

# Creative Mentorship

## Mentors Workshop

Workshop by Dragana Tomic-Pilipovic

Transcript:

Introduction: Dragana Jevtic, project manager, gives welcome speech. She announces the guests. She is happy to say that the initiator of the project, our KUMA (the godmother) Helene Larsson is here with us today.

Announcement of discussion and workshop. Dragana Jevtic explains passage of the activities on the seminar.

She emphasizes as one of the goal to find the way to accomplish a project and to find the way for implementation of your knowledge and experience in that what we are doing.

In order to secure the **sustainability of the project**, the Embassy has recognized that the **project should be transferred to the local organization**, so since while ago, Dragana has officially been appointed a project manager, and her colleague Visnja Kisic a project coordinator. Thanks to these good news, they plan to **communicate with mentors more often** now and hope that they will feel free to **share their suggestions and ideas**.

Next activities will be to **identify and contact existing mentoring programs in Serbia and share our experience and findings with them, and make a mentoring platform**. They also want to make a **platform for networking among project members**, both mentors and mentees, so they will organize more joint events...

Before handing over to Helene, Dragana says that she needs to share a feeling: “Ever since I’ve started being involved in this project – I felt really good – I felt that I am **doing something good and meaningful** – and not just for myself, but for many other people as well. One of my colleagues, Slavica, has given a name to this good feeling – this is a **society building project** – and it is! It has already had an impact on many people, and it will on many more. And for that I want to **thank to the Embassy, to Slavica and to Helene, for recognizing this need and finding the way to fulfill it**. Thank you!”

It is very important for participants to realize that one of the goals is exchange of experience. It is important for mentees to learn from mentor and for mentors to learn from mentee, to come to new conclusions, to find new solutions to a problem.

**Helen:** project advisor in the Swedish Embassy

Helen is talking about a mentorship project in general, how it began and for how long it has lasted, since 2011. On this project number of young, talented and creative people are gathered, and the main activities of the project are **coming into contact with people and sharing experience**.

Ideas about progress and how to make the progress.

They want to implement this project to some similar projects and to any other part of the world where it can be implemented.

She is talking about her professional and personal development which happened at the same time and influenced on each other more than she expected. For her, like as for all mentors, like as for all participants, one of the goals is not only a **social development** but also **personal human development**. This project is **long perspective**. It is not for one moment, it is not just one meeting.

There are potential problems, like disagreement of participant's opinions.

Connection between all participants is very important.

She thanked everyone for coming.

### **Dragana Tomic-Pilipović**

Dragana calls all participants to collaborate and to give a feedback. She underlined that goal.

One discussion group around each table

1. Every table has one host
2. Summary of discussions.

Every participant presents himself. They tell their main reason for coming to the workshop and for taking part in the project.

Questions for your feedback (every participant should tell his own opinion and then the whole group should make a group conclusion):

1. What is needed for a person to be a good mentor?
2. What do you see as challenges of mentorship based on the experience in this project?
3. What kind of support from us would you find useful as a mentor?
4. What are your suggestions or inputs for us? (project doers)

She explained that every group has 20 minutes to answer all the questions.

After the discussion:

Everyone is satisfied with workshop and they took benefits from it.

Dragana explains how „Dobra torba“ was made (by Smart Kolektiv, giving work to women from textile industry who lost their jobs; so now by using “Dobra torba” we are enabling these women to have work).

## **Answers after discussion**

### **Group 1**

#### 1. Good mentor:

Opened in communication, opened with his mentee; speaks sincere about his possibilities for collaboration and about that-how far he is ready to go for mentee; to be honest; good mentor is an experienced teacher and his experience is relevant for mentorship.

To be able to learn and to listen before to talk, because only if he wants to listen, he can be focused on mentees needs and that is the only way to really help mentee.

Good mentor is ready to learn as much as possible, to learn from mentee and to learn for himself and to develop his potentials because of better relation with mentee.

To be able to prevent generations gaps. This is very important, because qualitative relation is based on mentors' strong will as much as mentors' ability to get closer to mentee in as more points as it is possible; personal experience shows that communication on professional level is much better if mentor and mentee have the same interests on personal level, like music...

Mentor and mentee are not the same persons. This is especially important for mentor to know. It is not necessary for him to direct mentee, especially not in directions in which mentee does not want to go. He should give a chance to mentee to develop in his own direction and pace.

#### 2. Challenge:

Professional challenges like first mentor/mentee experience – for many mentors this is a first time that they are being mentors. They are posing questions: Can I do enough and can I find the way to realize what would be enough, what would be too much; do not exert pressure on mentee, or on mentor if there is some problem in mentor/mentee relation. How to feel if your mentee draws some borders? Then, mentor should give a direction for taking the goals within the limits; also, he should try to exceed those limits.

New people: mentor/ mentee should find the way to introduce people, to get to know new people.

How to find time for your mentee?

How to find a mutual point of interest? Serbia needs a promotion of the idea of mentorship, because that idea is not popular enough.

### 3. Support:

It would be important for meetings not to take a place in cafes etc., but in offices because that can be a positive influence for mentor/mentee communication.

It would be good to promote mentorship without personal interest, for example profits.

It would be good for mentees to write short comments, reports after every meeting, for example quarterly.

### 4. Inputs:

Several meetings should take a place in order to discuss and exchange experience.

We have to find the way how to connect mentees and mentors, like “match making” in order to make a decisions about matching. Mentees need a feedback, and they need permanent support from organization, permanent connection with organizers; mentors and mentees should ask mentors and organizers for advice, everything should stay clear. There should be the way for uniting ideas and sharing knowledge. There should be the way for connection between mentors and mentees on the national level.

Suggestion: speed dating.

Question: what if tree mentees have the same mentor?

Answer: that could be good too, because in that case we can compare and see differences between collaboration with different people.

## **Group 2**

### 1. Good mentor:

Knowledgeable, open minded, generous to share knowledge, good listener, honest in relationship and empathy, focused to mentees goals, able to recognize problems, ready to challenge, self-confident, but how much? Self- doubt - just enough. A certain self-criticism. Comfortable with silence-to allow things to be said. Willingness/eagerness to benefit/develop oneself.

### 2. Challenges:

Self-doubt (are my experiences relevant...?)

Openness that mentors do not have to have all the answers.

Mentee may not be clear.

Mentor should not impose.

Waiting for mentee (what/how to send signals).

Differences between old mentor/ young mentee.

### 3. Support:

Clear guidelines- can usefully be repeated.

Feedback - guidance.

Sense of progress.

Evaluation.

Articles/references.

Hotline/go to person if any issues/problems/challenges.

\*A notice about something like that, organization is preparing something like support team already. It would be available 24/7

### 4. Inputs:

Strong point of reference.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Plan ahead for monitoring/feedback and evaluation in the next phase.

Help us share a clear vision and experience towards building the future.

Clarification, let everybody see everything what is going on in other teams.

Suggestion: one workshop with all mentors and mentees where both sides can suggest something.

\*Answer: mentees should know everything about mentors' expectations and also mentors should know everything about mentees' expectations.

### **Group 3:**

#### 1. Good mentor:

Trust, honest, approach

Motivation and commitment

Focused on person

Patience, listener

Willingness to share

Discipline (systematic and organized), focus on priorities.

## 2. Challenges:

Difficult to find a good match (personally and professionally)

Unclear expectations from mentor

More initiative from mentees needed

Mentee should be ready to receive mentoring (sometimes they are not)

Time

Sometimes mentor just cannot help

## 3. Support:

Small reminders to both mentors and mentees (How are you? Have you met? ...)

More careful and transparent matching process. Flexibility with unsuccessful matches

More initial information exchanged between mentor and mentee before the first meeting

\*Dragana explains how they created list of competent people which they connected.

\*Slavica talks how they allowed future mentees to choose people with which they want to collaborate and how the matching was done.

\*suggestion: it would be helpful to know how they came to these connections between mentees and mentors. Mentor and mentee should be focused. Mentor and mentee should not be here to do only what they planned to do, but they also must be dedicated to development.

## 4. Inputs:

Whatever the outcome, you must keep going!

Align expectations between mentors and mentees early.

### **Mentees answers from previous meetings:**

#### **Mentees feedback:**

Problems with setting clear goals:

They should not be dedicated to only one goal. They should change it if it is necessary.

What to do and talk about next time we meet? Action steps: mentee must have action steps.

Role of the mentor: teacher or coach? There must not be bad feelings about directions, mentor should not be a director, commander, but a coach. There should exist collaboration.

Mentor's availability. When you find time for mentee, you should be focused on him 100%.

How to draw a line between mentorship and private life?

\* Reaction: use of project management in somebody's life is not OK for her. She feels uncomfortable about it. Sustainability as a word, it looks like mentors assignment is too difficult, she feels big pressure. Her mentee is smart, young woman and she is under pressure because she doesn't want to be a commander. It is difficult to her to stay relaxed when you know you have to teach and evaluate someone. Evaluation is a big problem, because it is difficult to be relaxed when you have a list of assignments that needs to be filed

\*Answer: mentor should follow collaboration progress and follow instinct about that progress. Although she doesn't know how to realize if their connection succeed. In Serbia, it is difficult to achieve it.

\*Dragana T-P: for collaboration mentor and mentee should know there is a possibility to success.

\*Dragana T-P explains that they expanded the project. They proceeded mentees answers: every mentee said that this experience was positive. It effected in a different ways: they started seeing things from another angles, reminds them on their homework and reminds them on their goals.

**Questions:** Goals of this meeting?

**Answer by Dragana J:** useful application of those conclusions.

One of the participants asks for results of another groups. And he wants more information about the project process. He wants to be informed trough short e-mails, which will remind him and keep him informed.