

What is Mentoring and what to look for in the right Mentor  
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### **What is mentoring?**

There are several definitions of mentoring. In all the definitions, mentoring is described as a process that always involves communication and is relationship based. A common definition used is that mentoring is a professional relationship in which an experienced person, known as the mentor, assists and guides another person, the mentoree or mentee, in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth.

True mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing occasional help by a more experienced and knowledgeable person. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialogue and challenges relevant to a person's professional and personal development.

### **What does a mentor do?**

Being a farrier mentor comes with a lot of responsibility. Some of the functions of a mentor are to teach the mentee specific knowledge and skills. The mentor can also facilitate the mentee's growth by sharing resources and networks. The mentor challenges the mentee to move beyond their comfort zone but does so in a safe learning environment void of ridicule, sarcasm, demeaning comments and unprofessionalism. The mentor's focus is on the mentee's total development, professionally and personally.

Mentoring is not job coaching. Though related, a mentor may coach but a coach is not a mentor. Coaching is functional and takes place within the confines of a formal supervisor-employee relationship.

### **Formal and Informal Mentoring**

Informal and formal mentoring are often confused, but they are very different in their approaches and outcomes. Informal mentoring occurs all the time and is a powerful experience. The problem is that informal mentoring is often accessible only to a few people and its benefits are limited only to those few who participate. Formal or structured mentoring takes mentoring to the next level and expands its usefulness and to corporate value beyond that of a single mentor-mentee pairing.

With informal mentoring, the goals of the relationship are not specified, outcomes are not measured, access is limited or may be exclusive, and the mentors/mentees select each other on the basis of personal chemistry.

With formal mentoring, the goals are established from the beginning, outcomes are measured, access is open to all who meet some criteria, and the mentors/mentees are paired based on compatibility (the ability to work together in harmony and without conflict).

### **What are the benefits of being a mentor and mentee?**

Mentoring gives a person the opportunity to facilitate a fellow farrier's personal and professional growth by sharing knowledge that you have learned through your years in the farrier industry. While the primary goal of mentoring is to challenge the mentee to think in new and different ways, the mentee is not the only one who gains from this relationship.

Some farrier mentor benefits include:

- Gaining insight from the mentee's background and history that can be used in your own professional and personal development as well.
- Gaining satisfaction in sharing expertise with other farriers.
- Re-energizing and re-directing your own farrier career.
- Gaining an ally in the farrier profession.

There are a number of benefits in being mentored. Being mentored should be about forging unique relationships to help you gain new perspective and direction in your personal and professional life.

Some mentee benefits include:

- Learning from the farrier mentor's expertise.
- Receiving critical feedback in key areas, such as communications, interpersonal relationships, farrier knowledge, technical skills and other areas of professional development.
- Developing a sharper focus on what is needed to grow professionally within the farrier field.
- Learning specific skills and knowledge that are relevant to your personal goals.
- Networking with more influential farriers.
- Having a friendly ear which to share frustrations as well as successes.

## **How do you select the right Farrier Mentor?**

Selecting the right farrier mentor is a very individual decision. As a mentee, you first need to determine what you may need or desire from your mentor. Take the time to define why you need a mentor and then make a list of those who can potentially fill your needs. Think of prospective farrier mentors such as leaders and influencers in the farrier industry. Learn as much as you can about the people on your list of potential mentors. Get to know them by developing an online or personal relationship with them. Organizations like the American Association of Professional Farriers (AAPF) provide opportunities for farriers of varying skills and knowledge to form alliances by a formal Mentor and Mentee process.

Possibly find a farrier mentor who is well connected with formal and informal networks in order for you to benefit from these as well. It is also highly recommended you select a mentor who shares similar values with in order to avoid personal and moral indifferences that may hinder the learning process. Choose a farrier mentor who you can trust explicitly and who you can communicate well with. Having a farrier mentor who has mentored others and allows you to contact past mentee's can be enlightening and helpful in making your decision on the right mentor for yourself. Make sure the prospective farrier mentor has the time and energy to devote to you in order to help you become successful in your farrier career.

After you have gotten to know the prospective farrier mentor, ask them if they will be your mentor. Explain to them. Make sure that the farrier mentor understands that you are committed to the time needed to advance your personal and professional farrier career. If for some reason the person does not want to mentor you, do not be discouraged, simply move on to the person on your list of choices.

Mentors are everywhere, but you have to be strategic to find and choose a mentor that is just perfect for you. Remember, the goal of being mentored is to find and develop a long term personal and professional relationship in order to enhance your personal and farrier skills and knowledge.

## **Resources:**

American Association of Professional Farriers – “Mentoring” – [www.professionalfarriers.com](http://www.professionalfarriers.com)

Forbes – “Choose the Right Mentor to Advance Your Career” - [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

Management Mentors - [www.management-mentors.com](http://www.management-mentors.com)

Wikipedia – “Mentorship” - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentorship>