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Music Mark Coaching and Mentoring - How to get the most from it!

Music Mark is delighted to support our members by providing access to a mentoring and coaching programme which is free at the point of access. We have a large pool of experienced coaches and mentors available to work with and support your development, providing a breadth of experience from both within and outside of music education.

Music Mark pays the coaches and mentors directly for their work however, to ensure this valuable programme can continue and that the maximum number of members can benefit, all participants are required to engage fully with their coach or mentor. This is a professional, paid arrangement therefore lack of communication may result in cancellation of remaining sessions to return the budget back into the programme and enable someone else to participate.

Please see the guidance below which will support you in understanding our expectations and to help you make the most of participating in the programme.

Engage

Make it worthwhile for you and your mentor/coach.

Your mentor or coach is part of this programme because they want to help you succeed. Thanks to the funding from Arts Council England, we are paying for their services, but many are offering their time to us at a preferential rate or find this time within already busy diaries to enable wider support for everyone involved in music education. **You have a responsibility to show them that you are committed to the relationship.**

Your mentor or coach will understand if you must drop everything to deal with a crisis or if priorities must change but otherwise, they can reasonably expect you to engage fully with them and with the discussion. **This is a professional relationship and should be treated as such by ensuring communication in a timely manner and respect given for the time and support being made available to you.**

Drive

Take charge of the relationship yourself.

You should actively set up the meetings with your mentor, not wait for them to initiate contact. The relationship is primarily for your benefit, so set the pace and create the agenda for each session yourself. If your mentor or coach is having to push you all the time, then you may not be ready for this, and a different form of support may be more suitable for now.



SUPPORTING
CONNECTING
INFLUENCING

Focus

Be clear with yourself and your mentor/coach about your objectives.

Mentoring and coaching work when there is a focus. Of course, you are probably working on something that you do not yet understand (a “known-unknown”) but it is important that you can articulate what this is (and why it matters) to yourself and to your mentor/coach. You will have outlined this in your expression of interest and will probably explore and refine it in the initial introductory conversation (the chemistry call).

As you go through the process, you need to retain clarity on what you are aiming for, especially if it evolves over time.

Question

Ask (and you will receive).

Expect a two-way conversation which will probably move between mentoring, coaching and other modes at various times (the debate about the boundaries between them may never reach conclusion). At the heart is a relationship between a more experienced mentor/coach and a learner, whose learning will be in proportion to the quality of the questions both parties ask.

Some suggestions are provided for you below.

Goals

Agree what you’re going to do e.g. by the next session and in the longer term.

Part of making the relationship work is committing to making a difference to the way you work and to achieving goals. Goals will help keep you on track, so make sure they fit with your focus. Sometimes achieving one may be the trigger for your next session.

Act and follow through

Make sure you do what you have agreed. Whatever the goal is that you have agreed for the next session, give it a good go. If you try but find you need more help, reflect on what stopped you so that the next session with your mentor or coach can support you moving forward. Out of respect for your mentor/coach and yourself, make some progress before your next session.



SUPPORTING
CONNECTING
INFLUENCING

Share

Report back to your mentor/coach.

We all like to see how we are making a difference, and this will be crucial to maintaining your mentor's or coach's commitment to you. They will enjoy sharing in your successes and will sometimes be able to help you see successes you missed.

Feeding back on what you've done will also help you and your mentor understand the next steps you need to take.

Be honest

Say what's working well and what isn't.

You and your mentor/coach are professionals, and you have an interest in using each other's time productively. It is important that you can be honest with each other about the process. As with any relationship, surfacing issues early and constructively will help you find a solution.

There is no shame in admitting it isn't working. Chances are that if you feel like that, your mentor/coach is aware of it too. That will not be the usual outcome though and honest, objective dialogue will usually enable you both to work out a better way to move forward.

Most of the time, being honest will just be about sharing how you are growing through their interest in your career.

Thanks

Have an attitude of gratitude.

Take time to let your mentor/coach know that you appreciate their time and energy and that you are making the most of the relationship.

Return

Think about how you can give back.

Mentoring and coaching are highly rewarding, and many mentors and coaches learn both from the process and directly from the person or people they are working with. So, this is less about giving direct feedback than thinking of your mentor's or coach's needs that they may share (whether intentionally or inadvertently) and taking the trouble to spot if you can help them.



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INFLUENCING

Suggested questions

A quick internet search provides lots of ideas for questions to ask your mentor or coach. Many may not be suitable for your circumstances but here are some to think about.

- Where do you think my strengths lie?
- How can I develop the right discipline to achieve my goals?
- What skills should I develop to grow in my career?
- What are some things in your career that you regret not having done earlier?
- Do you ever get impostor syndrome? How did you learn to get over it?
- Did you have a hard time starting out/when you became a manager/Head of Service?
- What are some of the hard choices that you made to get where you are in your career?
- How did you bounce back from setbacks?
- How can I handle this situation better?
- I feel stuck. What are some ways I could try to solve the issue?
- My boss/colleagues are treating me unfairly. How should I tackle this and how do you think I would know when to move on?
- How do I prepare myself for performance reviews?
- What would you like to see me do every week to show that I'm improving throughout this mentorship? [although bear in mind comments above about your responsibility to drive the relationship]
- Am I progressing in the right direction? [closed question – but they have their place]
- Are there any other topics you'd like us to discuss?
- Do you have any feedback on how we can improve our rapport?

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us, at any time, if you would like to talk to someone in the Music Mark team about your own mentoring or coaching experience of participating in this programme – you can get us via email on info@musicmark.org.uk.