SPEED MENTORING TOOLKIT

RIBA
Architecture.com

What is Speed Mentoring?

RIBA Speed Mentoring is an effective method of mentoring, based on the speed-dating concept. The format matches practitioners who could benefit from sharing their knowledge, experience or connections. It allows for quick-fire exchange of ideas about professional development or business needs and targeted networking, with the potential to initiate an ongoing mentoring relationship. The difference between networking and RIBA Speed Mentoring is that mentees are specifically matched with their chosen mentors.

Information for you

Why run a Speed Mentoring event

RIBA Speed Mentoring is popular and feedback has shown that it is enjoyable and has proved to be useful. More than 97% of participants at the 2015 RIBA Small Practice Conference (Guerrilla Tactics), where speeding mentoring was featured, noted that they had received 'valuable practice or professional development advice' and responded with 'yes' when asked if the RIBA should run more speed-mentoring events.

It is a good way to:

- engage with members and other colleagues in an informal, fun, quick-fire manner. Careful selection of delegates and mentors should ensure that both parties find the event enjoyable and rewarding.

- facilitate / foster new professional relationships

- initiate an ongoing mentoring relationship (if both parties agree) – although this is not the purpose of the event and is not guaranteed.

When to run a Speed Mentoring event

Speed Mentoring can be stand-alone, or tacked onto an existing event.

Afternoon or early evening is an ideal time as there is the opportunity for relaxed networking and drinks before and after. The RIBA uses speed mentoring at various professional events.

Delegates are invited to stay on after the main conference to participate.
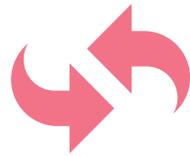
Suggested format and timings

- Evening Event
- Speed Mentoring session 1 hour: five x 10 minute mentoring slots with 2 minute change overs. (Mentors stay seated, mentees change seats at each session).
- Arrival, registration and networking drinks beforehand, suggest 45 minutes
- Networking drinks afterwards, suggest 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Total event length: 2.5 to 3 hours

How many mentors and mentees

The RIBA has run Speed Mentoring at Guerrilla Tactics, since 2014. In the first year there were 60 mentees with 40 mentees, in 2015 those numbers increased to 80 mentees with 60 mentors. In both instances this allowed for three or four mentoring slots for each mentee, seeing two or three of their selected mentors*. Mentors would ideally have all of their mentoring slots filled in order to keep the whole hour lively and energised.

*some mentors were more popular than others and consequently were heavily over-subscribed.

How to choose your participants

Select mentors, such as clients, other architects, co-professionals etc. who offer the kind of enterprise skills and business expertise your delegates are looking for. Consider asking locally based RIBA Hon. Fellows, clients, other architects, marketing specialists and other professionals such as accountants etc.

How to match mentors and mentees

Utilising a free survey website is a good way to match mentors and mentees. You should create a survey which is purely a list of all mentors and their organisation with a selection for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th choice mentors.

Asking mentees to choose six allows them to see their fourth, fifth or sixth choice if, for example, their second or third choice is fully booked. This needs to be submitted about a week before the event and then the survey is closed.

Once the survey has been closed, download the results into an Excel or csv file ready for matching. Create an Excel spreadsheet with the complete list of mentors and the mentoring slots. In an ideal world there would be an algorithm, but until one is written this next task has to be done manually. Depending on numbers match each mentee with three or four mentors, starting with their first choices. Two people are needed for this task, one selecting mentees for mentors, the other filling in the matching sheet and checking for clashes. Again, depending on numbers this can take three hours, or more.

This is the most time-consuming part of the process, but it is vital to get right to ensure nobody is double-booked. Use the Excel functions such as filtering and sorting to assist with this. Time spent here will save time later.

Link to sample Excel Spreadsheet
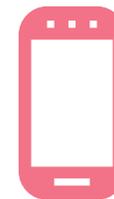
'Dance cards'

Dance cards are used to record the matching of mentors with mentees for use by both parties with a master set kept by the organiser. Once the matching has been completed dance cards need to be created for each mentor and mentee. Each different mentoring session is colour-coded. Each individual dance card needs to be saved as a pdf and then sent to its corresponding participant, so they can either refer to them on their smart device, such as their phone, or print out and bring on the evening. Print copies of all dance cards ready for the event to give to participants if required, plus a master set for ad-hoc checking.

Link to sample dance card spread sheets for both mentors and mentees

Link to sample email text for mentors
Link to sample email text to mentees

What other materials are needed

- Name badges for mentees
- Tent cards for mentors for use on tables with the dance cards.
- Pens and pads on each table.
- Stopwatch or watch for session timing
- Whistle or horn to sound end of each mentoring session (it can get very noisy).

Link to tent card template

What kind of room is required

Ensure you chose a room that is big enough, not only to host the mentoring, but for people to manoeuvre and breakout for drinks and networking.

- Registration desk – this should be located either just outside or just inside the room to welcome mentees and give them their dance cards, to welcome and register mentors and let them know on which table they are seated
- Tables - A cabaret-style table arrangement is ideal with pairs of chairs around circular tables.
- Audio/visual equipment – (microphone and speakers) is required for the compere to welcome, close and manage the event. Playing suitable music for the networking sessions before and after the Speed Mentoring can help create an informal and relaxed environment. It is useful to have a projector to show a PowerPoint presentation of the table layout with new background colour to illustrate the change of each mentoring session.
- Lighting – soft lighting helps with the relaxed atmosphere, but not so dim that people cannot see to make notes.

Link to table layout PowerPoint

What makes a successful event

To be successful the event needs to adhere to a tight timescale in order for all mentees to meet their mentors within the hour.

Speed Mentoring is fun, but intense; energy levels can dip if it drags on for more than an hour, so be strict with time-keeping and move people on after each slot.

Have a programme of timings and activities for staff involved. Having drinks available before and after, a compere who can control the room but who is fun and lively, and helpers on hand to help will contribute to the success of the event.

What staff resources are needed

- Registration desk – two people
- Hosts to assist participants to find their tables etc. – two people
- Compere – one person
- Additional helpers (not essential) – two people

How to trouble-shoot

It is possible that additional mentees may turn up at the event without having submitted their survey selections. This is more likely if the Speed Mentoring follows on from another event and delegates stay on. Be flexible. If there are slots available you may consider fitting in people, but pre-booked mentees must take priority.

Mentors may drop out at the last minute. If possible try to re-allocate their mentees to other mentors or make an announcement that the mentor has had to cancel, this will save mentees looking in vain for a missing mentor.

Follow up and feedback

A day or two after the event write to mentors and mentees to thank them for their involvement and ask for feedback.

Tip for mentees

Come with a specific issue you need addressing