

## *Making a Modern Project Manager*<sup>1</sup>

### **Mentor People Part 1**<sup>2</sup>

**Yasmina Khelifi**

Mentoring was a kind of foreign word for me until I took part in a corporate program as a mentee. I'd been waiting for it for a while and saw it as a silver bullet—giving me all the answers to my career questions. Going into it with so many expectations; unsurprisingly I was disappointed.

A few months later, a younger colleague abroad I worked with asked me: "Can you mentor me?"

I was surprised. I asked myself: "What can people learn from me?"

I was flattered.

I was also a bit stressed: "Will I be able to answer all the questions?"

I answered "yes" and never regretted it. Since then, I have mentored other people.

Based on these experiences, I'd like to share some insights.

### **What is mentoring?**

Mentoring can take various forms. Sometimes it is providing support by email. Sometimes you can send relevant content that could resonate with what you've discussed with your mentee. Your mentee may need a contact to dive into a topic or to think of the next step.

As [Deborah Heiser, PhD](#), founder of the Mentor Project, puts it: "Mentoring is a relationship".

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: This series of articles is by a project manager for Gen X, Y and Z project professionals. The author Yasmina Khelifi is an actual project manager with a large multinational telecom in France while also an active PM professional, authoring articles, interviews and a popular LinkedIn blog as well as a podcast with a global audience. Also active in PMI France for many years, she has been an international correspondent for the PMWJ since 2021. We are delighted that she has agreed to author a series of articles based on her personal experiences over the last decade.

<sup>2</sup> How to cite this paper: Khelifi, Y. (2024). Mentor People Part 1, Making a Modern Project Manager, series article, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XIII, Issue II, February.

It is a way to share information, knowledge and experiences.

As a mentor, it is not about devoting huge numbers of hours to mentoring, and it isn't about answering all the questions. It's just about being available to share your experiences and pitfalls.

## **Why is being a mentor worthwhile?**

Through mentoring, I have learned a lot. I have met new people. I have thought about my experiences in a different light. I have improved my active listening skills. I have been able to share knowledge and experiences, hoping it will help others to progress.

Mentoring is more than just a line in a LinkedIn profile. Taking the time to listen and help can make a huge difference.

## **What are the conditions of being a successful mentor?**

You have to define some ground rules with your mentee, such as:

- Expectations
- Confidentiality
- Duration and frequency of meetings
- Who will organize the meetings?

These ground rules will create psychological safety.

But these alone are not enough.

## **4 Pitfalls to avoid**

### **Be cautious of the context**

You may want to give advice based on your experiences, but are your experiences relevant to the context of your mentee? Will your advice help the mentee?

*While asking a mentor for advice and using them as a filter can be effective, it can also shut down ideas or lead in the wrong direction. We often receive advice based on 'that's what worked for me' – which is idiosyncratic to the respective person's situation, and not necessarily useful for someone's living reality.- Dr [Christian Busch](#) in *The Serendipity Mindset: The Art and Science of Creating Good Luck**

## **Moving the meetings**

You are busy. The mentee is busy. Both of you are busy.

You may need to move a meeting with your mentee because you have too much work or a personal emergency. But moving the meeting frequently will harm the trusting relationship you are building. Perhaps the mentee is waiting impatiently to get your perspective on a topic. Perhaps the mentee will interpret it as a lack of interest on your part.

Carve out time and try to stick to it.

## **Talking too much**

When I am asked a question, I am tempted to answer with a never-ending story and never-ending sentences. Being a mentor has forced me to listen to the mentee – and to my own voice. I force myself to answer what is asked, without launching into a monologue.

## **Not keeping your word**

I have a notebook where I take notes about the achievements and issues shared. I also make a note of anything I have promised to do. During the working day, we often promise to send an email or a file, or introduce someone to a contact, and we try our best to do it. In the context of mentoring, for me, it is even more important to keep my word to my mentee.

So next time someone asks you “Can you mentor me?”, think twice before saying no!

## About the Author



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**Yasmina Khelifi**, PMP, PMI- ACP, PMI-PBA is an experienced project manager in the telecom industry. Along with her 20-year career at [Orange S.A.](#) (the large French multinational telecommunications corporation), she sharpened her global leadership skills, delivering projects with major manufacturers and SIM makers. Yasmina strives for building collaborative bridges between people to make international projects successful. She relies on three pillars: project management skills, the languages she speaks, and a passion for sharing knowledge.

She is a PMP certification holder since 2013, a PMI- ACP and PMI-PBA certification holder since 2020. She is an active volunteer member at PMI France and PMI UAE, and a member of PMI Germany Chapter. French-native, she can speak German, English, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and she is learning Arabic. Yasmina loves sharing her knowledge and experiences at work, in her volunteers' activities at PMI, and in [projectmanagement.com](#) as a regular blogger. She is also the host and co-founder of the podcast [Global Leaders Talk with Yasmina Khelifi](#) to help people in becoming better international leaders.

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