

The difference between Coaching and Mentoring

While the skills required are similar, and both are used as professional development tools, the structure and the outcome are quite different.

Definition:

Coaching:

- Coaching is raising awareness and responsibility to unlock potential and maximize performance of another person. It is a process that aims to improve the performance, focus, and capacities this individual - “Coachee”.

Mentoring:

- Mentoring is when an experienced and trusted person shares their knowledge, skills, and expertise to help another person – “Mentee” to progress in their professional or personal development.

Similarities:

Both coaching and mentoring:

- Support a person’s development, including sharing knowledge, increasing self-awareness, developing skills, and being exposed to new perspectives. This may lead to career progression and real, lasting change.
- Are generally based on one-to-one relationships which are supportive and non-judgemental.
- Generally, it involves a series of meetings over several months.
- Tend to require a personal agreement (sometimes a ‘contract’) between those involved, which might cover the goals of the sessions and how progress towards these goals will be assessed.
- Involve observing, listening, and asking questions to understand the individual’s situation.
- Use questioning techniques to facilitate the individual’s thought processes.

Differences:

Topics	Coaching	Mentoring
Timeframe	Relationship is more likely to be short-term (up to 6 months or 1 year) with a specific outcome in mind. However, some coaching relationships can last longer, depending on goals to be achieved.	Relationship tends to be more long-term, lasting a year, two or even longer.
Focus	Coaching is more performance driven, designed to improve the coachee's performance.	Mentoring is more development driven, looking not just at the "Mentee's" current job function but beyond, taking a more holistic approach to their career development.
Structure	Coaching is traditionally more structured, with regularly scheduled meetings, like weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly.	Generally, meetings tend to be more informal, on an as need basis required by the mentee.
Expertise	Coaches are hired for their expertise in a specific area, one in which the coachee desires improvement. e.g.: Presentation skills, leadership, interpersonal communication, sales...	Within an organisation mentoring programs, mentors have more seniority and expertise in a specific area than mentees. The mentee learns from and is inspired by the mentor's experience.
Agenda	The coaching agenda is co-created by the coach and the coachee in order to meet the specific needs of the coachee.	The mentoring agenda is set by the mentee. The mentor supports that agenda.
Questioning	Asking thought-provoking questions is a top tool of the coach, which helps the coachee make important decisions, recognise behavioural changes, and take action.	In the mentoring relationship, the mentee is more likely to ask more questions, tapping into the mentor's expertise.
Outcome	Outcome from a coaching agreement is specific and measurable, showing signs of improvement or positive change in the desired performance area.	Outcome from a mentoring relationship can shift and change over time. There is less interest in specific, measurable results or changed behaviour and more interest in the overall development of the mentee.

The principles of Coaching and Mentoring are:

- Ensure that there is trust, confidentiality, mutual respect, and sensitivity throughout the process.
- Agree boundaries and ground rules, such as how often you will meet, how long the relationship will last, the different roles in the process, preferred methods of communication and feedback, and the desired outcome. This may be set out in a coaching or mentoring contract.
- Allow the individuals to drive the relationship, identifying goals and challenges and taking responsibility for their own self-reflection and development, without coercion.

The coach and the mentor will help coachee/mentee in different ways to accomplish their goals. In fact, some professionals use multiple coaches or multiple mentors throughout their careers, depending on their desired goals. In both coaching and mentoring, trust, respect, and confidentiality are at the forefront of the relationship.