

MENTOR GUIDE

Month 3: Strategic Thinking & Commercial Acumen



This session is about helping your mentee build confidence as a commercially aware HR partner. At mid-level, they're already driving initiatives - now it's time to help them see (and speak to) the business value of their work.

Your role is to guide their thinking around impact, not just activity, and support them in shifting their mindset from 'HR function' to 'strategic contributor.'



CONVERSATION STARTER

Ask this to open the session:

"If your COO asked how your work supports the company's goals, how would you answer - clearly and confidently?"

This helps surface any disconnect between their day-to-day work and the bigger picture.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

Use these to guide the conversation:

- What business priorities are top of mind for your leaders right now?
- How do you currently talk about your work, and is it in business terms or HR terms?
- Where does your work contribute to performance, growth, or risk reduction?
- What do you wish you felt more confident talking about in commercial conversations?

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- Uncertainty around financial or commercial language
- A gap between delivery confidence and strategic articulation
- Overfocus on operational activity rather than outcomes
- Interest in the business without a clear sense of how to plug in

WATCH OUTS

- Don't assume they've had exposure to financial data or commercial decision-making
- Avoid overwhelming with terminology - focus on mindset shifts
- Don't push them into "proving" ROI, help them start by thinking in business language

WAYS TO ADD VALUE

- Share how you've linked HR initiatives to business results in your own career
- Suggest one or two simple commercial metrics to track or be aware of (e.g. turnover cost, productivity gains, cost-to-hire)
- Reflect back where you hear them already thinking strategically - even if they don't realise it
- Offer to help them test-drive their "value statement" or positioning

ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE

- Help them craft a 1–2 sentence summary of how their work supports business goals (e.g. "I help scale the business by developing agile talent solutions that reduce time-to-performance")
- Encourage them to link a current HR project to a commercial objective
- Suggest they connect with a Finance, Operations, or Sales partner for a 20-minute conversation about business priorities

OPTIONAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDED

- **LTT Blog** - Being a Kick-Ass CPO in 2025 and Beyond: The Must-Haves For Aspiring People Leaders
- Book - **The HR Scorecard**: Linking People, Strategy, and Performance

LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT MONTH

Next month's theme is **Leadership Confidence & Impact**.

Encourage your mentee to start reflecting on how they lead - formally and informally - and where they may be underplaying their presence, voice, or authority in day-to-day work.