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Mentor Answers FAQs[©]: How the Mentor can help

Third in a series. Because “the protege of today is the mentor of tomorrow”, both sides of the partnership will benefit by digesting this series. This issue, research and suggestions for when “the negatives seem to outweigh the positives. See page 3.

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Mentoring White Paper #1: Read *Success to Significance*. Out-of-the-box thinking



“For some, success is accidental, not intentional. However, success however achieved is not enough. It’s crucial to create a legacy of significance.”

Parts 1 & 2 available free of charge in pdf version at: www.mentoring-solutions.com

Upcoming:

Insightful reading: Dark Age Ahead - part 2 Vicious Spirals

Mentoring Timeline

Suggestion 5: CORE yourself

From the Editor:

Past issues have carried everything and anything on knowledge sharing using mentoring and coaching to support blended learning.

Happy reading for another year.

Your editor:

Marilynne Miles Gray





Mentoring Timeline: 1978

If you've ever seen a movies in a multiplex, you're sitting in the brain child of Nat Taylor.

Age 98 when he died in March 2004, Taylor was a pioneer film industrialist who invented the concept and the name "cineplex" launching it first in Ottawa back in the late 1950s. At the time, he was told it would "never work."



Years later, in 1978, at age 78, Taylor linked with an unknown law student to open an 18-screen complex at what was then a staggering \$2,500,000 and a total of 1,600 seats in total.

You might well ask: Why take such a risk? Why a mere student? Who was this character that so impressed Taylor, already a success by any standard that the older man would take the younger under his wing and mentor him?

Garth Drabinski, a law student when they met, says Taylor was more than a **mentor**.

"He was a father to me, and a teacher to me, and a friend, and a business partner. When you went to see him, you knew you were in the presence of someone special. He had an air of great success about him. He was a remarkable human being."

Taylor's first cineplex was ridiculed by those in the industry. Of a pitch he made of the idea at convention,, he said later: *"I was a bust, a bomb. No one knew what I was talking about. They said it wasn't conceivable. The industry was suffering pretty badly from television."*

The rest, as they say, is history. The cineplex is regarded as a good marriage of technology, commerce and culture. As time passes, the cineplex may go out of fashion. Certainly Drabinsky has led a colorful and controversial life. But that's exactly what **mentoring** is all about -- holding a mirror up to life and our world.

*"If you can imagine it,
You can achieve it.
If you can dream it,
You can become it."
-William Arthur Ward*

Insightful reading: Dark Age Ahead

Dust jackets are often the first point of reference for readers. The one on Jane Jacobs' most recent work *Dark Age Ahead* (2004) notes she is the provocative author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a classic that "*has never gone out of print*". Hard to dismiss in advance what she is about to say.

At first glance, it's hard to imagine the connection between town planning (Jacobs' specialty) and **mentoring**. Yet Jacobs, within the first five pages, (having expounded on the negatives about society) weighs in with the comment:

*Every culture takes pains to educate its young so that they, in their turn, can practise and transmit it completely. Educators and mentors... use books and videos if they have them, but they also speak, and when they are most effective, as teachers, parents or **mentors**, they also serve as examples.*

Jacobs begins with a sketch of cultural mass amnesia: use it or lose it. She asks: surely the threat of losing everything we have achieved, cannot apply to us! How could that possibly happen? After all, we have books, videos, storehouses of knowledge, pictures, the internet, oceans of information, scholarly journals, daily press, museums, government reports, even time capsules!

She then goes on to build her case and then links it to **mentoring**. So, let us follow her logic. First, "Writing, printing and the internet give a false sense of security about the permanence of culture." A living culture depends on word of mouth and direct experiential examples --- hence the need for internships, instructional tours, on-the-job training, apprenticeships and mentors. Assimilation into an occupation, much as into a new culture, happens only through first hand experience. Otherwise the nuances are glossed over.

Further, a living culture is forever changing. If it is lost, reconstructing it is not the same as restoring it. Jacobs offers the instance of Renaissance scholars trying to reconstruct the lost classical knowledge of the ancient Greeks and Romans based on writings and artifacts. She then points some of the unanticipated outcomes. This "new" knowledge was imported into a largely medieval world unprepared for the new non-feudal ideas. This rediscovered knowledge led to disturbing new insights (such as that the Earth revolved around the Sun), and the establishment for a time rejected this newer knowledge. To Jacobs' mind, reconstruction was ironically "*a barrier formed by caned and preserved knowledge of kinds which we*

Turn to page 5.



From the Virtual Mentoring Library[®]:

Take the 30-Second Test

Instructions: Don't bother pulling out your pencil... just read. If you can't answer the following items, continue reading. You'll soon see why.

1. Name the world's five wealthiest people.
2. Name ten people who have won the Nobel Prize.
3. Name the last seven Presidents / Prime Ministers of your country.
4. Name five Best Actor and Actress Academy Award winners for the past five years.
5. Name ten athletes who have won more than five Olympic gold medals.

How did you do? Turn to page 4 .

*"The beginning of wisdom
is the definition of terms"
~ Socrates*



squeezed for time?

Know "How many of our staff are interested in mentoring?" or "What type of mentoring do our staff desire -- formal or informal?"

The Mentoring Interest Profiler[®] (MIP) is our web-based survey tool that can be used organization-wide to determine the interest in knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer, coaching for specific skills and so forth.

This brief survey typically takes two to five minutes for respondents to complete. Your organization receives a Report of the results as well as all of the raw data for analysis. MIP charts and graphs contain a wealth of detail.

Call today to discuss your challenges
and learn how we can help.

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How the Mentor can help

"the protege of today is the mentor of tomorrow"

When life seems to be one negative, draining thing after another -- the unforeseen challenges of the new job, the stress of long commutes, financial uncertainty, uncollegial peers -- the search for "a cure" is natural.

Sometimes there's a mentor at hand to be a sounding board, a listening post, (with permission) an advisor, a gate opener -- whatever roles are most appropriate.

In these situations, there are roles mentors mistakenly think they ought to play / allow themselves to fall into. Correspondingly, proteges expect mentors to play certain roles. Professional counsellor should not be one of them. Nor is being a shoulder-to-cry-on.

When dealing with negative features of life, mentors can still be of assistance but it's crucial to distinguish the various roles, understand which is appropriate to employ at any given point in time, why it is selected and how to use it to best effect.

Let's imagine the mentor and protege have taken a collective deep breath (to lessen body tension), counted to ten (to gain more objective perspective), then as part of the process brain stormed a list of helpful actions that will form a Mentoring Action Plan. More of that later.

A few ideas plus some research to consider

A number of ideas might be applied in the mentor-protege relationship.

1 Think beyond "self" Research by people such as Seligman (former President of the American Psychological Society) point to the value of giving back to the greater community and doing good deeds. Such actions help more than just the receiver. For instance, some who see this positive behavior being modeled by others apparently experience an emotion called "elevation". In turn, elevation encourages more human openness, charity, and positive feelings about others.

The work of Francis Fuller decades ago noted that, in times of stress while learning new and complex behaviors (such as becoming a teacher), not every learner could shift his/her attention beyond the self and the immediate situation. Further, it could take up to several years to learn to focus on others rather than self. Old habits die hard. Under stress, people revert to old habits because these are ingrained.

2 While it sounds simplistic, research points to the **importance of enjoyment**. Studies of quality of life and motivation (involving some 8,000 North American interviews

Turn to page 4 .



How the Mentor can help

From page 3

in one instance) -- suggest that enjoying work is crucial. People who experience satisfaction from work itself have a highly positive sense of motivation, engagement, and challenge. Parallel findings in similar studies came from South America, Southeast Asia, and industrialized Europe.

There are "three secrets" to finding satisfaction, pretty well motherhood ones that many choose to ignore. First, choose tasks to match abilities -- neither too easy nor too frustratingly difficult. Second, make certain clear goals are set. Our company felt this important enough to make sure this can be done in our Colaboro software using both the Mentoring Agreements[®] and Mentoring Action Plan[®] tools -- not only to set those goals but to ensure goals are actually reached. Third, seek feedback from friendly observers such as mentors.

As to this last item, more needs to be said. There are "friendly observers", possibly peers, who actually aren't competent to give feedback. Even if qualified, quite often, little thought is given to what feedback entails -- a score? a verbal report? a checklist? a videotaping of the performance? or something else? Certainly mentors are ideal candidates in most instances but not if it is to formally evaluate. This is the boss' role. Much has been said about this issue in mentoring literature, and ignored to the peril of those involved in sharing knowledge and building trust.

*"Nothing should be prized more highly than the value of each day."
~ Goethe*

3 rose-colored glasses world view: It all begins with negative thinking that commonly leads to abnormal and extended periods of stress enough to elevate cardiovascular functions and compromise the immune system.

Nurturing optimism can be a preventative, healthful way of dealing with this stress. It's claimed we can "teach" people an optimistic resilient style and good coping behaviors for better responses to life's flooding.

Nurturance of optimistic styles is a preventative "medicine"; those taking this approach don't see setbacks in only negative terms and these people bounce back better and faster than those who don't think and act along these lines.

4 humor: there have been a number of studies to show the value of smiling and laughing as an antidote to depression and negativity. One researcher theorizes: "Laughter helps you to disassociate yourself from the [negative] event so you can engage in more healthful and social emotions."

Next issue: Suggestion 5 - CORE yourself.

30-Second Test

From page 3

Probably your score isn't high.

So, what's the point of this test? Few of us remember headliners of yesterday.

If you were to see the answers, you'd notice that none of the names on the list are second-rate achievers. They're the best in their respective fields.

The point is that applause dies. Achievements are forgotten. Awards tarnish. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Now take a second test. See how you do:

- 1** Name three teachers who aided your journey through school.
- 2** Name three friends who helped you through difficult times.
- 3** Name five others who have taught you something worthwhile.
- 4** Think of five people who have made you feel special and appreciated.
- 5** Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.

Much easier?

The people who make a difference in life aren't necessarily the ones with the most credentials, the most money, the most influence, the most power, the greatest number of awards.

They're the ones who care.

(Source: author unknown. Adapted with thanks.)

On Reflection

"An inventor is simply a person who doesn't take his education too seriously.

You see, from the time a person is six years old until he graduates from college, he has to take three or four examinations a year. If he flunks once, he's out. But an inventor is almost always failing.

He tries and fails, maybe a thousand times. If he succeeds once, he's in. Those two things are diametrically opposite. We often say that the biggest job we have is to teach a newly hired employee how to fail intelligently. We have to train him to experiment over and over and to keep on trying and failing until he learns what will work."

~ Charles Kettering (developer of the first electric cash register)



Colaboro IV

Colaboro IV, the next generation of our mentoring software is set for its early April launch. Responses to the beta version have been uniformly warm, enthusiastic and positive.

What changes did we make? Here's just a few:

Colaboro now has three different versions.

➔ 1. Colaboro Networking

streamlined for Mentoring Pools© focussing less on competency-building and more on proteges connecting easily and accurately with meeting people who have highly-desired demographics. These choices, made by the protege, can range from: "mentor in the same location as me", or "has X years of experience in a field, and so forth.

➔ 2. Colaboro Core

enhanced version of the current Colaboro 3. One key introduction is the new modularity that allows clients to add on options if desired.

The **Online Partner Training**, for instance, is an optional module that can be licensed for a specific number of users. There are no restrictions on how many times each licensed individual user can access Online Partner Training during the year. Here's what that means: if Mentor A uses it in conjunction with Protege B, then starts to work with Protege C, Mentor A can log in without additional charge.

Colaboro IV Core continues to include tools such as the **Needs-Expertise Inventory**© for Competencies. In tandem with our Professional Mentoring Services staff, Coordinator can even create competency-based statements and change Likert-type scale ratings using a new **Survey Builder**.

The **Mentoring Compatibility Indicator**© and **Mentoring Style Indicator**© tools have not changed and are still included for use, if desired. The first still identifies best interpersonal matches while the second profiles patterns of giving and asking for help in the relationship.

Coordinator matching capability has been expanded based on client requests. Now, partners can be matched in same or different **Mentoring Pools**©.

➔ 3. Colaboro Enhanced

for clients with richly-complex requirements.

If you'd like to qualify your organization's Task Force or Steering Committee for a Colaboro IV demo, call today. Tell us about your needs, your unique challenges, and your experience with mentoring and coaching programs to date.

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Insightful reading: Dark Age Ahead

(From page 2)

erroneously may imagine can save us from future decline or forgetfulness."

Jacobs lines up her ammunition right away, citing Jared Diamond's fascinating work *Guns, Germs, and Steel* in which he argues that (on the plus side) on any continent with the development of cities, civilizations were able to support individuals and institutions engaged in activities other than direct food production. In other words, crucial activities like **mentoring** could now relay the essentials of the increasingly-refined culture on a wider scale through new specialists -- the priests, artisans, lawyers, generals, farmers, hunters and others.

*If you fail to prepare,
you prepare to fail."
Anon*

On the negative side, "cultures lost their memories." Or, even if one culture had an early and long lead over another -- this status is not secure. In the cases of China and Mesopotamia, they were far in advance of culture in Europe but eventually were surpassed. They did not have Dark Ages but both dwindled into poverty and backwardness relative to Europe. Diamond's insight, paralleling her own, concerns Jacobs.

Her cautionary tale then singles out "*five pillars of our culture that we depend on to stand firm*" with her promise to discuss "*what seem to me ominous signs of their decay... in process of becoming irrelevant*":

- community and family
- higher education
- taxes and governmental powers directly linked to needs and possibilities
- effective practice of science and science-based technology
- self-policing by the learned professions.

Symptomatic of the breakdown of these five are societal failings like racism, the growing gulf between rich and poor, attrition of the middle class, environmental destruction, crime, low election turnout and voter distrust of politicians.

Heavy message? Absolutely. Ignore it, she claims, at your peril. After all, it's happened before to those who turned a blind eye to the lessons of the civilization next door or the civilization of a few decades earlier.

Next issue: Dark Age Ahead - Vicious Spirals