

MENTORING SESSIONS - CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

CASE

The mentee applied to join the EU Tourism Mentoring project in order to seek guidance from an HLTT person on implementing her business idea. As she did not previously operate in the sector, the mentee considered the mentoring programme as a great opportunity to get new information and consult her ideas and business plans with someone more experienced in her field.

Having acquired some knowledge on how to do business, the mentee was well aware of many different challenges, which might prevent the small business from achieving success and long-term growth. Thus, the mentee was seeking for guidance on how to run a business in the HLTT sector. She was asking for assistance to develop a proper business plan so that she could apply for a bank loan. As the business idea was based on an innovative product, she also needed help with formulating the marketing and communication strategy.

BACKGROUND

PROFILE OF THE MENTOR:

The mentor has 20 years work experience in the HLTT sector. She started working in the sector as a tour guide and over the years decided to set up her own business focusing on organising guided trips in Bratislava (Slovakia) and the surroundings.

The mentor also started an initiative aimed at promotion bike-tourism.

PROFILE OF THE MENTEE:

The mentee was a young female determined to start her own business in the HLTT sector. She has had some experience as an entrepreneur, but not in the sector. Thus, she was seeking for more information on the sector itself, setting up and running a start-up as well as developing her own network.

Although the mentee had a plan to develop the business in a certain field, she needed assistance to come with sound business plan so that she could apply for a bank loan to get funds related to setting up and running a start-up. The mentee also needed help to set a communication strategy and identify potential business partners.

THE MENTORING SESSIONS

Overall, there were 4 mentoring meetings. The mentor arranged the first session in a form of a group meeting with all the mentees assigned to her so that they could get to know each other, find out whether the matching would work and to inform the mentees on the roles of a mentor and a mentee, potential benefits of mentoring, as well as tasks and responsibilities. The mentor also got her first ideas on how to proceed in the other mentoring sessions with the mentee.

The mentee's expectations included:

- finding out the specifics of running a start-up in the HLTT sector;
- receiving assistance in formulating a tailored marketing and communication strategy;
- Building up a network of potential business partners.

During the mentoring session the mentoring couple first paid attention to the issues identified at the first meeting and then selected issues to be discussed at the next meeting. Over the course of the mentoring sessions the couple found out that apart from the personal meetings, they could also use email and telephone communication to support the mentoring process.

OBJECTIVES

The mentoring couple discussed the mentee's ideas, skills, knowledge and experience in order to identify her needs. Subsequently, the couple agreed on the following objectives of the mentoring relationship:

- Write a proper business plan
Period: 4 weeks
- Set a marketing and communication strategy and a marketing plan
Period: 6 weeks
- Organise a promotion and networking event
Period: 8 weeks
- Improve the existing web-site
Period 8 weeks
- Identify potential business partners and to establish cooperation
Period 10 weeks
- Re-defining the target consumer and adapting the communication strategy
Period: 12 weeks

DETAILED PLAN (HOW DID THE MENTOR HELP THE MENTEE):

The mentor's impression from the first meeting taking place in August 2014 was that

the mentee did not really want a mentor, but specific contacts and advice. The mentor got acquainted with the mentee's business plan based on her website and offer as well as the mentee's expectations from the mentoring relationship. Based on the information the mentor realised that, more than a mentor, the mentee expected advice on an area of her planned business that the mentor was not familiar with, and contacts.

The first individual personal meeting took place in September 2014. The mentor and the mentee signed the mentoring agreement and discussed the mentee's new product. They also agreed on a set of objectives and set two actions for the next meeting in November 2014, which included developing a business plan, setting up a marketing and communication strategy that should help the mentee establish cooperation with business partners as well as promote her services.

After this meeting, email and phone communication took place between the mentor and the mentee. The mentor provided the mentee with assistance in developing a business plan and formulating an effective communication strategy. She also helped the mentee organising an event aimed at promoting her business as well as networking. She also contacted her partners to help the mentee present her product.

As the mentor had doubts about how serious the mentee is about starting the business, the mentor assessed the mentoring outcomes and found that she should be stricter as a mentor and that the mentee shouldn't take her just as a source of contacts and solutions. At the next meeting, after checking the agreed actions, the mentor also decided to evaluate how determined the mentee was in setting her new business.

At the third meeting the mentee proved that she was very determined to make her plan successful and develop a career in the HLTT sector. With regards to some difficulties to implement the agreed actions successfully, she proposed the issues to be discussed at the meeting and had a proactive attitude in proposing ways to tackle this issue.

Considering the results of the actions taken previously, the mentoring couple realised that the domestic market is not ready for her innovative product and the possible partners may not be willing to cooperate. Together, they found a new market segment for her product.

At the last meeting, the mentoring couple evaluated the product development and its future perspective. Finally, this mentoring couple ended the mentoring relationship, but started a new business partnership.

RESULTS

OUTCOMES MENTOR:

The mentoring programme allowed the mentor to practise and deepen her mentoring skills. As the mentee was planning to set up a business based on an innovative product that the mentor was not familiar with, the mentor acquired information on new trends in the HLTT sector. The mentee was a very dynamic, enthusiastic individual

providing the mentor with new perspectives on running a business in the sector and this led to joining their ideas in a new business partnership.

OUTCOMES MENTEE

The mentee's objectives of the mentoring relationship were met. The mentor supplied the mentee with information on the sector and helped her understand the context in which she would like to operate. Based on this, the mentee was able to prepare a comprehensive business plan, identifying in detail the vision, strategy, target group as well as potential business partners. The mentor also helped the mentee set a communication strategy as a part of her marketing strategy.

Furthermore, the mentee was provided with guidance on setting up and running a start-up. Eventually, the couple agreed on future cooperation.

CASE STUDY 2

CASE

A newly opened 4-star hotel hired a general manager, who had previously worked as a director of a bank. The manager had acquired strong skills in managing a business, but had no background, nor experience in the tourism sector. Due to limited human and financial resources of the hotel (a small enterprise), the manager was seeking for support outside the company.

The manager was offered the opportunity to be mentored by a mentor operating in the HLTT sector, trained within the EU Tourism Mentoring project. Recognising that mentoring could be a very effective way to become familiar with different issues related to hotel management and develop specific skills required by the sector, the manager decided to apply to become a mentee and participate in the EU Tourism Mentoring project.

BACKGROUND

PROFILE OF THE MENTOR:

The mentor had nine years experience in the HLTT sector. She had completed her post graduate studies at the department of tourism and hospitality at a university in Slovakia. Her research activities were focused on the economic efficiency of investment projects in accommodation facilities that resulted in designing a software tool measuring the economic efficiency of investments.

After graduation, the mentor operated as a product manager of an incoming operator. Later, she ran a guesthouse in the High Tatras (Slovakia).

As an academic, the mentor was lecturing for the Research Institute of Economics and Management.

Since 2012 she operates as a hotel manager in a 4-star hotel.

PROFILE OF THE MENTEE:

The mentee operated in the bank sector for 14 years as a director of a bank. She also runs an agency providing education services focusing on company training and personal development.

The mentee got an opportunity to start a new career as a general manager in a 4-star hotel, where she works as a Sales manager and Coordinator, being also responsible for management of the hotel restaurant and wellness centre.

THE MENTORING SESSIONS

According to the terms of the EU Tourism mentoring project, there were originally 3 mentoring meeting sessions.

Before the sessions started, the mentee was acquainted with the objective and process of the mentoring meetings. The concept of a mentoring programme, its objectives, procedures and form was introduced to her.

The mentoring process was mostly based on personal meetings.

The mentee stated the following expectations from the mentoring sessions:

- finding out the specifics of hotel management - planning, leading, organising, control, managing human resources;
- receiving advice on calculations of all services provided in a hotel – calculations of dishes, accommodation;
- becoming familiar with the specifics of hotel marketing – how to be different from others;
- finding out how to become a good food & beverage manager.

The mentor helped the mentee set the objectives to be achieved throughout the mentoring sessions, the roles of a mentor and a mentee and the form of sessions.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives defined by the mentee and mentor included:

- The mentee was assigned a task of deciding whether to maintain the hotel restaurant and wellness centre or to rent the facilities;

Period: 4 weeks

- How to make the hotel restaurant and café attractive for business and high-end clients
Period: 2 weeks
- Preparation of a marketing strategy and marketing plan of the newly-opened 4-star hotel where the mentee was working;
Period: 1 month

DETAILED PLAN (HOW DID THE MENTOR HELP THE MENTEE):

The first issue that the mentee needed to consult with the mentor about, was in regards to running the hotel wellness center and restaurant. As the mentee was assigned a task of deciding on maintaining the hotel restaurant and wellness centre or renting the facilities, the mentee needed to become familiar with all the relevant aspects in order to make a sensible decision.

The mentor helped the mentee understand the most important issues related to running such facilities, the opportunities and threats that the management of the hotel might face. The couple also discussed particular costs of the restaurant and wellness centre and marketing strategies in order to enable the mentee to obtain all information necessary to consider the risks and opportunities and decide whether to maintain the facilities or let them for rent.

Another discussed issue was a marketing strategy and a marketing plan of the 4-star hotel that the mentee needed to prepare for the hotel owner. As the mentee had no previous experience of hotel management, she was not aware of the specific features of marketing in the HLTT sector and hotel marketing. The owner of the hotel expected the mentee to prepare a marketing plan in a 2 weeks period.

The mentoring couple discussed the particular parts of the marketing plan for the hotel. As the mentor had completed her post gradual studies and also worked at a department of tourism and hospitality of the university, she was able to provide the mentee with theoretical knowledge and practical advice on how to prepare a marketing plan of a hotel. The mentor also provided the mentee with a marketing plan of a 4-star hotel (where the mentor is working) written by her university students.

The last session treated the issue of how to catch the attention and how to attract businessmen and high-end clients to visit the hotel restaurant and café. One of the solutions proposed, was setting up a private club for them.

RESULTS

OUTCOMES MENTOR:

As an experienced HLTT professional, the mentor considered participating in the EU TM project as a great opportunity for networking as well as a possibility to gain new perspectives related to her research activities. Furthermore, the mentor was seeking

to practice and improve the acquired mentoring skills, which might help her pursue her own career.

The mentor found the matchmaking of the mentee very effective, because her professional interests as a mentor have met the requirements and needs of the mentee.

OUTCOMES MENTEE

The mentee was able to become acquainted with specific features of managing a hotel in a very effective way. Now she can use all the information and knowledge for sound decision-making in everyday situations during the management of the hotel in which she operates. The mentee's managerial skills were adapted and developed according to the requirements of the sector.

The mentoring relationship lasted beyond the formal programme proposed by the EU Tourism Mentoring project.

CASE STUDY 3

CASE:

The mentee at the time was an old hotel manager, earned a good salary, he was well-regarded by his employer and had good prospects for a future career in the hotel industry. However, he wished to start his own business offering professional guide services to tourists.

The manager was approached and offered the opportunity to join the EU Tourism Mentoring project and receive help from a mentor who has operated in the HLTT sector and could provide valuable insights into starting a business. After considering the benefits that professional mentoring could offer, the manager agreed to apply to the EU Tourism Mentoring project.

BACKGROUND

PROFILE OF THE MENTEE:

The mentee was a 27-year-old individual holding a bachelor degree in management and having a five years background working in the HLTT sector at the time employed as a hotel manager. However, while he saw his professional future in the HLTT sector, instead of climbing the career ladder in the hotel industry he wanted to start a guide agency in Lithuania. The mentee had quite a good understanding about the particularities of active tourism, providing guide services to tourists (foreign and local)

and understood the inside workings of guide agencies and how they operated in the HLTT sector.

SWOT analysis of the mentee:

Strengths:

- Has 5 years of experience working in the HLTT;
- Bachelor degree in management – theoretical basis for management positions;
- Speaks three foreign languages;
- Has demonstrated good capabilities of creative thinking;
- Is responsible and unremitting;

Weaknesses:

- Cannot work alone;
- Doesn't have enough courage to make a decision, especially quick one;
- Doesn't have a clear understanding of economics;
- Fear of failure impedes his willingness to take action;

Opportunities:

- Long term opportunity - one day to become financially independent;
- Can receive a lot of useful information from his current employer;
- Has friends who are running their own business. They can consult him for free;

Threats:

- To lose the current job without any possibilities to come back;
- Terminating a good relationship with the current employer;
- Inability to compete with rivals;
- Initial capital for starting a business is very low;

THE MENTORING SESSIONS

According to the EU Tourism mentoring project terms, at least 3 mentoring sessions between the mentor and the mentee were supposed to take place. The mentoring process was a mixture of face to face meetings and online communication. In total, the mentee and his mentor had two face to face meetings, three phone calls, one Skype call and exchanged five emails.

During the very first mentoring session it became apparent that the mentee had a clear vision for his business: the agency would provide tourists with attractive, interactive and interesting guide programmes. Guides working in the agency would not only be very well versed in history, but also be lively, charismatic and have a good sense of humour. However, despite knowing minute details of his dream agency, he stated that he had no idea on how to actually start a business.

The very first order of business was to establish precisely what the mentee was expecting from the mentoring relationship and the areas where the mentor could

facilitate personal growth.

In short, the mentee was looking for:

1. A person who could guide him in the areas where he doesn't feel confident;
2. A person who could listen to his reflections, brainstorming;
3. A different opinion and advice on how to proceed moving forward;
4. To become more motivated and self-confident, get the inspiration to start his business.
5. Personal development;
6. His long term goal was to have a successful business in the HLTT sector.

From here the mentor and the mentee established the objectives for their mentoring relationship, chiefly among them were:

1. The mentee had to conduct more research about how to start his own business and clearly define what are the true obstacles he sees;
Period: 2 weeks.
2. After defining the perceived obstacles the mentee should take time to find examples of how others have managed with similar problems;
Period: 2 weeks.
3. After gathering the information on the obstacles as well as examples of best practice in dealing with them, the mentee had to define how he will be tackling the issues and the resources available to him;
Period: 2 weeks.
4. A business plan for the guide agency must be completed, putting all the knowledge he attained to use;
Period: 2 weeks.

How did the mentor help the mentee:

At first the mentor took time to have a more open and in-depth discussion about the mentee's situation. The main question the mentor asked was why the mentee believed, in his own words, that he doesn't have any idea on how to start a business and what kind of support he would like to receive from the mentor or from others in general.

Towards the end of the first session the mentor asked the mentee to provide more examples and more details on his business plan and talk more about the research that he had done. It soon became apparent that he doesn't have enough examples of how others have established their agencies and how they have started business.

From here the mentor and the mentee wrote up a list of clear objectives to be achieved so that the mentee can succeed in starting his guide agency.

During the next few online communications the mentee proceeded to outline and continuously add further information on what were the necessary processes to start his business. The mentor constantly questioned about what the mentee believed to be the obstacles for each step to be taken towards establishing his guide agency, what others have done in similar situations, the similarities between all examples and also his case, and how the mentee should proceed moving forward.

After several online sessions encouraging the mentee to dig deeper about the particularities of starting a guide agency, the mentor facilitated the production of a comprehensive business plan which served as the starting point for the mentee's new

guide agency. The business plan contained information on successful marketing strategies, financial risk assessment, the market segments to be targeted by the agency, plans for achieving market penetration on a national scale.

RESULTS

Even though this was not a very long mentoring relationship, the mentor and mentee had a mutually beneficial relationship with friendly, confident communication and after only a few meetings (face to face and online) the mentee had its first achievements. Throughout the mentoring relationship the mentee displayed more and more signs of confidence as his knowledge grew and because he was the one responsible for the outcomes of his research. At the moment, the mentee has established his guide company, and he is working hard to develop his business. During the last session the mentee concluded that the most important thing, in his opinion, it's not to think one needs to know precisely how to start a business but simply start doing it.