants to promote a culture of mutual learning within the organization he’s a part of.

## Challenges Mike Faces

Since Mike’s main concern is not getting himself promoted, he only cares on a personal level whether or not his mentees reach some of the goals they’ve set for themselves. Due to this, they’re completely accountable for their own progress towards growth and self-improvement. Although a few self-motivated individuals are able to gain a lot from this relationship, many people fall through the cracks and are unable to maintain the relationship consistently with their mentor. Consequently, Mike also has trouble reminding his mentees that they have meetings because his emails get lost in the flood of emails that get sent daily within the organization.

# The Sponsee

Clara

"I have problems, lots of problems"



Clara is someone who has **problems** and needs guidance. Her main goals are directed towards learning as much as she can and general growth.

## About Clara

Clara is someone who is distressed by either an internal affliction or environmental stressor. She is at a point in her life where she wants to become closer to more people that she already knows and find someone (preferably, someone who's been there before) who can guide her through the array of problems she's currently dealing with.

## Challenges Clara Faces

Clara's main concerns include internal intimacy and closeness problems: she needs to develop closer relationships with many of the people she already knows and not find more friends. She is also distressed because of a wide array of environmental stressors that she does not know how to handle because they are new problems. In addition to problems of sexual salaciousness and rampant alcoholism, Clara suffers from career myopia: she doesn't know what she wants to do with her (professional) talents and needs someone who has been through similar experiences as her to inspire her with their own stories and motivate her to want to grow and develop (professionally).