



## Mentoring case study

**Name:** Jodi Myers  
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**Jodi Myers has worked in the arts since 1972, starting in stage management and marketing. She worked on the national touring programme for the Arts Council before becoming director of Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry and subsequently Director of Performing Arts for the South Bank Centre in London.**

**Since 2005 she has worked as an independent consultant across the arts, for clients in the subsidised and commercial sectors and in education. She also mentors and coaches individual managers, producers and artists, and occasionally works as an executive theatre producer.**

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## **Creative network<sup>o</sup> asked Jodi about her experiences of mentoring...**

### **Q: How do you define 'mentoring'?**

Mentoring is off-line support (i.e. it is delivered by someone other than a manager), and it offers someone the opportunity to make a significant transition in knowledge, skills, experience or thinking.

Coaching may be delivered by a manager or a third party. It is a process that supports personal development and learning, helping the coachee to articulate their beliefs, attitudes and values. This is often a prelude to achieving behaviour change or acquisition of new skills.

### **Q: What led you to becoming a mentor?**

I had enjoyed mentoring someone previously, and when I was leaving SBC I knew I'd miss working one to one with people, helping them to develop, so I decided to offer mentoring services.

**Q: Have you ever had a mentor yourself, either officially (through a brokered scheme) or unofficially (through personal/professional networks)? How did this work?**

I haven't been formally mentored, though I have had a number of people I'd regard as 'buddies', who would listen and advise me as and when I needed to talk something through.

**Q: Have you ever undertaken any specific training in coaching and/or mentoring? If so, how did this help?**

I have attended mentoring training and undertaken a coaching course run by the Cultural Leadership Programme and accredited by Performance Coach Training Ltd.

As a member of the Association for Coaching, I undertake continuing professional development.

I have learnt an enormous amount from all the people who have trained me and through them I have developed self-awareness and discipline, and extended my coaching skills.

**Q: What are the key areas your clients/mentees come to you for help with?**

Most people I mentor or coach are at, or approaching, some sort of turning point in their careers. They may be seeking a new direction or position, be newly appointed to a leadership role, have a particular set of objectives to achieve within a set time frame, or want to develop key professional relationships or new skills.

**Q: What, in your opinion and experience, are the essential qualities of a good mentor?**

A genuine interest in other people, the ability to commit time and concentration, good listening skills, discretion, and willingness to share experience, knowledge and contacts.

**Q: What's your idea of a 'nightmare' mentor?**

Someone who thinks s/he knows it all and that mentoring is just about meeting for the odd drink and opening their address book.

People who are good at their main jobs do not automatically make good mentors (though, of course, many do).

**Q: What's the best thing about being a mentor?**

Seeing people at all stages of their careers realise their full potential and gain in confidence, being able to share my experience - and gaining new insights from my mentees.

**Q: What's the most challenging aspect of being a mentor?**

Getting arts organisations to appreciate that mentoring – and coaching – can provide valuable development opportunities for many members of staff, and consequently for them to be willing and able to make budget provision accordingly in challenging financial times.

Of course mentoring that is done on a voluntary basis may be valuable, but I think some is not of sufficient quality to be of real benefit to the mentee.

**Q: What do you see as the potential for coaching/mentoring in the creative and cultural sector?**

There are huge opportunities for coaching and mentoring in our industry if we are able to invest sufficient resources to both training and implementation on an on-going basis.

And if we fail to do so, the talent pool may be under developed, leading to loss of staff, morale, skills and expertise from the sector.

**Q: What do you see as the link between coaching, mentoring and leadership?**

Mentoring and coaching are similar but not interchangeable. When used at the appropriate time they can be of considerable benefit to leaders, emerging leaders, team leaders and many individuals as by their nature they provide opportunities tailored to the individual, rather than one-size-fits-all training.

Those that have been mentored or coached often champion a culture of mentoring or coaching in the workplace, causing a positive ripple effect.

Many supportive leaders offer invaluable coaching to their teams.

**Q: What's your personal coaching/mentoring/leadership epiphany? What's the most important thing you've learned about yourself?**

While having the right skills and tools are important, even more valuable is having the right rapport with one's clients. The trick is to listen and facilitate, not worry too much about whether you are using the right jargon.

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AS 21/08/09