

# How mentorship has created a special community and helped people develop their careers

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## Abstract

Mentorship is an extremely rewarding relationship between two people with the goal of professional and personal development. Elemed's Mentoring Academy in partnership with the Regulatory Affairs Professional Society (RAPS) combines three pillars – mentoring, training, and networking – to give our community the best possible solution to fast track their development, which would usually take years of trial and error. By creating a great mentoring community within the areas of regulatory, quality, and clinical, we were able to see our current mentees grow and expand their boundaries. This article shares the journey, experiences, and results we have seen from Elemed's Mentoring Academy.

2020 will always be remembered as the year COVID-19 impacted the world. This article captures Elemed's journey through the crisis, focusing on how the idea of a mentoring programme created a fantastic community of supportive mentors and mentees. Elemed is a niche recruitment agency specialised in helping people find their dream job in the areas of regulatory, quality, and clinical in the medtech and diagnostics industry.

In Spring 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic had the world in its control. Many of our clients put their hiring plans for 2020 on hold or decided to cancel them totally. What to do when you're a recruitment company and recruitment stops? We took the opportunity to really spend time talking to our talent community and our network of

hiring companies about skill set shortages and talent trends. We learnt that common deficiencies found amongst candidates were in the areas of: business acumen, emotional intelligence, business curiosity, influencing, and project management skills. We noticed that there was a lot of training available for technical skills, but not enough for soft skills which are critical to progress in a career in regulatory, quality, and clinical.

The idea of Elemed's Mentoring Academy was born to add value to our community by using the power of the Elemed network to create mentoring relationships with a view to fast track skill acquisition and approaches that would otherwise take years to develop or learn through trial and error.

We were approached by the Regulatory Affairs Professional Society (RAPS), after launching the programme, to join forces. A great collaboration was born, supporting our mentees with some great speakers from the RAPS network who brought in industry insights from a regulatory perspective. All participants (mentees, mentors, and even speakers) were entitled to a certain amount of regulatory affairs certification (RAC) credits for recertification which was found very valuable, especially by our mentees.

Elemed Mentoring Academy is the first ever hybrid mentoring programme targeted at regulatory, quality, and clinical professionals within the medtech, in-vitro diagnostics, and pharmaceutical industries. The programme is conducted completely virtually and consists of three main pillars which makes it so much more than just a mentoring programme.

The first pillar of the programme is the mentoring component. In a highly personalised matching process we hand select each mentor-mentee pair. The advantage of this personalised approach as opposed to software is that we are able to make a high quality match taking all the information gathered from both parties into consideration. This means that we try to pay special attention to the requests and challenges of the mentees and match them with the mentor that meets their needs best. Here is what some of

our mentees say about the matches we've made:

- *"The mentor I am paired with is great! She has been through a lot of what I am going through now and is able to commiserate and give valuable advice. Her perspective has helped me to see some of the challenges I faced from a different viewpoint and alter my strategy."*
- *"Elemed has made a match made in heaven."*
- *"I am glad that the mentor I was matched with fit my exact expectation when I joined the academy."*
- *"I greatly benefit from the exceptional match making of mentee and mentor that enables me to learn from my mentor how to define and reach my goals."*

The second pillar of our hybrid mentoring programme is training. As soft skills are the key to every career, we also offer at least one training session per month on a variety of soft skills topics. In order to ensure these sessions are valuable for the mentees, we invite experts to deliver the workshops and training sessions. All training sessions are recorded for those who cannot make the live event. We have found that our mentees greatly value combined mentoring and training as it supports their continuous learning and enables them to grow personally and professionally. Here is some feedback our mentees have provided on the training they get in the programme:

- *"The speakers have been excellent [...] I have already taken away so many tips and tricks for networking, managing up, and making better connections with people."*
- *"The live sessions, focusing on different topics such as career development or business skills, are presented by reputable speakers within the medtech and regulatory industry:"*
- *"The programme stimulates me to learn more, and read more."*

The third pillar of Elemed Mentoring Academy is the community. Too often mentoring is a solo development journey for mentees. But we wondered what would happen if we could bring all mentees together to create a support hub; to

share challenges and celebrate successes with each other. As we wanted to promote a culture of continuous learning, we also created a support hub for our mentors, in addition to our mentees. At the support hub we conduct regular mentee and mentor roundtables. This forum allows mentees and mentors to meet new people, strengthen existing relationships, and support each other throughout their journey. After receiving the feedback from our mentees, most of them value this community part of the programme:

- “It has been so fun to meet the other mentees and engage with them in roundtables and workshops! There are mentees from all over the world and hearing their experiences has made me feel like a part of a community, especially with the increased isolation measures from COVID-19.”
- “[...] it gives me also good contacts for effective networking, and I like the exchange with the other mentees [...]”
- “The regular meetings with other mentees are a great way to exchange experiences and to share knowledge.”
- “It is nice to network with the other mentees and see how they are dealing with certain situations and how their mentee-mentor relationship is. I really appreciate how helpful everyone is. That impressed me a lot.”

The last component to our mentoring programme is our online learning platform for mentors and mentees. This is the place where we add some useful resources to start the programme such as tips on goal setting and a first meeting checklist. Apart from the recommended reading we suggest for our mentees and mentors,



we have built a great list with their own recommendations to share within our mentoring community. There is constantly new content added to the platform to engage our mentees in between their one-on-one mentoring sessions and group training sessions.

Seven months on, what are some of the results? We’ve seen huge personal and professional growth amongst all of our mentees, greater self-awareness around strengths and weaknesses, more confidence in their professional and technical abilities, and also more willingness to experiment with new things such as leadership methods, communication styles, etc.

We’ve also seen some mentees who were very unhappy in their roles who started to approach their managers with some constructive ideas on how to make their working environment more effective. Solutions improved internal structure but also made the workplace a more enjoyable place to be, a place the team looked forward to coming to every morning. Their line managers

were very happy about their proactive approaches and honesty and helped them to implement these changes within the company.

When it comes to the actual careers of our mentees, we have seen internal promotions, the chance to lead significant projects, as well as mentees navigating career change and transformation.

Due to COVID-19, some of our mentees have been made redundant or were unhappy in their current roles. Due to the support of our Elemed Mentoring Academy, they were able to find their next challenge and get some security back in these uncertain times.

*“I cannot say enough positive things about this programme, I am so happy I found it! I 100% recommend the Elemed Mentoring Academy to anyone looking to find a role model and make more connections in their career.”*

*“There is much to be gained from the programme, independent of career stage.”*

*“Overall, Elemed’s mentoring programme provides a fantastic opportunity to grow.”*

We are currently recruiting for mentees to join our 2021 programme. If you want to find out more about the programme, visit our mentoring website, sign up, and benefit your career!

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all mentors participating voluntarily in this programme.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors are both part of Elemed, the company that facilitates the program discussed in this article.

## Author information



**Karen Münz** is the programme coordinator of Elemed Mentoring Academy and was instrumental in its creation.

She is passionate about professional and personal development in and outside of the workplace.



**Elena Kyria** is an award winning talent acquisition specialist in the medtech industry. She has worked with many professionals in regulatory, quality and clinical roles in Europe, over the last 9 years. In 2018, Elena was named one of the year’s top Millennial Shepreneurs by *Insights Success* magazine.