



# Mentorship program

A top-down view of a desk with a laptop on the left, a smartphone on the right, a pencil in the center, and a small green plant in the bottom left corner.

## Foreword

There are already 28,000 immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland and the number is growing rapidly. Over half of the businesses established in Helsinki metropolitan area are already founded by immigrants. Immigrant-owned businesses create more jobs than other businesses but have lower productivity. There are good supports available for establishing and starting a business, but not yet enough for growing and expanding them.

Immigrant entrepreneurship is a vital component of Finland's economic fabric, contributing to innovation, cultural diversity, and economic growth. Yet, immigrant entrepreneurs face unique challenges when establishing and expanding their businesses in a new country.

Mentorship stands out as a powerful tool in supporting immigrant entrepreneurs, offering guidance, knowledge, and networking opportunities to fuel their business growth and development. In this guide, you'll get to know the stories of five mentor pairs. You'll learn what they have discovered during their journey and what tips they offer to participants in the mentoring program.

The mentoring program aims to make businesses more profitable, grow faster, and employ more staff, as well as to increase their owners' strategic skills and networks. Suomen Yrittäjät wants to support a more equitable and non-discriminatory business scene.

Through the mentoring program, participants gain more confidence, courage, knowledge, skills, and expand their networks. Experienced mentors bring their expertise, networks, and emotional support to help develop businesses. Mentorship also provides mentors with the opportunity to evolve and expand their own perspectives and networks.

Diverse cultural backgrounds bring a unique strength and perspective that enriches the Finnish business landscape.



## The mentoring relationship

Mentoring is a relationship between an entrepreneur and another individual with more entrepreneurial experience, who acts as a support network to combat challenges faced by the mentee on their entrepreneurial journey. It is important that the mentoring pair have a shared understanding of the purpose of the mentoring process. For the mentoring relationship to be successful, the participants must be fully committed to the mentoring process.

The mentoring program is based on voluntariness and no monetary compensation will be given.

In the end, we hope that mentoring gives both mentors and mentees the chance to learn and develop skills that are needed in a diverse and changing business environment.

We wish you an inspiring mentoring experience!

# Thinking Bigger Through Mentorship: From Idea to Expansion

*Harri & Ana*



**Ana Alfelor-Mäkelä**, a Filipino expatriate in Finland, founded "Sachi Living" to enhance the wellbeing of Finnish professionals aged 25 to 45 through innovative interior design. Drawing from her medical interior design background and personal burnout experience, Ana aimed to create healing spaces promoting intentional living.

Lacking the knowhow to translate her vision into a viable business, Ana joined the mentorship program, where **Harri Jaskari** mentored her. Harri's guidance provided Ana with clarity, insights, and strategic direction, empowering her to refine her business idea and envision scalability.

Ana emphasizes mentorship's pivotal role in her entrepreneurial journey, highlighting how it clarified her business model and strategies. Harri, reflecting on mentorship's importance, emphasized its role in fostering confidence, knowledge, and strategic thinking among aspiring entrepreneurs.

Harri encouraged Ana to think beyond smallscale initiatives and explore collaborations to expand her business reach. By leveraging complementary services and forming strategic partnerships, Ana could enhance her business proposal and reach a broader customer base.

The mentorship journey provided Ana with invaluable insights, empowering her to embrace new possibilities and chart a course for sustainable growth. Committed to expanding Sachi Living's reach and impact, Ana plans to leverage the strategies and frameworks developed through mentorship.

Aspiring entrepreneurs can learn from Ana and Harri's experiences,

emphasizing the importance of mentorship in fostering confidence, knowledge, and strategic thinking. Seeking guidance, embracing cultural understanding, and exploring collaborative opportunities can help entrepreneurs navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship and achieve sustainable growth.

### **Harri and Ana offer insights for scaling businesses:**

- 1. Think Big, Start Small:** Adopt a step-by-step approach to scaling, focusing on testing ideas and acquiring customers rather than administrative tasks.
- 2. Embrace Flexibility and Adaptability:** Maintain flexibility to explore different markets and overcome barriers, enabling business expansion.
- 3. Seek Guidance and Mentorship:** Having a mentor boosts confidence, offers alternative perspectives, and helps see new possibilities in the entrepreneurial journey.
- 4. Collaborate and Innovate:** Team up with forward-thinking companies, explore collaborations, and think outside the box to reach new customers and discover fresh ideas for business growth.

Scaling a business requires a combination of vision, resilience, and strategic thinking. By adopting a step-by-step approach, remaining adaptable, seeking mentorship, and embracing collaboration and innovation, aspiring entrepreneurs in Finland can navigate the challenges of scaling with confidence towards sustainable growth.

# The role of the mentee:

- Commit to the mentoring process
- Be open to different perspectives and to the feedback
- Set the objectives for the mentoring process and communicate the needs to the mentor

The mentee is responsible for her own and her company's progression and therefore needs to be actively involved in the discussion that takes place. Mentee is in charge of setting the appointments.

## Tips for the mentee:

### **1. Proactively build your network**

Take full advantage of networking opportunities provided by the mentoring program. Engaging with fellow entrepreneurs and professionals can unlock new avenues for growth and provide invaluable insights into navigating the Finnish business landscape.

### **2. Recognize your strengths and areas for improvement!**

Collaborating with a mentor can help you pinpoint areas where you can enhance your capabilities and achieve greater success.

### **3. Embrace constructive criticism!**

Be open to receiving constructive feedback from your mentor and peers in the program. Embracing feedback as an opportunity for growth can help refine your strategies and elevate your business performance.

### **4. Establish clear objectives!**

Set clear, attainable goals for the duration of the mentoring program. This will enable you to maintain focus on key priorities and track your progress effectively as you work towards your business aspirations.

### **5. Active participation and commitment**

Demonstrating commitment and proactive engagement will maximize the benefits derived from the program, fostering meaningful connections, and facilitating long-term business success.

# The role of the mentor:

- Offer support and motivate positively
- Listen actively
- Offer perspectives and constructive feedback

Mentoring also gives the mentor an opportunity for development. When you advise others, you can deepen your own understanding and skills. Mentors have the opportunity to create new networks and contact.

## Tips for the mentor:

### **1. Embrace cultural diversity**

Recognize and appreciate the unique cultural background of your mentee, and leverage it as a strength in their entrepreneurial journey.

### **2. Provide tailored guidance**

Understand the specific challenges and goals of your mentee as an immigrant entrepreneur and offer targeted advice and resources to support their growth and development in those areas.

### **3. Foster open communication**

Create a safe and supportive environment where your mentee feels comfortable discussing their challenges and seeking guidance. Encourage transparent communication and actively listen to their perspectives and experiences.

### **4. Encourage self-reflection and goal-setting**

Help your mentee reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations, and guide them in setting ambitious yet achievable goals for their business. Support them in developing action plans to progress towards these goals.

### **5. Facilitate networking opportunities**

Introduce your mentee to relevant contacts in your network and help them expand their connections within the business community. Encourage them to participate in networking events and initiatives that can further their professional growth.

# Expanding Networks in Finland as an International Female Entrepreneur Through Mentorship

*Laila & Bengt*





**Laila Fe Balinggan's** journey from the Philippines to Finland reflects a profound shift in both geography and career trajectory. Driven by Finland's renowned education system, she transitioned from academia to entrepreneurship, specializing in B2B digital marketing. Her commitment stems from a genuine concern for companies' online presence, recognizing it as the primary interface with modern customers.

Transitioning to entrepreneurship in a new country posed considerable challenges, particularly in networking. As an international student-turned-entrepreneur, Laila found bridging academic and professional networks daunting, exacerbated by the absence of targeted events for aspiring entrepreneurs in Vaasa, her local city.

Joining the mentorship program, Laila sought to expand her network within Finland's business community. Paired with mentor **Bengt Leander**, their collaboration focused on tailored networking strategies, leveraging Bengt's extensive experience and network.

Bengt's mentorship not only facilitated introductions aligned with Laila's goals but also provided cultural insights crucial for navigating Finnish business etiquette. Together, they attended various events, including a business cruise, illuminating the nuances of Finnish professional culture.

The impact of mentorship on Laila's networking approach was palpable, as noted by Bengt, who observed her enhanced confidence and strategic engagement. Notably, Laila's adept application of Bengt's strategies during

the Energy Week in Vaasa underscored the effectiveness of their collaboration.

### **Advice for Other Mentors**

Bengt offers advice to other mentors aiming to support mentees in a new country: "Understand your mentee's goals, leverage your network for warm introductions, and guide them beyond typical events to online and community-based networking opportunities." He stresses the importance of relationshipbuilding over mere contact accumulation, advocating for active listening and providing value in every interaction.

Laila's journey vividly shows the challenges and opportunities faced by international female entrepreneurs in Finland. Through his mentorship, Bengt has not only helped Laila navigate the challenges of entering a new business culture but also instilled in her the skills necessary for sustained professional growth and networking success in Finland.

The mentorship program is more than just a platform for networking — it's a springboard for integration and success in Finland's business landscape. The mentorship is an opportunity to not just survive but thrive and feel truly connected to their new business environment. Through the mentorship program, she has not only gained valuable business contacts but also essential cultural insights that have equipped her to thrive in her adopted country. This shows that with the right support and resources, overcoming the initial hurdles is not just possible, but can also be a rewarding journey.

The mentoring program consist of three modules for mentees. These modules are designed to provide mentees with comprehensive support and resources to overcome challenges, acquire essential skills, and maximize their potential for success as immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland.

## The program consists of three modules:

**1**

### **DREAM IT, ACHIEVE IT: UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL**

- Boost your self confidence
- Motivational Guidance

**2**

### **RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS IN FINLAND**

- Basic principles of contract law
- Boost your strategic thinking
  - Sales and pitching
  - Funding

**3**

### **HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF NETWORKING**

- Personal Branding and LinkedIn
  - People skills
- Networks: What can we do for each other?

# Module 1:

## **Dream it, achieve it: unleash your potential**

This module focuses on empowering mentees to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations and take actionable steps towards success. "Motivational Guidance" offers personalized support and encouragement to help mentees identify their strengths, set ambitious goals, and develop strategies to achieve them.

# Module 2:

## **Running a successful business in Finland**

This module equips mentees with essential knowledge and skills to navigate the Finnish business landscape effectively. "Basic principles of contract law" educates mentees on legal aspects relevant to running a business, ensuring compliance and risk management. "Funding instruments" introduces mentees to various sources of funding available in Finland, empowering them to finance their ventures strategically. "Boost your strategic thinking" provides tools and frameworks to help mentees develop a strategic mindset and make informed decisions for their businesses.

# Module 3:

## **How to get the most out of networking**

This module emphasizes the importance of networking for entrepreneurial success and provides mentees with practical strategies to leverage networking opportunities effectively. "Personal branding and LinkedIn" teaches mentees how to build a strong personal brand and utilize LinkedIn as a powerful networking tool to connect with potential clients, partners, and investors. "People skills and networks" focuses on developing mentees' interpersonal skills and nurturing professional relationships, enabling them to expand their networks and access valuable resources and support within the business community.

# From Stuck to Strength: How Empathy and Sponsorship Create a Path for Entrepreneurs

*Hannele & Audrey*



**Audrey Downey's** journey with the mentorship program is a story of resilience and renewal. Moving from Canada to Finland, Audrey had to find her way in a new country. She had spent over a decade as a musician, web designer, and a content creator but faced challenges in expanding her business in Finland. She felt stuck, dealing with personal struggles, financial stress, and a lack of direction.

When she found the program, she was paired with **Hannele Mennala**. Hannele has experience in business and a passion for personal growth. Having lived in several countries and worked in different industries, she understood the challenges of being a female entrepreneur in a new country.

Through the mentorship program, Audrey found a supportive ally in Hannele. She not only provided guidance and a fresh perspective but also became an advocate for Audrey, opening doors to new opportunities. Their journey together shows the transformative power of mentorship, proving that with empathy and the right support, it's possible to move from feeling stuck to finding strength.

When Audrey first joined the mentorship program, she was facing significant challenges in both her personal and professional life. Her personal struggles had left her feeling overwhelmed, especially with the challenges she had to face on her own being in a new country. Beyond the personal challenges, Audrey struggled with confidence in her professional life.

Hannele recognized that Audrey needed more than technical advice; she needed a mindset shift and a

supportive hand to help her see the opportunities ahead. Hannele focused on Audrey's needs and dreams, making sure that her guidance was tailored to Audrey's unique situation.

Audrey's journey from feeling stuck to finding strength wasn't an overnight process. It took time and commitment to shift her mindset and embrace her potential. However, with Hannele's support, Audrey started to see her situation differently. Hannele helped her understand that it wasn't about making drastic changes overnight, but rather about taking small steps and exploring new possibilities.

Hannele's active role in opening doors and providing opportunities also played a significant role in Audrey's growth. By introducing Audrey to her network, Hannele helped her find new connections and build a stronger professional community.

Audrey's mentorship experience with Hannele through highlights the transformative power of mentorship. For Audrey, having a mentor who genuinely believed in her was pivotal in changing her outlook.

For anyone considering becoming a mentor, Hannele emphasized the mutual benefits. "It's very empowering for the mentors as well," she said, explaining how the relationship was rewarding for both parties. "You get when you give."

Audrey's story shows that with the right mentorship, entrepreneurs can transform their challenges into opportunities for growth. The power of empathy and sponsorship in mentorship can create lasting change, not just for individual entrepreneurs but for the broader business community as well.

# Mentoring agreement

Hopefully after your one-on-one meeting, you have reached an agreement on what you both expect to give to and gain from the mentoring relationship. A written agreement is recommended because it is much clearer than just a verbal agreement. You will find the agreement attached to this file and on our website.

## **Ethical Guidelines for Mentoring Agreement**

All interaction is based on respect, openness and integrity.

Full confidentiality: Discussions and shared information remain confidential unless otherwise agreed upon.

Constructive feedback is crucial for enhancing the mentoring experience.

## **Shared goals:**

Define clear objectives for the mentoring period.

Regularly reassess goals to align with evolving needs.

## **Mentor's guiding role:**

The mentor's role is to provide guidance, support, and share personal experiences.

Encourage independent decision-making, emphasizing the mentee's autonomy.

## **Communication and Meetings:**

Monthly meetings throughout the program.

Diverse communication channels: face-to-face meetings, virtual sessions and email.

Building upon these ethical guidelines, we aim to cultivate a positive and empowering mentorship relationship.



# MENTORING AGREEMENT

## Practical aspects of mentoring

The mentoring agreement is a document of understanding between the mentee and the mentor, where the mentoring pair agrees on common ground rules. The mentoring agreement ensures that both parties understand their roles, obligations, and responsibilities.

Please respond to the questions below and note any additional observations you find necessary.

The mentoring program will last for six months. Mentorship meetings should be arranged at a pace suitable for both the mentee and the mentor. How will we schedule meetings? Who will arrange the meeting place? Who will initiate mentorship calls? How do we handle rescheduling meetings?

How often can the mentee contact the mentor, and what is the best way to reach each other?

How do we prepare for meetings, and when should the mentee send the meeting agenda to the mentor?

## Objectives for Mentoring

Define the goals of mentoring. In what areas should the mentee improve, and what topics does the mentee want to discuss? What do I want to achieve in the next year, for example?

## Mentor's Role

What are the mentee's hopes and expectations for the mentor? What kind of support can the mentor offer the actor?

## Mentee's Role

What hopes and expectations does the mentor have for the mentee? How should the mentee prepare for mentoring?

## Confidentiality and Publicity of the Mentoring Relationship

What does confidentiality in the mentoring relationship mean to us? What is our obligation to confidentiality, and how do both of us uphold it? Whom can I inform about the mentorship relationship? Can I discuss our mentorship on social media?

## Other Considerations

The mentor is not responsible for the decisions the mentee makes regarding their business operations.

Time and Place

Mentor's Name and Signature

Mentee's Name and Signature

# Business Marketing in Finland: Learning the Finnish Market through Mentorship

*Pannela & Jari*





**Pamela Mauricio**, a coffee enthusiast from Peru, embarked on her entrepreneurial journey upon moving to Finland, determined to start her own coffee roastery business. Facing the challenges of a new market and global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, she remained committed to supporting Peruvian coffee farmers and empowering women.

Guided by mentor **Jari Rantala**, Pamela focused on differentiating her brand in the competitive Finnish market, emphasizing her unique story as a female immigrant entrepreneur. Jari's mentorship stressed the importance of understanding customer needs and adapting strategies to fit the local market. Jari brings to mentorship a wealth of experience in ICT and business development. With over two decades of experience, he's worked in customer experience, business development, and customer journey development. His deep knowledge of business processes has allowed him to mix and match growth hacking and lean startup methods for better results. "I've learned a lot about making businesses grow and have seen what works," he explains. His motivation for joining the mentorship program was rooted in a desire to give back and learn.

For Jari, mentorship isn't just about giving advice, but also about equipping entrepreneurs with the mindset and tools they need to understand their market and adapt accordingly. He takes a collaborative approach, sharing his knowledge but also encouraging mentees to find their path. "I hope my mentees can pick the advice that works best for their business," he says, emphasizing that not all advice will fit every situation.

Highlighting the importance of early

product testing and embracing authenticity in marketing, Jari's guidance equipped Pamela with practical insights for navigating challenges and finding solutions in the Finnish market. Mentorship provided not only practical business advice but also instilled confidence in Pamela as she embraced authenticity in marketing and engaged with her audience. Through mentorship, Pamela gained insights into cultural nuances and consumer behavior, essential for success in a new market. Ultimately, mentorship emerged as a transformative tool for Pamela, enabling her to adapt, grow, and thrive as an immigrant entrepreneur in Finland.

**For immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland, here are several practical pieces of advice that can be drawn from Pamela and Jari's experience:**

- **Test Early:** Before fully committing to a product or strategy, test your ideas to see if there's genuine interest from customers. As Jari said, "Find the easiest and cheapest way to find out if the problem you are working with is worth solving."
- **Fail Early:** Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Each failure provides valuable lessons that can guide you toward better solutions.
- **Seek Mentorship:** Connect with experienced professionals who can offer guidance, share insights, and provide a fresh perspective on your business challenges.
- **Adapt Strategies to your Target Customers:** Understand who your target customers are and their pain points. Then tailor your marketing and sales strategies effectively.

# “Do Not Eat the Whole Elephant”: How Mentorship Can Make a Difference

*Timo & Natalia*



**Natalia Osipova**, a determined immigrant entrepreneur hailing from Russia, encountered formidable hurdles upon establishing her interior design venture, Tabiti Oy, in Finland. Her entrepreneurial journey was fraught with challenges, notably grappling with the intricacies of the Finnish business landscape and forging connections with prospective clients. Reflecting on her initial struggles, Natalia candidly admitted, "It was really difficult for me to understand."

Moreover, Natalia grappled with self-confidence issues, particularly in the realms of marketing and client acquisition. Despite crafting a robust business plan, she harbored doubts about the direction of her venture, confessing, "I always doubt myself." However, amidst these uncertainties, Natalia found solace and encouragement in the form of her mentor, **Timo Ronkainen**, a seasoned banking professional with nearly four decades of experience.

Timo, despite his background differing vastly from Natalia's field, adeptly identified common challenges encountered by small businesses. He adopted a pragmatic approach, advising Natalia to tackle challenges incrementally, remarking, "You can't eat the whole elephant." This sage advice provided Natalia with clarity and direction, enabling her to navigate obstacles such as expanding her network and securing clients. Timo's validation of Natalia's business strategy further bolstered her confidence, affirming, "No, but it's great. It doesn't need any changes."

Recognizing the pivotal role of networking in Natalia's entrepreneurial journey, Timo diligently facilitated intro-

ductions to pertinent organizations and individuals. He emphasized the importance of setting clear objectives, articulating, "It's really important to have clear objectives." Through Timo's mentorship, Natalia not only gained confidence in her abilities but also cultivated a robust professional network, essential for her business's growth and sustainability.

The impact of a mentorship program on entrepreneurs, especially those who are immigrants, cannot be overstated. Through program Natalia received guidance and encouragement that give her the confidence to pursue their entrepreneurial goals. With Timo's encouragement, Natalia found clarity and confidence in her business, understanding that she was not alone in facing challenges. "It's not me alone," she said, acknowledging that her struggles were shared by many entrepreneurs and were not unique to her. This realization empowered her to pursue her business goals with renewed determination.

The mentorship program shows how the right guidance can open doors and help tackle obstacles one step at a time. Timo emphasized the importance of building networks, which enabled Natalia to find the right people who could support her business journey. By sharing his experience and offering practical advice, he showed how mentorship can empower to navigate challenges and grow business with confidence. For entrepreneurs, mentorship program such as this, provides not just a roadmap for business success but also the assurance that they have a community behind them, ready to support them every step of the way.



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