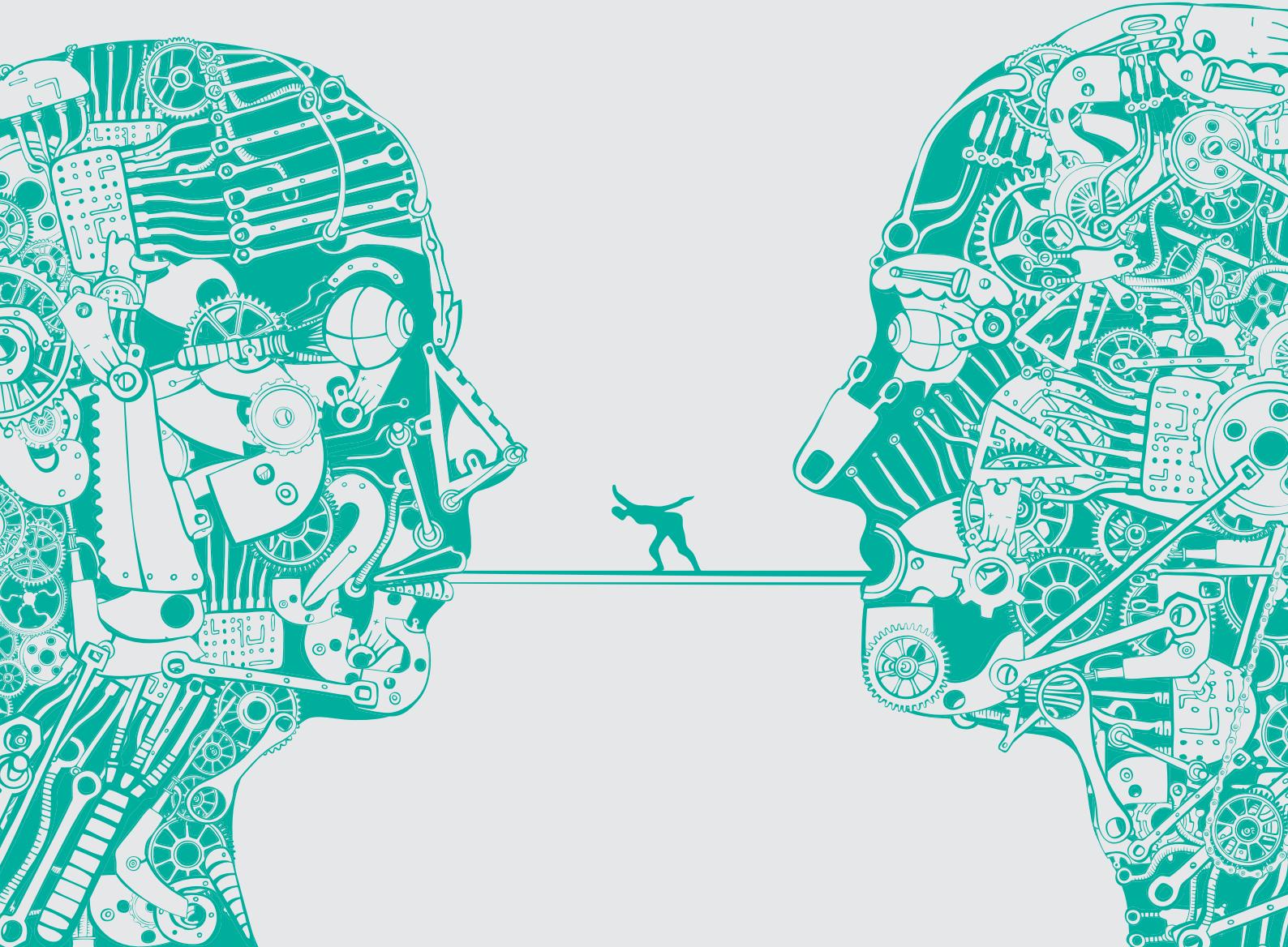


What's it Like to be Mentored?

Tom Beedham, Director of Programme Development at Criticaleye, unpicks that strange bond between mentor and mentee to uncover what really happens behind closed doors





There's always room for improvement and a good leader will be able to acknowledge that. While mentoring isn't for everyone, nor is it needed at every stage of an individual's career, speaking to someone who has reached the heights you want to can be both informative and inspirational.

On a basic level, mentoring allows leaders to really accelerate their learning curve by avoiding the mistakes of others. Yet it also goes far beyond this to provide the tools to fix unique problems as they arise.

It's common for business leaders to be intently focused on strategy and operations, so much so that they're blinded to the environment beyond. Mentoring is really about getting you to shift your perspective so that you see outside of your bubble. It allows you the time and space to dissect issues and find solutions that can't enter a mind swamped with operational tasks.

Having conversations with someone not involved in your business also means you can examine the issue without the emotional conflict or bias you might find in the boardroom.

Indeed, you may wish to discuss the relationship you have with colleagues with your mentor. After all, failure to elicit change or drive results is rarely down to bad ideas but the inability to engage and inspire others. Feedback on your messages and how they land with others can greatly improve that.

When asked about the importance of working with his Criticaleye Board Mentor, one CEO recently told me that even if you have great relationships with

your Chairman and senior team, there is always an edge to any conversations you have in the boardroom.

They explained that their mentor enables them to have honest and open discussions on subjects that matter. For example, the CEO rehearses conversations they plan to have in the boardroom and gets honest and challenging feedback on them from their mentor.

The key to mentoring is that you get out of it what you put in. You can't just give a mentor an hour of your time and expect solutions – you need to translate those self-reflections into actions, objectives and measurable targets.

A good mentee will come to the relationship with an open mind, honesty and the willingness to adapt. Failure to approach the relationship in this way means the mentee is likely to repeat the same behaviours, firmly believing they are on the right track.

Mentors must be interested in developing and helping others to succeed. They are not there to push their views or tell the mentee what to do, but to allow them to work out the best approach for themselves.

Both parties must also come armed with emotional intelligence; the mentee so that they can take feedback objectively and the mentor so they can sense how far and when to push.

While your mentor doesn't need to be from the same sector, they should have been through a similar and relatable experience. At Criticaleye, we believe that true and effective executive mentoring can only be delivered by

someone who has been at the coalface of leadership. Someone who has dealt with the same types of issues as their mentee and who can inspire them to succeed from a position of experience, as well as understanding.

You'll also need a rapport so that, over time, you can build trust and respect – two crucial elements to a good mentoring relationship. Indeed, by the end of the mentoring process – and that varies depending on the people and issues at hand – most mentors and mentees have developed a unique and highly valued bond. ■

Profiles of all Criticaleye Board Mentors are available online, [here](#).

If you work with executives who would benefit from the support provided by a Board Mentor, or are interested in exploring a mentor role as part of your portfolio career, please contact me on: tom@criticaleye.com



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Tom leads Criticaleye's Board Mentor service and plays a key role in developing and delivering the company's executive team programmes.

Tom previously led Criticaleye's UK Listed Companies division with responsibility for managing relationships across the FTSE 250, Small Cap and AIM markets, along with selected pre-IPO businesses.

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