

# Mentoring Matters

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This month we asked Ann Rolfe, Australia's most published author on mentoring and the founder of [Mentoring Works](#), about her perspectives on mentoring.

For the last sixteen years, Ann has specialized in mentoring, setting up programs and training people in fields as diverse as health, construction, energy, communications, education, law and government. Her training programs and resources are used in many countries to develop and support mentoring. She received the 2011 LearnX Asia Pacific Platinum Award for Best Coaching/Mentoring Training Program.

## Interview with Ann Rolfe



**MM: Can you tell us about how mentoring is currently practiced in Australia?**

**AR:** Australians see themselves as egalitarian, so mentoring models that emphasis partnership and collaboration rather than authority or status, are welcomed.

I find more and more acceptance of the idea that mentoring is a two-way street. Mentors facilitate a process and find the relationship yields development for them

as much as the mentee (I refer to the mentee as "mentoree" in my books). The relationship is dynamic and although the mentor may begin by leading, autonomy is important. The mentee is encouraged to drive the relationship, set the agenda and choose the direction.

**MM: What are the most exciting changes you've seen over the past 16 years?**

**AR:** There are two exciting changes. One is that where there was so little information and understanding, now there is almost too much! As well as about 106 million results if you Google "mentoring" there is a wealth of solid academic as well as practitioner resources available. There is still less here in Australia than Europe and the USA but there is still plenty.

The other change is the move from the traditional idea of a mentor being older and wiser to the concept that mentors are partners and collaborators whose different experience is what adds value.

Mentoring is used in many more ways than ever before. I work mainly in corporate and government organizations with a focus on career,

**"Don't rush into mentoring.  
Take a strategic approach."**

personal and professional development and leadership. But mentoring helps youth, disadvantaged people, community and small business groups, the arts, and science in fact the applications are only limited by our imagination!

**MM: What is the most important advice you'd give to organizations starting mentoring?**

**AR:** Don't rush into it. Take a strategic approach so that mentoring supports and is aligned with organizational objectives. Mentoring should be designed to add strategic value to organizations and personal benefits to individuals.

I'm writing about this now. My next book, *Mentoring Strategy, Planning And Implementation* will be published next year. I've developed a model that has been used to develop award-winning mentoring. It focuses on detailed planning, promoting and communicating the mentoring concept, preparing people for mentoring and putting in place a program of support.

**Words of Wisdom from Ann:  
"Context is very important and  
another reason not to rush  
into mentoring."**

**MM: Context - how important is it? How do you see it playing out in your work?**

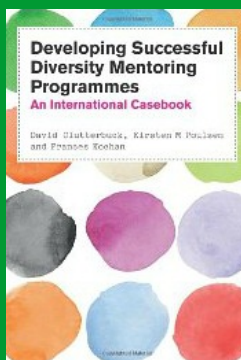
**AR:** Some programs I have been involved in recently have helped build safer workplaces and increased profitability in small businesses. Others have helped retain young recruits and equipped mature workers to assist in their development. There are others who have, provided career development and leadership skills that contributed to equity for Aboriginal employees and client services, and increased operational consistency.

Each of these has a very different context. This is why there can be no one-size-fits-all in mentoring. I do use generic models to explain mentoring roles and the mentoring conversation, but you must tailor programs and training to the needs of your participants, their circumstances and the strategic objectives you seek to achieve.

**Words of Wisdom from Ann:  
"A mentoring mindset is  
personal courage, being  
constructive, valuing  
difference, self-responsibility  
and dialogue."**

Context is very important and another reason not to rush into mentoring. You need to take time to understand what outcomes mentoring can realistically produce in the situation, what will really make a difference for people and the organization. Otherwise mentoring is just another solution in search of a problem.

### What Ann Recommends Reading



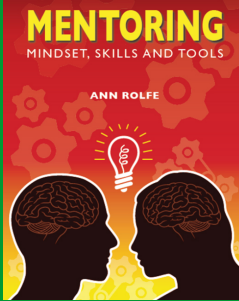
**Developing Successful  
Diversity Mentoring  
Programmes**  
by David Clutterbuck and  
Kirsten Poulsen

**MM: How did you arrive at the concept of a "mentoring mindset" and why is it important?**

**AR:** I've been helping people develop mentoring skills for a long time. I've also provided tools. And, I've observed and thought about why formal and informal mentoring succeeds and why it doesn't. My conclusion is that there is something beyond skills and tools - as important as they are - that makes mentoring work.

For want of a better term, I called it mindset. Then I started to think about what that term really meant. I reflected on what I'd learned over the years from the many mentoring partnerships I'd seen and read about and what participants had shared of their experiences. This led me to develop some beliefs and as I explored them I realized what they were..... values.

Specifically, I believe that the mentoring mindset is an approach based on five core values: personal courage, being constructive, valuing difference, self-responsibility and dialogue.



**Mentoring Mindset,  
Skills and Tools**  
by Ann Rolfe

This mindset - you might call it a philosophy or principles - guides you when you are mentoring. If you have this mindset, mentoring is easy and natural. You don't need a lot of rules, you make decisions and take actions that are congruent with the values.

**MM: What are you is reading now that you would recommend to our readers?**

**AR:** I am reading Clutterbuck, Pousen and Kochan's new book, [Developing Successful Diversity Mentoring Programmes](#). This is an international casebook with contributing authors as diverse as the examples they present and practical lessons for anyone setting up mentoring.

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## What Are People Saying About the New Mentoring Excellence Pocket Toolkits?



*"I really appreciate having these handy toolkits in my back pocket."*

*"The toolkits are welcome reminders."*

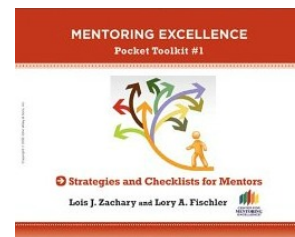
*"They help me stay on track and remind me about the questions I should be asking my mentee."*

## Mentoring Excellence Pocket Toolkits

**Order Yours Today!**

### Toolkit #1: Strategies and Checklists for Mentors: Mentoring Excellence

Toolkit 1 offers strategies for success and checklists for mentoring excellence that can be used during each phase of the mentoring relationship. They can be used to guide mentoring conversations, gauge progress, and promote mutual accountability. These checklists can also be used to determine readiness to move on to the next phase.



**Order Your Toolkit #1 Today! Amazon Price \$12.00**

### Toolkit #2: Feedback and Facilitation for Mentors: Mentoring Excellence

Toolkit 2 provides tips, guidelines, and checklists to help mentors master facilitation and feedback skills that are critical to enhancing learning and building authentic and productive relationships. When used effectively, facilitation and feedback ensure high level, high impact mentoring relationships.



**Order Your Toolkit #2 Today! Amazon Price \$12.00**

## Toolkit #3: Strategies for Mentees: Mentoring Excellence

Toolkit 3 is organized around the four phases of successful mentoring: getting ready, establishing agreements, enabling, and coming to closure, which build on one another to form a developmental sequence. This pocket toolkit provides answers to many frequently asked questions about how to make the most of a mentoring relationship and offers tips to keep it on track.



[Order Your Toolkit #3 Today! Amazon Price \\$12.00](#)

## Toolkit #4: Accountability Strategies and Checklists: Mentoring Excellence

Toolkit 4 covers the very important process of setting goals. It offers accountability strategies and checklists for mentoring excellence that can be used during each phase of the mentoring relationship. They can be used to guide mentoring conversations, gauge progress, and promote mutual accountability. These checklists can also be used to determine readiness to move on to the next phase.



[Order Your Toolkit #4 Today! Amazon Price \\$12.00](#)

## Toolkit #5: Mentoring Across Generations: Mentoring Excellence Pocket

Toolkit 5 helps mentors and mentees understand the differences among Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials in mentoring relationships. It gives valuable guidance, tips, and checklists to help all ages get the most out of their mentoring relationships.



[Order Your Toolkit #5 Today! Amazon Price \\$12.00](#)

### A Note to Our Readers:

We believe that leaders cannot be effective without a strong and ongoing commitment to mentoring excellence. This belief, our passion for mentoring excellence, and our extensive experience in the field with organizations led us to create the Center for Mentoring Excellence. At our virtual center, [www.centerformentoringexcellence.com](http://www.centerformentoringexcellence.com), you will find mentoring tools and resources, expert advice and a forum for sharing best mentoring practices. We hope that you will visit us there and let us know how we can continue to help you raise the bar on mentoring in your organization.

