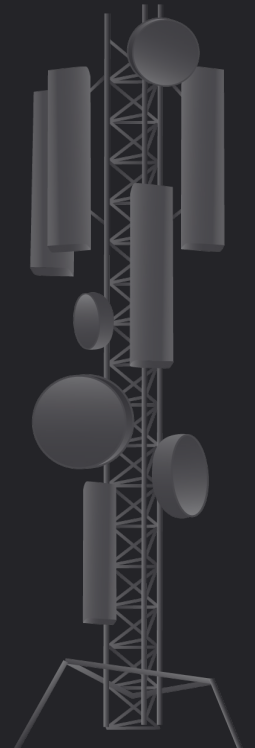# CEO Partners with Mentor for Smooth Huawei Swap-Out, Avoiding Penalties and Protecting National Security

How Mentor helped a wireless infrastructure operator deliver a vital high-risk program on time.

The Challenge

Our client, one of Europe's leading independent operators of wireless telecom infrastructure, was playing a key role in the roll-out of 5G. Given their size and growth, Mentor is no stranger to high-stakes projects.

Why Did They Bring Mentor Onboard?

The client was in the midst of a government-mandated, high-risk program to swap out Huawei equipment from their mobile network. The reason? National security concerns.

Missing deadlines in this situation could lead to significant penalties from OFCOM. The stakes were high. BT/EE, as the end customer, would ultimately be responsible for those penalties, so everything was riding on timely delivery.

Recognising the program's importance—not just to their reputation but also to national security—the client's CEO knew they couldn't afford delays.

That's when Mentor was called in, just as the specialist telecom supplier began to mobilise their team.
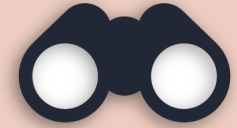
At a glance

- Our client managed a UK government-mandated program to replace Huawei equipment in the 5G roll-out due to national security concerns.

- Missing deadlines risked heavy OFCOM financial penalties – late delivery was not an option.

- Our client's reputation, its relationship with the national telco, and UK national security were at stake. The CEO brought in Mentor.

- Mentor significantly strengthened the plan and oversaw a restructuring of the program organisation and governance.

- The swap-out was completed on time with no financial penalties incurred.

- The client's delivery organisation adopted the new practices, significantly improving their overall ability to manage future high-risk programs.

Starting Point – Independent Program Review

Mentor's first step was an Independent Program Review.

The goal?
Assess the program's setup, identify potential weak spots, and address them before they could disrupt the program and jeopardise the deadline.

Mentor's Blueprint for Success

Mentor leaned on its tried-and-true approach, honed over 30 years of managing critical programs. The six pillars of the Mentor Blueprint ensured a smooth execution:

1 ALIGNMENT:
Making sure the Executive team was all on the same page.

2 FIT-FOR-PURPOSE ORGANISATION:
Creating a team and structure specifically for this program.

3 A REALISTIC PLAN:
Ensuring everyone believed in and committed to the plan.

4 SUPPLIER MANAGEMENT:
Building strong working partnerships.

5 CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY:
Ensuring everyone knew their role and how their work fit in.

6 COLLABORATIVE CULTURE:
Fostering a space where everyone could contribute openly

Mentor conducted in-depth interviews with senior executives from the three key companies involved and used their AI-driven Mentor Execution Index (MEI) to assess the program's health.

Over 80 people participated, giving Mentor both a broad and deep understanding of the program's dynamics.

Key Findings

Mentor's review uncovered some critical issues:

- The three companies involved were not fully aligned and weren't "speaking with one voice."
- The program organisation had not yet gelled.
- There was scepticism about whether the plan was realistic, with the absence of an agreed scope or the inclusion of an additional scope causing frustration.
- Dependencies on other programs were causing conflicts.
- While the program culture was strong, there were significant areas for improvement.
- BT/EE had concerns about supplier capabilities, highlighting a need for better engagement.

Mentor also identified several planning biases:

- Targets were being set - without fully involving the responsible team.
- Leadership had preconceived ideas and resisted contrary evidence.
- Some key tasks were seriously underestimated in terms of time.
- Over-reliance on outmoded approaches and failing to appreciate new ideas was evident.
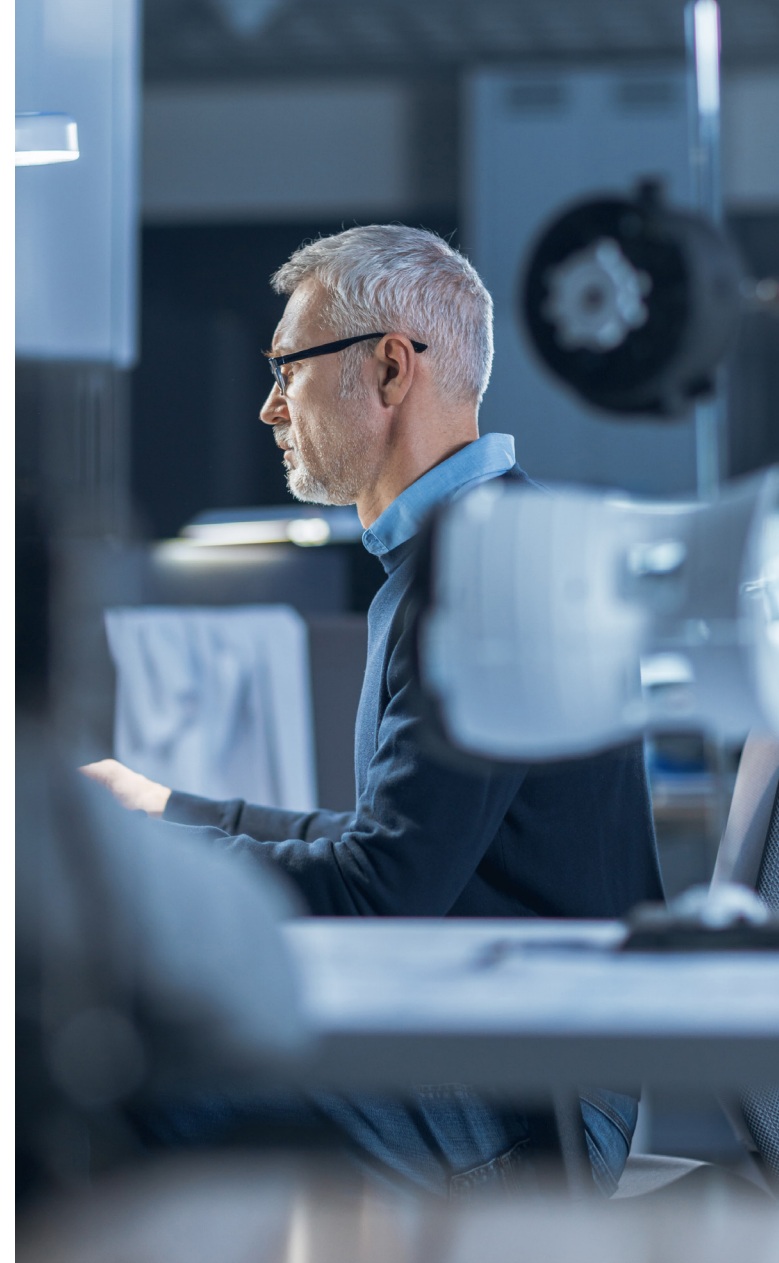
Mentor's Recommendations

Mentor presented their findings and worked with the key players to address the five major weaknesses:

1. **Governance:**
   Create a clear governance structure.

2. **Streamlined Rollout:**
   Simplify the network rollout process.

3. **Validated Plan:**
   Make sure estimates, metrics, and resources are realistic.

4. **Data Model:** Build a reliable data model to guide the program.

5. **Dependency Management:**
   Set up a system to manage interdependencies and escalate issues.

Next Steps

The immediate focus was on improving the Plan and Organisation. Mentor was brought in to help implement these changes, which included:

- Defining clear program metrics to track progress and forecast events.

- Making sure the right resources were available at the right times.

- Eliminating guesswork from the plan and creating transparency and accountability at every level.

- Setting up a formal process for escalation and resolution of program-impacting issues.

The Outcome

Once the improvement plan was in place, Mentor took full accountability for the program's success.

With a Mentor Program Director and Program Management Office Lead overseeing everything, the swap-out was completed on time, allowing BT/EE to meet their commitments to OFCOM without incurring any penalties.

Not only was the immediate program a success, but the client's delivery organisation also adopted the new practices, significantly improving their overall ability to manage future high-risk programs

" *We asked Mentor to help when we needed it the most.*

Helping us recover a programme whilst in parallel supporting us to create capacity and fix the root causes.

David and the team brought insight, counsel and heavy weight delivery capacity to my business area at a critical time.

The Mentor team don't pull punches, delivering advice with clarity in a supportive way that allows the business to move forward."

Mark Bartlett

Director Of Operations at Cellnex UK

mentor ™

Mentor Europe Associates Ltd,
Elsley Court,
20-22 Great Titchfield Street,
London W1W 8BE

enquiries@mentoreurope.com

Phone: 0118 359 2444