

A guide to setting up a Peer Mentoring Programme



INTRODUCTION

Peer mentoring was introduced to complement NESTA's Starter for 6¹ initiative, an enterprise development programme for innovative creative start-up businesses.

This guide shares NESTA's experience and learning of peer mentoring with creative businesses during that programme.

Peer mentoring is different from traditional forms of mentoring (parent-child models) as it involves near peers with one or two years more experience than their mentees (akin to teenager-child model). NESTA was keen to test the efficacy of this form of mentoring within a business context and considers the success of the peer mentoring pilot a valuable supplement to the Starter for 6 business development approach.

“Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.”

Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring

¹Starter for 6 is an enterprise training programme that supports up-and-coming creative entrepreneurs across Scotland. Over three years NESTA supported 210 creative individuals, providing them with a tailored business support package including enterprise training, peer mentoring and grants awards. As a result of the success of Starter for 6, the Scottish Government, through Creative Scotland, confirmed its funding commitment to run the Starter for 6 programme from 2009-2011. This programme is delivered in Scotland by the [Cultural Enterprise Office](#). Peer Mentoring is now an integral part of the programme.

[A Creative Enterprise Toolkit](#) has been developed for trainers, lecturers and those who work with creative start-ups. The toolkit is a collection of our knowledge, training plans, exercises, case studies, learning and insights from the programme.

INTRODUCTION

During the programme, start-up businesses were mentored by near-peers: Starter for 6 alumni with one or two years experience in developing their own businesses, who had been trained in mentoring skills. They acted as a critical friend to the start-up, rather than a conventional business adviser. The near-peer model was considered more appropriate than the traditional mentor-protégé approach. Although popular within education and employment practices, it is a less common form of support for creative entrepreneurs.

This guide provides:

- an overview of the structure of the programme
- the format of meeting sessions
- some practical points and case studies for those considering setting up a peer mentoring scheme
- the impacts for both the mentors and mentees.

“I FOUND THAT THINGS STARTED TO HAPPEN A LOT QUICKER ONCE MY MENTOR GOT INVOLVED. SHE PUSHED ME TO MOVE THE BUSINESS FORWARD AND ALSO HELPED TO ADDRESS CONCERNS I HAD.”

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The Peer Mentoring Programme was designed to be cost and resource effective: easy to administer for the organising staff, and easy to participate in for the mentors and mentees.

The structure followed five simple steps:

Step 1: Mentor selection and training

Mentors were selected alumni from past Starter for 6 programmes. They participated in a half-day group training session on mentoring skills with an expert coach. This included questioning techniques, how to listen effectively, and how to provide advice rather than answers.

Step 2: Mentee selection

NESTA contacted all Starter for 6 participants and invited them to take part in the Peer Mentoring Programme. This opportunity was well received, with 53 out of 68 individuals taking up the offer.

Step 3: Matchmaking mentor and mentee

Having met with all the participants, NESTA matched mentors to mentees – with each mentor having at most two mentees. Care was taken to ensure mentors did not feel over-burdened by their mentoring duties, which could detract from their own business development.

Step 4: Mentor / Mentee Agreement

Before mentoring sessions began, an agreement was drawn up that clearly set out the understanding of NESTA, the mentor and mentee in relation to their participation. This was then signed by all parties. A guide to creating such an agreement is provided in Appendix 2. Mentors received a small stipend to cover out of pocket travel expenses.

Step 5: Mentoring duration

Mentors met mentees for a minimum of one hour a month over a four month period. Meetings tended to be informal and relaxed, and focused on discussing how the business was progressing, as well as any hurdles encountered.

The level of mentoring experience varied greatly. Some had previous experience in informal mentoring or tutoring, while others were completely new to it. To ensure a consistent approach, **Coach in a Box**ⁱⁱ provided training on mentoring techniques.

The training session covered different types of relationships, questioning techniques, listening skills and how to offer advice rather than solutions. Mentors also found the training invaluable in setting out the requirements and expectations of the relationship, and making their role clear.

Tools such as the 'Action Learning Cycle' below provided a structure for how to conduct effective first meetings with mentees. Mentors found this practical tool helpful for keeping focus during meetings:

- **Purpose:** be clear about the purpose of the meeting and expected outcomes
- **Review:** identify current concerns or obstacles, and explore possible solutions and actions to take
- **Make Sense:** explore options, measures for success and support needed
- **Plan / Experiment:** agree outputs from Review and Make Sense sections.

'See-Hear-Speak' provided a simple yet powerful pathway for good communication. This sequential, three-step framework helped the mentor identify and overcome possible hurdles to effective discussions:

- **See:** by building rapport and putting yourself in the other person's position, they will know that you 'see' them. They are then more likely to speak openly and be more comfortable discussing business and personal issues.
- **Hear:** the other person has to believe that you have 'heard' them. You can do this by repeating what you have heard and reflecting back the feelings they are demonstrating. Once 'heard' they are likely to relax and are then ready to listen to the mentor or move onto the solutions stage.
- **Speak:** communicating what you want in a clear, exact, non-confrontational and non-judgemental way helps to avoid misunderstanding or miscommunication.

Once training was completed, it was important to help avoid any possible conflict of interest as the relationship developed. The Mentor / Mentee Agreement set clear boundaries and roles for both parties and included an agreement that the mentor would not enter into business dealings with the mentee.

ⁱⁱMentor training session was provided by Coach in a Box (www.coachinabox.co.uk)

MATCHMAKING MENTORS AND MENTEES

To make the relationship worthwhile, it is important the two parties are sufficiently aligned. NESTA had met with all participants personally, and was well placed to do this. Points considered included whether mentors and mentees had:

- Similar backgrounds with respect to the business
- Comparable working environments
- Experience of similar business hurdles, that the mentor had overcome.

The traits mentees considered most important in their mentors included:

- Honesty
- An approachable nature
- A non-judgemental approach
- The ability to look at situations from a different angle.

“YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TRUST THEM [MENTOR] AND TO FEEL THAT YOU CAN SEEK ADVICE AND OPEN UP TO THEM.”

Where the participants are not known personally, matching could be initiated as follows:

- **By mentors:** who – on considering mentees’ needs, business sector, experience etc – select those where they think they can add most value.
- **By mentees:** who are provided with a list of mentors to choose from.

With both approaches, once selection is made, a short introductory meeting takes place, after which both parties agree to continue the relationship or seek an alternative match.

Sector specific or cross discipline?

In some cases, the mentor and mentee operated in a similar sector. Advantages to this included a good understanding of the sector issues the mentee faced, and being able to pass on useful industry contacts.

However, feedback suggested mentors and mentees do not have to work in the same area for the relationship to be effective, and for both to feel well matched.

Mentees suggested it was beneficial having a mentor from outside their sector, as this focused discussions on business elements, rather than creative aspects (for which they could access advice elsewhere).

It also removed the temptation to rely too much on their mentor’s experience, or to cut corners in their own research and understanding.

Mentees also pointed out that a mentor in the same field might be less open about their experience or less forthcoming with their advice, particularly if there was a competitive element.

Mentors themselves felt that, where businesses were operating in a different field, it was easier for them to step back and take a more holistic approach.

“OUR BUSINESSES ARE VERY DIFFERENT, BUT IN TERMS OF PERSONALITY AND VALUES, THE MATCH IS VERY GOOD.”

It is important that both mentor and mentee know what to expect at the outset. Before the mentoring sessions began, both parties signed an Agreement that set the boundaries for the relationship and included non-disclosure details and an agreement that mentors will not enter into business dealings with mentees. Procedures for highlighting problems such as personality issues or changes in personal circumstances should also be considered before a programme launches. Information on how to create such an agreement is provided in Appendix 1.

Contact can take various forms: face-to-face meetings, telephone calls and Skype (where distance is an issue). Initial meetings tended to be face-to-face, with telephone and Skype used for follow-up discussions. Meetings can take place at the mentor or mentee's business premises, or in a less formal setting such as a café or bar.

The initial mentoring session tended to focus on introductions and exploring similarities between the businesses, with mentors taking the lead and asking mentees many questions about their business and background. Some mentees were apprehensive about the meeting, describing it as being like "a first date". Others felt intimidated by contact with more experienced entrepreneurs, and felt a need to impress their mentor. To address this and facilitate the communications process, a structured topic guide could help both parties know they are on the right track.

During the second meeting or contact, mentees gave a greater steer, with the focus on drawing up a list of key points to discuss. Subsequent meetings reviewed these specific issues, and explored other concerns the business faced.

Mentors and mentees should agree a minimum number of meetings or contacts for the duration of the programme. During Starter for 6, both parties committed to at least four meetings over a period of four months, each lasting around two hours. Scheduling meetings in advance was considered an effective way of managing the relationship and providing structure. It avoided long gaps between meetings, and ensured mentor sessions fitted around other business commitments. It also helped to agree ahead whether contact outside the designated meetings was acceptable, as mentees can worry about seeming to 'pester' their mentor.

Having an agreed plan like this gives both parties a "guilt free escape route", where neither feels obliged to continue the relationship beyond the specified timeframe. However, many of the Starter for 6 mentoring partnerships continued on an informal basis, as the relationships were considered mutually beneficial.

The fact the Peer Mentoring Programme was free for mentees was regarded positively. Some participants had previous experience of having paid mentors, which they had to stop using if they had cash-flow problems.

“NEW BUSINESSES ARE SO BUSY THAT IF THERE IS NOT A STRUCTURE IN PLACE, THEN IT IS LIKELY THAT THE MENTORING MEETINGS WOULD SLIP OFF THE RADAR.”

Mentees' expectations and feedback

Prior to the programme, mentees felt mentors would make a valuable contribution to their business by introducing contacts and networks, and providing honest advice.

Having gone through the programme, mentees suggested that having a near-peer as a mentor had the additional benefit of giving them the opportunity to speak to somebody who had recently been through the process of setting up a business.

The flexibility of the programme was welcomed, as mentees were not restricted to discussing particular areas of the business, but could ask their mentors any questions they felt relevant.

Mentees were keen to become peer mentors in the future to assist other creative entrepreneurs.

Examples of specific support and guidance provided by mentors and the impact of these are summarised in Appendix 2.

Mentors' expectations and feedback

Mentors who accepted NESTA's invitation to participate in the Peer Mentoring Programme generally wanted to get involved as they had benefited personally from having a mentor during the Starter for 6 initiative. All the mentors wanted "to give something back".

Mentors received a great deal of satisfaction from helping their mentees, and found the progress made by mentees very rewarding. It reinvigorated their enthusiasm and prompted them to refocus their own business. It also made them realise how much they had learned since they had started their own business and how much it had progressed. This recognition of their achievements boosted their confidence. The relationship also helped to expand the mentors' own networks, both by meeting other mentors and also by meeting other mentees.

Many mentors and mentees were keen to keep in touch after the formal mentoring programme ended, because they had found the relationship to be valuable. It was anticipated that the relationship would become less formal after the official peer mentoring meetings ended, but that they would remain in contact to discuss business issues. In some cases, it was anticipated that there might be scope for collaborative work further down the line.

SAFEHINGE

Martin Izod, Technical Director.



Introduction

Martin Izod is Technical Director of **Safehinge**, an award-winning company that has developed a safe and innovative solution allowing doors to pivot without creating a gap at the hinge that can trap fingers. It is estimated that 30,000 children trap and seriously injure their fingers in doors every year, with more than 1,500 requiring surgery.

Becoming a mentor

A previous Starter for 6 participant, Martin took up NESTA's offer to become a mentor because he enjoys "the buzz of speaking to entrepreneurs and learning about other sectors", and saw mentoring as an opportunity to provide advice and support to help others achieve something bigger than they might have envisaged.

The mentor training was enjoyable. The 'See-Hear-Speak' tool allowed Martin to understand how other people think, and learning about body language "helped me to look for subtle cues of how the person might be feeling and to get to the nub of an issue."

Mentoring companies

Martin mentored two companies: a fashion business and a beauty product company. When matching a mentor and a mentee, the business sector is not so important: “I think it’s easier if the mentee is working in a different area, as there is a level of detachment. The threads of a business tend to be similar regardless of the sector it operates in.”

The main attributes of a mentor should be: “Sufficient depth of business knowledge for the development stage of the business; the right personality to engage the mentee in a meaningful way; and adequate time to commit to the relationship.”

The relationship with one mentee continued beyond the formal programme. While they are still in contact, Martin recommended a more experienced mentor when the company moved onto a level beyond where he felt he could make a significant difference.

Format of meetings

Meetings should be held where both parties feel comfortable. Mentees can feel challenged and nervous, especially at the first meeting, so it’s important that you find a venue that is relaxed. Noisy coffee shops can be distracting and should be avoided.

In the first session, it is important to establish what the mentee wants to get out of the sessions: “Once you know the issues they want to address you can see where you can help and set goals on that basis.” At the end of each meeting the main points were summarised and actions agreed, these were then written up. “Having notes to the meeting provided consistency and avoided flitting between issues; this ensured delivery on what had been agreed.”

Mentees’ concerns varied. The fashion business was embryonic, and discussions were around defining the business. With the beauty product, the main focus was on funding. Managing work-life balance was a recurring theme.

Benefits to the mentor

Martin found mentoring a very positive experience: “In an entrepreneurial business, everything is self-initiated and there is no-one to give you feedback or pat you on the back. On providing advice, I discovered that I was more capable than I thought I was. Being a mentor provided a framework for me to give support to other entrepreneurs as well as to gauge my own progress, which was also noted by my Coach in a Box mentor, who had known me before Safehinge was launched.”

Being a mentor has had a lasting effect on Martin: “Mentoring gave me a confidence boost and has empowered me to make bigger business decisions. I am now more self-assured in addressing issues, to the benefit of my business.”

“MENTORING GAVE ME A CONFIDENCE BOOST AND HAS EMPOWERED ME TO MAKE BIGGER BUSINESS DECISIONS. I AM NOW MORE SELF-ASSURED IN ADDRESSING ISSUES, TO THE BENEFIT OF MY BUSINESS.”

IONA CRAWFORD LTD

Iona Crawford, Head Designer and Company Director.



Introduction

Iona Crawford is Head Designer and Company Director of her eponymous fashion label, renowned for intricate garment structure fused with trademark tailoring. Iona uses unconventional tailoring and pattern cutting, and combines contrasting fabrics of Scottish origin – including cashmere, wool, tweed and leather – to create unique collections that are contemporary yet timeless.

Becoming a mentor

Iona was a mentee on NESTA's pilot Peer Mentoring Programme, and later became a mentor. The chance to be a mentee was considered a privilege: gaining the support and advice of a mentor who could help address business concerns.

Having benefited as a mentee, Iona took the opportunity to be a near-peer mentor as she understood what mentees were going through in starting their own business and felt she could offer meaningful support.

Not everyone is cut out to be a mentor, and the training helped in reinforcing the skills necessary to do it well: knowing when to talk and when to listen, being attentive to body language, and maintaining a confident and reassuring tone of voice. For Iona, mentoring came naturally and built on her prior experience: "I realised that having taught and run fashion workshops, I was using some of the same skills required of a mentor."

“I REALISED THAT HAVING TAUGHT AND RUN FASHION WORKSHOPS, I WAS USING SOME OF THE SAME SKILLS REQUIRED OF A MENTOR.”

Supporting entrepreneurs

Iona gained valuable insights from her experience as a mentee, and wanted to give something back through mentoring two companies: a jewellery business and a designer of digitally printed interior textiles.

There are pros and cons to mentor and mentee being in the same industry sector. Positive aspects include a deeper understanding of the concerns, operations and networks of a specific sector; while on the downside there could be a possible conflict of interest.

Iona's mentor operated in the food industry, bringing a broad perspective to business issues: "I found my mentor looked at the bigger picture and advised on the business as a whole rather than getting bogged down in fashion details, which I found beneficial."

As a mentor, Iona was relieved to have companies that were not in fashion. "As a relatively new business that is still growing, I have worked long and hard to find contacts and would not feel comfortable about sharing this information at such an early stage." Mentors may also have reservations about sharing industry contacts, as their reputation could be damaged if the mentee does not act appropriately.

Conducting meetings

Face-to-face contact is important, particularly in the early stages of the relationship. "I asked mentees to prepare for the meeting by bringing examples, information and any questions they had about their business. This 'show and tell' was helpful in learning about their businesses." Flexibility on the duration of meetings ensures that pertinent issues are adequately addressed without feeling pressured by time.

It is vital to listen to mentees and instil confidence in their abilities, particularly on approaching contacts and conducting meetings with confidence.

The mentor should be open and respect the mentee as an equal, not take on the role of teacher with student. Honesty is crucial, and it's important to know when to signpost mentees to other sources of advice: "You don't have to be a fountain of knowledge on every aspect of business, but you need to know whether you can help or not."

Mentees were keen to know how to approach buyers and build a contacts database, how to ensure a work-life balance, and how to manage cash flow: "I always advise them to keep a tight handle on finances, this is vital to know how your business is doing." Iona is still in contact with both mentees, although the relationships have developed into supportive friendships rather than formal mentoring.

Benefits to the mentor

With mentoring support, Iona's confidence increased allowing her to juggle the various aspects of starting and running a business: "As a mentee, I gained confidence in talking about my business, in defining what I do and expressing this in a clear and positive way. My mentor's support and guidance led me to undertake more research, gathering the right information to pitch my idea for funding."

As a mentor, Iona gained a sense of wellbeing from giving something back and watching mentees progress and succeed in achieving their goals. Iona considers mentoring programmes and the connections they generate to be mutually beneficial: "Being involved in a mentoring programme has benefits to both parties, it allows you to make new contacts and gain insights into how other sectors operate. Having events that keep the network together is a good idea."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer mentoring provides valuable business, practical and personal support to entrepreneurs in creative start-up businesses.

For the early stages of starting up a business, the support of a peer mentor has many benefits: the mentored companies have faster access to information and benefit from the recent past experience of their peers. It provides much needed cost-effective support to entrepreneurs at a critical development stage of their businesses. Such a programme also supports and encourages networking amongst small businesses across different creative sectors, allowing a sharing of experiences of setting up and running a business.

The following lessons may help in setting up a peer mentoring programme:

- Set expectations at the start of the programme, ensuring both mentors and mentees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The frequency and regularity of meetings, as well as contact outside them, should be agreed in advance. A schedule of meetings should help ensure that appointments are kept.
- Meetings should be reasonably structured and finish with a list of action points.
- Structured guides for discussions can ensure both parties are on track, and can help avoid mentees feeling overwhelmed in their dealings with more experienced entrepreneurs.
- Mentees must agree to respect the contacts and networks of their mentors and to follow up actions that involve others as agreed.

- Mentors should be trained to know their limits and to refer issues outside of their experience or knowledge to other agencies. It is useful to have a list of relevant contacts that can be passed to mentees.
- It is not always necessary to match mentors and mentees from the same industry sectors. However, it is useful to match businesses with similar working patterns, business models or experiences.
- Mentoring needs can change, so flexibility in the peer mentoring scheme is advisable, providing mentees with access to different mentors as their business develops.
- Mentors should not be over-burdened by needy mentees or by having too many on their case-load. It is important that the mentor's contribution does not detract from his or her own business needs and activities.

Appendix 1: Drawing up a Mentor / Mentee Agreement

The information below provides a guide to the type of information you might include in a Mentor / Mentee Agreement to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the participants. Where indicated, *[insert text]*, you should insert the name of the organisation administering the Peer Mentoring Programme and other relevant information. The situation will be different in each case so you should adapt this Agreement to meet your needs and if, in doubt, seek professional advice.

Mentor / Mentee Agreement

This Agreement sets out the understanding of *[insert name of administering organisation]*, the Mentor and the Mentee in relation to their participation in the Peer Mentoring Programme. With the exception of the confidentiality obligations referred to below, the terms of this Agreement are not intended to be legally binding.

Background:

[Insert information on the aims of the peer mentoring programme and what the administering organisation hope to achieve through this].

Mentoring Guidelines:

The Mentor and Mentee will have due regard for the following factors with regards their participation in the Peer Mentoring Programme:

1. The initial Mentor / Mentee meeting will ideally take place face-to-face at a mutually convenient location.
2. Mentees will receive a *[insert number of hours]* hour meeting (either face-to-face or by telephone) a month over the period of *[insert number of months]* months from *[dd/mm/yy]* to *[dd/mm/yy]*. This totals *[insert number of hours]* hours over the period and can be flexible to suit both the Mentor and Mentee.
3. This project is voluntary and the Mentor / Mentee will be free to withdraw at any time. If a party does withdraw *[insert name of administering organisation]*, should be informed of the reasons for such withdrawal.
4. Everything discussed between Mentor and Mentee is in confidence. The Mentor agrees they will not disclose any of the Mentee's confidential information other than where the confidential information is already in the public domain, is required to be disclosed by law or is disclosed with the consent of the Mentee.

5. Mentors are not business advisers – mentoring advice is given only on a personal basis to support the development of the business. Mentors will support Mentees through discussions etc. They will not take an active role in the Mentee's business and may not be able to answer all questions, but will refer Mentees to other organisations / sources of support as appropriate.
6. Neither the Mentor nor *[insert name of administering organisation]*, will be liable for any advice given by the Mentor to Mentee.
7. The Mentor and Mentee will not become involved in any business relationships or business transactions with each other during the Mentoring period.
8. Mentors will give *[insert name of administering organisation]* a brief report on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the mentoring project but not on individual progress; although Mentors must report any serious concerns about the Mentees business e.g. infringement of Intellectual Property, fraud etc to *[insert name of administering organisation]*.
9. Both the Mentor and Mentee will be required to provide their views on the Peer Mentoring Programme's effectiveness to *[insert name consultant / consultancy]* who will independently evaluate the project. This will gauge the effectiveness of the Peer Mentoring Programme, the impact made through the project, and identify areas for improvement.

.....
.....

SIGNED for and on behalf of <i>[insert name of administering organisation]</i>	Date
Mentor – I agree to the terms of this Agreement	Mentee – I agree to the terms of this Agreement
..... (Signature) (Signature)
..... (Name) (Name)
..... (Date) (Date)

Appendix 2:

Examples of specific support issues covered during the mentoring relationship and the impacts

Area of weakness	Support provided by mentor	Impact
<p>Time management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – procrastination over particular tasks – taking on too much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – encouraged mentees to identify priorities and focus on these – helped mentees to break down the activities, step-by-step, so that they seemed less daunting – assisted with developing a timeline of contacts to speak to and what advice they would need at different points in their business development – motivated mentees to move their business idea forward – set deadlines to provide clear aims and allow mentees to focus on achieving set tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mentees learnt to manage their time more effectively – having an external person point out their weaknesses encouraged mentees to address the issues faster
<p>Lack of confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mentees required reassurance that they were on the right path – mentees lacked confidence with their business ideas and own skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provided an important emotional role, particularly for sole traders who often felt isolated with no-one to bounce ideas off – allowed mentees to share their concerns and problems with somebody they could trust and who was outside of their business – openly shared their experience about difficulties they had had and how they had overcome these – provided a benchmark for mentees to measure their own business progress against 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mentees felt more confident about their business idea and their ability to take the business forward “He has encouraged me to ‘get out there’ and build the client base.” – mentees felt reassured about concerns they had
<p>Lack of awareness about the practicalities of setting up and running a business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – naivety about the operational aspects of running a business and not having basic elements in place (such as checking the availability of the company name and website) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – identified gaps and offered suggestions for action – offered practical support with everyday issues drawing on their personal experience of issues and obstacles they encountered in setting up and running their own business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – helped mentees to ‘fire-proof’ their businesses, ie to protect their business from future risk by having a greater awareness of operational processes

Appendix 2:

Examples of specific support issues covered during the mentoring relationship and the impacts

Area of weakness	Support provided by mentor	Impact
Lack of business planning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – challenged mentees on various points and asked if alternatives had been considered – helped mentees identify the weaker areas of their business or areas where they needed to gather more evidence (e.g. showing there is a market for the product) – encouraged mentees to look at alternative options in order to find the most appropriate solution for their business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – issues identified can be addressed early on, thereby strengthening the business, improving the offer to investors and increasing the business's chances of survival – greatly improved and more focused business plans
Lack of pitching / sales skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mentees needed support in relation to pitching to funders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – offered the opportunity for a 'test-run' and then provided feedback about the mentee's pitch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mentees have a better understanding about what to include in a pitch to funders – “When applying for funding, the feedback from unsuccessful bids is really useful for understanding what needs to be improved with your business. A mentor can effectively give you this feedback in advance.”
Lack of market awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – encouraged mentees to further research the market(s) in which they are operating and to seek feedback from (potential) users – discussed the start-up process and bringing new products to market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improved market awareness
Lack of marketing knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – encouraged mentees to try new marketing routes, for example, through shows and exhibition space – provided advice about trade shows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improved understanding of marketing – increased the number of marketing routes – improved quality of marketing tools
Problems with the technical / creative aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – offered practical assistance with the technical / creative aspects of the business where operating in a similar field to the mentee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increased understanding of technical / creative aspects

Appendix 2:

Examples of specific support issues covered during the mentoring relationship and the impacts

Area of weakness	Support provided by mentor	Impact
Lack of awareness of Intellectual Property issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – highlighted the importance of IP, encouraging mentees to fill in IP applications – put mentees in touch with specialist organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improved awareness and understanding of IP issues – protected the company's IP
Lack of financial planning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – suggested alternative options for raising finance – recommended approaches to take with funders – discussed costing options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increased awareness of funding requirements – increased awareness of funding options – reduced costs. (For example, one mentee initially reported costs of £250K in their business plan, which, after discussions with their mentor, and additional research, were reduced to £20K)
Lack of networks/contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – introduced mentees to contacts within their own field to explore supply and retail opportunities – signposted mentees to specific support services, for example organisations who offered technical expertise, grants, patent lawyers and accountants – discussed strategies for dealing with new clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increased access to relevant networks and contacts
Lack of team management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – discussed team and management issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reassured and supported mentees to change their approach to team and management issues
Lack of decision making skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – helped with the decision making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improved decision making skills

Source: consultations with mentors and mentees

List of Contributors

Nesta would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their contribution in supporting and developing the content within this handbook.

Coach in a Box
www.coachinabox.co.uk

Cultural Enterprise Office
www.culturalenterpriseoffice.co.uk

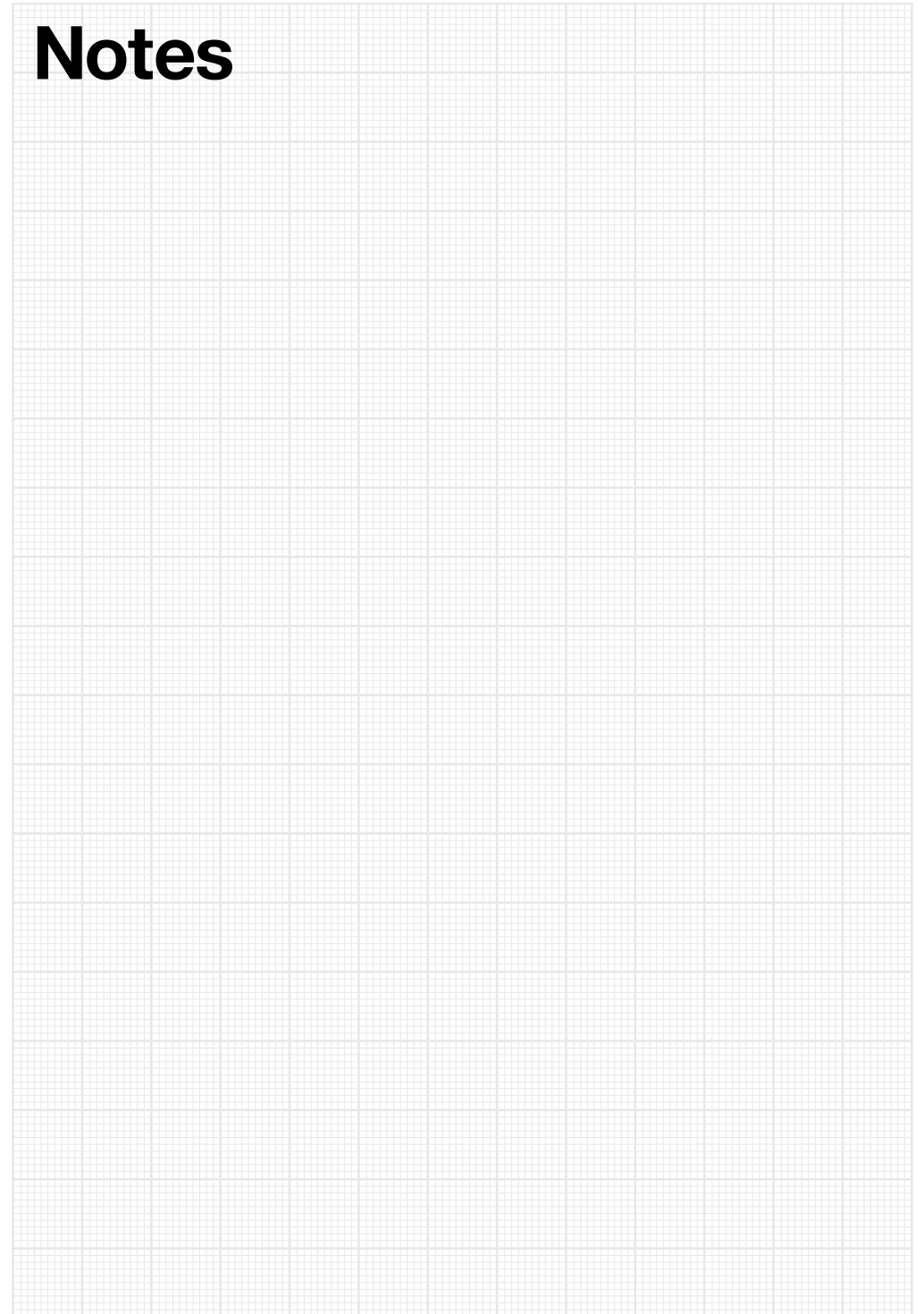
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Notes





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