



**Supporting entrepreneurs
in the cultural and creative
industry sector**

O3 – Induction to Pedagogy for Micro- Enterprise Owners Mentoring Handbook

Prepared by CEX and Meath Partnership

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Welcome Note for Micro Businesses

Thank you for agreeing to work with us on the Business Immersion Programme. The entrepreneur working with you will have a real opportunity to see how a business works first hand. We hope they in turn will be able to contribute to whatever activities you are engaged in during this time

Following on from this business mentoring and immersion programme, we are inviting you and the nascent entrepreneur whom you are supporting, to write a short profile of your business and their business idea, and to publish these profiles on an Online Observatory that will be presented through the project website by the end of the project in September 2018. This will help to promote your business and connect you with the 8 EU partners.

Introduction to the SHADOWS Project and Curriculum

Investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments Europe can make as entrepreneurship and self-employment are keys for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The critical role played by start-ups in driving economic development and job creation is increasingly understood.

The SHADOWS project has a number of key objectives but primarily the project is focused on improving the quality of available entrepreneurship programmes and learning materials to support potential entrepreneurs in the CCI to establish and run successful enterprises. Developing learning materials that specifically address potential for graduate entrepreneurs in this important sector and supporting new entrepreneurs in a robust mentoring framework represents a significant innovation of the SHADOWS project. As such, part of this project is to look at how nascent entrepreneurs in the Creative and Cultural Industries can best be trained and mentored to support them to run successful businesses in this sector, and to use the findings from our experience of delivering the project to influence education and training policy for this sector in Europe. To support potential entrepreneurs in the CCI sector, the SHADOWS project team have developed 10 modules specifically to address the needs of creative and cultural entrepreneurs. The nascent entrepreneurs will have an opportunity to trial this material before, or while, engaging with your company as part of the Business Immersion Module.

Mentoring the CCI Sector

Working with entrepreneurs in CCI is notably different from many other sectors. The motivation is

rarely to just make money, but more likely to find a way of making a living while fulfilling creative potential. Many CCI graduates are also concerned with 'making the world a better place' and so are drawn to projects which fulfil this aim. Because of this, the creative entrepreneur is unlikely to have been developing some of the pragmatic business skills that they will need, but rather 'hope for the best' that somehow they will get by without. Many creative graduates will however have different skills that the more conventional business person will not possess, such as seeing opportunities, making unusual links and being comfortable to take risks. It is useful to recognise this and acknowledge these qualities as a significant contribution to any business and part of a creative process.

Working with a more established creative micro-enterprise owner will be an invaluable experience. The nascent entrepreneur will be able to understand how someone who has come from the same creative route as them, has managed to establish a business, and without losing their ideals, has also managed to 'keep the lights on and food on the table'.

Role of the Business Mentor

Taking up the role of mentor should be considered as making a valuable contribution to the creative world. By supporting a nascent entrepreneur or creative graduate in the early stages of their business, you will be providing them with an experience that will stay with them on their business journey. It is important to have an open mind and to be aware that this is also a two-way process. As such, it is important to remember that by becoming a mentor, you must open yourself to your own personal learning experiences and opportunities.

The skills you need to be a good Business Mentor

As a micro-enterprise owner, you have developed essential skills along the way. In addition, you are coming into this mentoring partnership with your nascent entrepreneur with your own thoughts, your own value system and your own prejudices. It is important to be aware that this new way of thinking is not always easy and can throw up some challenges. We are not professional mentors so it is good to be reminded of some of the more typical skills that a business mentor has:

❖ Active listening:

There are two types of listening, active and passive; with active listening you are focused on what he or she is saying, and you reinforce what the person is saying by offering verbal and non-verbal cues. Active listeners are alert and show a sincere interest in what is being. If your listening is

passive this can be confused with hearing, but not understanding and it is important that you are aware of what is happening and you check this behaviour in yourself and your mentee,

❖ **In-depth questioning:**

Sometimes the most important questions are those that are hardest to ask; but as a mentor, it is important that you ask them anyway. When asking these questions, do so with diplomacy and tact, of course; but make sure that you don't shy away from asking the difficult, direct questions. For example, often those in the CCI sector will not be precise enough about financial issues and find it hard to be pressed on precise information, so this is one area where you should ensure that you practice your in-depth questioning skills.

❖ **Total honesty:**

This goes hand-in-hand with the previous skill. If you ask a tough question - or if you are asked a tough question -- be prepared to give or receive honest answers. As a mentor you may find your mentee asks you uncomfortable questions, so it is good to think about these boundaries and put some structures in place before the mentoring process starts.

❖ **Reflection and self-awareness:**

It's easy to want to move away from the challenging conversations and onto easier subjects. But the most successful mentoring relationship won't allow for this. Instead, mentors and mentees will take time to reflect on what's been discussed. This is important because when discussing difficult issues, it is possible to slip into defence mode in the heat of the moment. Taking time to reflect, however, can help us avoid knee-jerk reactions and making off-the-cuff remarks and statements.

Stages involved in a Mentoring Relationship

An effective mentoring relationship has been shown to move through three distinct stages. Each stage builds on the learning from the previous stage, and within each stage there are responsibilities for both the mentor and mentee.

- ❖ **Stage 1 – Exploration:** During the first stage of the process your role as a mentor is to provide information, when requested by the mentee, and to ask probing questions to help the mentee make judgements. It is during this stage that you need to use your 'active listening' skills. Here you should use your good questioning techniques and then practice recapping, paraphrasing and summarising to try and get to the centre of the issue being raised. Remember you are there to guide the mentee, not to provide a solution or impose

your point of view.

- ❖ **Stage 2 – New Understanding:** Having worked through the first stage, the likelihood is that some ‘new understanding’ will be reached about the issue being discussed. This may be a minor change in viewpoint or a major breakthrough in a person’s thinking processes. Regardless of the size or significance of the breakthrough, your role as the mentor is to reflect back to the mentee what they have learned. You should then guide the mentee through thinking about the implications of potential conclusions.

- ❖ **Stage 3 – Action:** If you have successfully reached a new understanding the next stage is to agree what actions should be taken. Again this is not about you as the mentor telling the mentee what to do. You need to guide the mentee towards identifying actions they can implement. If actions are agreed you must ensure these are recorded and then monitored through regular review and feedback.

Qualities for Effective Mentoring

To support you through each of these stages, the following qualities have been identified as necessary for becoming an effective mentor.

1. Ability and willingness to communicate what you know

It goes without saying that as a mentor, you're regarded as an expert in your field or area of responsibility. But it's one thing to know what you're doing; it's entirely another to be able to clearly explain what you know; and to be willing to take the time to do it. Be careful not to use jargon and acronyms which may not be known to entrepreneurs that are new to business in the creative sector. Being clear when you communicate the lessons you've learned, or the strategies or guidance you're offering, is essential, as is your level of desire to communicate the intricate details in a way that makes sense and that your mentee can understand and learn from.

2. Preparedness

Being a mentor means making an important, serious commitment to someone, so give your mentee the respect he or she deserves. Show your faith in your mentee's abilities and in the process by preparing for each mentoring session. It's important for your mentee to actively participate and even take the lead in these sessions; but first you should ask your mentee what topics or subjects he or she wants to talk about beforehand, and once you know, you should

outline the key points you want to focus on ahead of time, and have a plan ready for imparting your knowledge and advice in an effective and expedient way.

3. Approachability, availability, and the ability to listen

Your mentee must feel comfortable approaching you for advice or consultation; however, he or she must keep your other commitments and your schedule in mind. So, it's good policy to establish a set day and time for regular sessions, phone calls or meetings. In this 'hurry-up-and-make-it-happen world', it's important to be prepared and make the most of the time you've got with your mentee. You owe that to him or her, to the process, and to yourself. And once these time parameters are established, you must keep your commitments wholeheartedly and be ready to listen well and with an open mind; along with providing counsel and advice.

4. Honesty with diplomacy

Any questions that aren't addressed can lead to concerns and problems, so you owe it to your mentee to be candid and straightforward with him or her. Dispense with formalities and really help facilitate an open dialogue and don't beat around the bush in offering your constructive feedback, good and bad. Say what you think your mentee needs to hear from you, not what you think he or she might want to hear. Be willing to debate and discuss in a tactful way. Provide useful and honest guidance while ensuring that your mentee takes the reins and makes his or her decisions as to next steps or the best course of action in developing their business.

5. Inquisitiveness

Being a mentor also means you should continue learning about what's going on in your industry or business, your community, or the world at large. Remember; what worked a decade ago may not be optimal today, and what works today may not work as well one, two, five, or more years' time. So, continual learning is essential if you plan to continue to be an effective business-owner and mentor. Always keep an alert eye on trends, topics, and developments that may impact you, your business or your role, both now and in the future. And if your mentee asks you something you don't know the answer to, do yourself and your mentee a favour and follow up to find the answer.

6. Objectivity and fairness

Remember that a mentoring relationship differs from a friendship. Yes, you like your mentee and care about seeing him or her succeed, but that doesn't mean you have to socialize with your mentee or follow them on social websites like Twitter and Facebook. LinkedIn, specifically designed for business networking, may be a more appropriate connection to establish with your mentee. Also, ensure that there's no hidden agenda or ulterior motives involved in this relationship. Outside of the mentor-mentee relationship, you don't owe your mentee any favours, and he or she doesn't owe you anything except his or her thanks. Equally, others who know you and your mentee don't owe either of you anything. You can be an advocate for your mentee while still retaining your objectivity and fairness and not unfairly influencing any process either of you may be involved in.

7. Compassion and genuineness

Just because you must maintain your objectivity and fairness doesn't mean you can't show your compassion. In fact, your mentoring relationship probably won't work if you don't show your interest and desire to provide one-to-one help and guidance. You must also be selfless about sharing what you know. Remember that your goal throughout this process is to remain worthy of someone's trust, model positive behaviour and successful performance, and offer guidance and advice toward reaching a specific goal. Keeping this goal in mind should be the compass that guides all your actions as a mentor.

Checklist

It is useful to make your own checklist before begin the mentoring process. Boundaries regarding time and availability and methods of communication should be established at the start, and by following the points outlined in this checklist, it will help you to establish structures and boundaries to be maintained throughout your mentoring relationship.

Here are some suggestions for questions to ask yourself before the mentoring commences:

- ❖ How and when and where shall we meet?
- ❖ How and when will we communicate?
- ❖ What do we expect to learn from each other?
- ❖ How do we ensure we respect each other's confidentiality?
- ❖ How will we know if this is working for us?
- ❖ What are our goals and what is the order of priority?
- ❖ What are our expectations after the mentoring process has finished?
- ❖ How will we record our progress?
- ❖ What is the agenda for our next meeting?

As well as addressing these questions before the mentoring commences, you can also address these questions throughout the meetings with you mentee. It is good practice to always check back at the end of a session with your mentee and ask them what they get from the session, or if there was anything they hoped to get to which was not covered. Another good practice is to ask your mentee if they have any questions and if everything is clear to them, at the end of each meeting or phone call.