

MentorInk Newsletter

... the online publication of Mentoring Solutions Inc.

Year 18 Issue 4 September, 2004



In this issue

Emotional Intelligence Part 2- On empathy. For those of you who have just joined our readership, over the years, many different well-known books have been reviewed. You may want to dig into our archives for back issues. See page 3.

Mentoring Timeline With page 2, the clock turns to reliving the Olympic experience

How A Mentor might Contribute We continue the series. See page 2.

Press Release - Mentoring Solutions expands its service. For details, turn to page 5.

Mentoring in a Featured Profession. See page 4.

Test yourself. Can you spot the gaps? Part of the Ask Mentor series. Turn to page 4

UPCOMING:

- Book Review series - Part 3 of Working With Emotional Intelligence • Mentoring Timeline
- Details on the 18th Annual International Mentoring Conference (April 2005) • Series: How a Mentor Might Contribute -- more myths about self-help • [Nine Suggestions](#) Some time-tested insights.

Expressions of Interest invited

July 1986, several hundred attendees from around the world attended The First International Conference on Mentoring in glorious Vancouver, B.C. It was a "who's who" of mentoring -- many "household names" in the field. As an event, it's still fondly remembered, in part due to the fact good friendships and co-projects were born out of that special gathering.

Did you miss out? Did you attend and have been waiting all this time for another invitation? Pine no more... we are giving consideration to another such event for 2006! The format could be similar to the first -- speakers, concurrent sessions, meet-the-expert-Walkabouts, roundtables, Plenaries, and more -- or something radically new.

Here's the catch -- we're asking you for input. For example, send us examples of (a) type(s) of activities, (b) presenter names, (c) themes (d) groups / companies / organizations who might consider collaborating with us.

Email your bright ideas to the MentorInk Newsletter Editor at mgray@mentoring-solutions.com

Deadline for EOI submission is September 30, 2004.

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Murphy's Law of Combat

[or how a Mentor Might Contribute - part 3]

"1. The important things are always simple. 2. The simple things are always hard. 3. The easy way is always mined."

So says Murphy.

We love the notion that we can fix what's broken on our own. It's called self-help. It's especially easy to fall in love with concepts like concocting our own medicines, so to speak. We might not pause long enough to wonder: "But is it *good* medicine? Will it work?"

There is an appealing myth we can pick up a book and just read with the thought in mind that a solution is bound to leap off the pages --quick and easy. Self-help often is vastly oversimplified. Buried beneath partial truths is the plain fact that often there is much more hard labor to be done. Even the best self-help quite possibly is too simplistic to be able to manage complex challenges.

For these reasons there are mentors -- people wise enough, objective enough, experienced enough and strong enough to say: "Not good enough. Needs more practise. Needs more thinking through. You aren't ready."

Mentors are also people who look at popular panaceas and understand that popular "recipes" don't always work for a particular person at a specific point in time. Or simply don't work at all.

Case in point: The protege is working for a prolonged period of time in a stressful situation with one or more uncollegial peers. How to handle this? Run to the self-help book or internet site. What does it say? "Vent your anger and it will go away."

Not so fast says Mentor. Research suggests venting can be counterproductive and might keep the anger going. Expressing anger elevates cardiovascular activity that can contribute to cardiovascular disease. Instead, Mentor suggests the counter intuitive: watch funny movies, listen to soothing music, do things that are absorbing while they give the mind an opportunity to become more objective and more conscious of mood. Remember, in the end, one goal of the learner is to become a reflective practitioner. Seems simple enough but definitely not easy.

Next issue: More myths about self-help.

"DON'T JUDGE EACH DAY BY THE
HARVEST YOU REAP,
BUT BY THE SEEDS YOU PLANT."
~ ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Mentoring Timeline©

Fittingly, with this Mentoring Timeline, we celebrate the 2004 Olympics with an extended piece.

At the last Olympic games in Sydney, Africa's total medal tally was 35 with nine gold medals. Ethiopia, one of the world's poorest countries, earned the highest number of medals, four gold, one silver and three bronze. Ethiopia finished third in the medals ranking, behind the United States and Russia.

In Athens 2004, Africa's sportsmen and women will aim to increase this number. One such African, Kenenisa Bekele from Ethiopia, showed his class and versatility by winning an unprecedented third long and short course double at the World Cross Country championships.

In Sydney, the 22 year old Bekele outspurred his **mentor** Haile Gebrselassie to win the 10,000. Later, the protege also took the 5,000 bronze, shattering his mentor's records.

That's today, or at least the recent past. Now, here's a condensation of an account written in 1924 by Thomas P. Curtis, an Olympian in 1896, as a way to see just to what degree the world has changed, not just for athletes but also for the mentor-protege relationship. Imagine, as you read this the shifts that have occurred in attitudes towards training for big events, the mind set of the amateur, expectations, publicity, rewards.

Not much is said about the **mentor** however it is clear conditions and attitudes in some areas have drastically changed. Perhaps this shift is best captured by the movie Chariots of Fire. What has been the impact then on mentoring? Here's part of what Curtis says:

"When the games were first revived, the public interest at that time, particularly in European countries, was great. In the United States the revival was little advertised, little understood, and owing to these facts and to the great distance which had to be traversed by competing athletes, only two athletic bodies in this country sent representative teams -- Princeton University and the Boston Athletic Association (BAA). The decision to send this latter team was reached less than two weeks before the opening event."

Curtis felt the Olympics lost all of the romance and novelty once they were held outside Athens. "In 1896, the records made were not particularly good... largely due to the soft track in the Stadium, which had not been entirely completed."

The small team of five athletes, and trainer-mentor, John Graham, of the B. A. A., sailed from New York in March. "On board, the rear deck was cleared daily at about 3 p.m. and for an hour or more we practiced our different events....Training, however, for athletic sports was hardly at the same standard

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Mentoring Timeline (cont.)

in any of the European countries. I will never forget a stockily built, curly-haired Frenchman whom we encountered on our way from Brindisi to Patras. He confided to me that he was entered in two events, one, the 100-meter dash, and the other the 26-mile Marathon race. He stated very naively that he firmly expected to win one and possibly both."

"The first event on the program was the race of 100 meters in which both Burke and I were entered. There were 24 competitors coming from almost every European nation, and the sensation was an odd one. I was drawn in the first heat. Next to me stood the Frenchman, and to my surprise I discovered he was the same stocky little man who had confided to me that he was going to compete in the 100-meter race and, also, in the Marathon event. To my surprise, also, while standing on our marks, he was hastily engaged in drawing on a pair of white kid gloves, telling me that the reason he did so was, as he expressed it, "Becuz I am to run before ze Kink." He adopted these same tactics a few days later in the Marathon race and ran the entire 26 miles with a pair of white kid gloves on, only to find on reaching the Stadium some four hours after the crowd and Royal Family had left. He did not, in that race at least, run before "ze Kink." It was quite pathetic."

One of the most unexpected results occurred in the competition for throwing the discus. *"This form of athletic sport had been entirely confined to Greece from time immemorial, and no competitor from any other land was familiar with the rules covering the competition or with the proper method of handling the discus itself."*

"Robert Garrett, the Captain of the Princeton Team, decided to enter this event for the fun of it. All other competitors were Greeks, and to see the discus thrown as they handled it was to see grace personified. We are all familiar with the statue of the Discobolus, and the Greek competitors carefully followed the position shown in that work of art. Not so with Garrett, however, who seized the discus in his right hand and swinging himself around and around, the way the 16-pound hammer is usually thrown in this country, threw the discus with tremendous force. His first two attempts, however, were laughable, as the discus, instead of sailing parallel to the ground, turned over and over and narrowly missed hitting some of the audience. On his third and last throw, however, he succeeded in getting the discus away perfectly and, to the chagrin of the Greek champion who had made three perfect throws in the most graceful manner possible, it was found that Garrett's throw exceeded by some two feet the best throw of any other man. I think no one was more surprised than Robert Garrett himself."

One noticeable activity was the total lack of organized cheering. *"Our team was assigned a box in the front row of the Stadium, some fifty feet from that of the King and Queen. At intervals we cheered whenever one of our number was successful. We found we were listened to with a great deal of interest and surprise, so much so that when we had given no cheer for an hour or more the special aide of*



Book Review: Working with Emotional Intelligence - part 2

In 1995, Daniel Goleman published his book on the his research about *"the new measure...[that] focuses on personal qualities, such as initiative and empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness."* It's his second, follow-up book written in 1998 that's the focus of this series. We're examining it to see if it lives up to it's pronounced agenda of offering us *"an entirely new way of thinking about..."*.

As we continue, we discover Goleman links empathy to mentoring via a chain of ideas. His broad umbrella term is "social radar" with a series of competencies. Specifically, at the point of dealing with empathy, those who "understand others" can sense "other's feelings and perspectives, and [take] an active interest in their concerns".

Following on this, the author suggests people with this competence are *"attentive to emotional cues and listen well"*; *"show sensitivity and understand other's perspectives"* and *"help out based on understanding other people's needs and feelings"*.

Sounds like a description of good mentoring.

Here's what he points to as the pay off -- listening well is essential to success in the workplace. What he says next is a motherhood many overlook neglect:

"Those who cannot or do not listen come across as indifferent or uncaring, which in turn makes others less communicative... People who seem easy to talk to are those who get to hear more."

Goleman mentions other facets -- empathy needs tempering in organizations with tight resources since too strong an identification with "someone else's need" leads people to be more prone to go to extremes in helping. Such decisions can harm the collectivity. Empathy can cause a certain level of distress that professionals have to learn to manage and balance. As well, empathy has its own politics, more of which will be detailed in part three of this series.

Next issue: The politics of empathy.

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It's tough to find a Mentor When You're in Business

Searching for a mentor can be hard when that someone has to be willing and able to help take a company to the \$50,000,000 dollar level. While many formal mentoring programs focus on early-stage companies and budding entrepreneurs (because there are more mentors able to help at this level), there's still much to be imparted at later growth stages.

In the formative years, the mentor might be there to help develop competencies such as financing, employee programs, banking relationships, lines of credit -- the basics.

At the next level, the protege could be looking for people with influence to open doors ... not only to grow the business, but to grow it more profitably. The mentor has to appreciate what the protege is facing. Further complicating matters are needs to work closely with someone of the same gender or ethnic background. To ask this in addition to all the other requirements is to seek the almost-impossible. For instance, only 2 percent of women-owned businesses are over the \$5,000,000 million mark.

Some proteges, in an interim step, become members of a CEO peer group, meeting these people monthly or quarterly. Others pay other companies for help with issues. Often proteges cite several drawbacks to this approach: one-on-one mentoring is not provided and proteges feel they can't be candid under these conditions. In some cases, another approach is taken when the protege and his or her staff mentor other companies.

The protege must be able to clearly articulate what is needed -- a tale order if there are virtually no role models or samples to use for such purposes so there's a reliance on asking the mentor to do a lot of telling at first. "Tell me where I need to be with my bank. Help me align my executive officers."

Good mentors are hard to find, but it's worth the effort to find one, no matter a company's size.

[Source: extracted from *The Atlanta Business Chronicle* December 2003]

"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions.
Small people always do that,
but the really great
make you feel that you, too,
can become great."
~Mark Twain

Test Yourself

[one more in the series Ask Mentor]

Surfing the web, Mentor came across the following which is typical of what some are offering for use in mentoring programs. On the surface, it seems appealing and easy but Mentor warns readers: it lacks research, statistics, and case studies. Recall that elsewhere in this edition, there's mention of Murphy's law and "easy" approaches. This might fall into that category. Read the description to see if you can spot gaps in the concept.

Leadership Style 2: The Mentor

The most interpersonally oriented of all the leadership styles. Healthy Mentors are unconditionally caring leaders who derive deep satisfaction from seeing and encouraging the development of others; they are typically great supporters of customer service. Well-developed 2s will also be aware of their own needs, which provides balance in their lives and allows them to give freely, without expectation of return.

Developmental skills include acknowledging their own needs, seeing how they contribute to their own workload and saying no, setting clearer boundaries, and asserting their interpersonal power more directly.

An Analysis:

1. The mentoring activity isn't positional in the way a leader is. A leader actually might not be a mentor.

2. Mentoring is a highly individual, flexible process that aims for appropriateness in order to be successful. Depending on what's appropriate at any given time, the mentor carries out different roles, not just one role. Thus one would have to ask if there is a "leadering process"?

3. Those who are not leaders can still be excellent mentors. Being a leader is not a prerequisite.

4. Different personalities make equally good or bad mentors. For instance, an introverted person could be a strong mentor while another introvert might make a weak mentor. The same can be said of extroverts. There is no ideal mentor personality.

5. Mentoring appears to be time sensitive. One person might be excellent under one set of conditions (not stressed; equipped with knowledge; etc.) but not under another set of conditions.

6. Daniel Goleman's research suggests that giving unconditionally can weaken the organization.

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Getting it right!

Back in May 2002, we were ready to replace “OMS”, the Online Mentoring System® (our original mentoring software) with a new concept. Needing a new name, we chose Colaboro® to convey the idea of “collaboration” for knowledge sharing and transfer.

Here’s a quick and easy way to remember what our tool stands for:

Think “co” as in together

“lab” as in laboratory - an apt description for the extensive testing we do to get it right

“oro” - as in gold - the high standard we strive to meet.

Colaboro comes in different versions based on target group, and goals, among other factors. Colaboro Core (on the market since 2002); Colaboro Networking (developed in association with Stanford University and due for beta-test in September); Colaboro e-NSites (one self-directed pilot project for this version started the Registration Component this past April for some 700+ participants) with another Pilot for a different client finished the Planning Component in April and due to move to the next component in July.

If you’d like more about Colaboro®, and the right version for your organization, call us today toll free at 1-877-955-1314

Mentoring service online

We’re on the GSA Schedule. GSA operates through the Office of Contract Management Federal Supply Service. Each vendor on the schedule is listed on the Central Contractor Registration database (CCR).

Some weeks back, with the help of Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC), an Ottawa-based organization, Mentoring Solutions was assigned a contractor number under the heading of “mentoring software”. More accurately, we are a mentoring service online. So discard the idea that we send clients a CDROM to install on individual computer hard drives. We don’t. Service is what it’s all about.

View GSA information at: <http://www.ccr.gov>.

squeezed



for time?

Take The Mentoring
Interest Profiler™ (MIP)

Know how many of our staff are interested in mentoring?” or “What type of mentoring do our staff desire -- formal or informal?” The MIP is our web-based survey tool that can be used organization-wide to determine the interest in mentoring (and coaching).

This brief survey takes mere 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.

Want to use the MIP? Qualified organizations can contact our Sales staff to discuss your challenges and how we can help.

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Mentoring Timeline (cont.)

King George walked solemnly down from the Royal Box, stopped in front of our box, and touching his hat, said in the most solemn voice, 'His Majesty, the King--requests--that for him--once more--you will make--that peculiar noise.' This we promptly did--the King standing and touching his cap in acknowledgment."

The Marathon race was one in which the Greeks took more interest than in any other and for which their athletes had been training a long time. One woman wanted to compete, but was not allowed to start. *"The men were set off at two o'clock, each competitor followed by two soldiers on horseback. In the meantime, the other events were progressing in the Stadium. The 100-meter finals came first. As this race came immediately before the finals in the hurdles, our trainer-mentor thought it unwise for me to enter, so I was kept out to concentrate all my energies on the next race. Burke won by a foot and the American flag was promptly run up on the flagpole set near the entrance. This was done throughout the Games at the end of each contest, thereby enabling the spectators to tell the nationality of the winner, a thing that would have been otherwise almost impossible."*

Next came the finals in the hurdle race. *"The race was nip and tuck from start to finish. I beat out my closest opponent in the stretch by a scant two feet. As this was the race I had come especially to run, I breathed much more freely and was able to look at the other final contests with much greater pleasure."*

"At about half past four a gun was heard--the signal that the first one of the Marathon runners had been sighted. The excitement was intense, everyone wondering whether the man was Greek, American, English or French. All contests then in progress were temporarily stopped to await the arrival of the winner. In the course of a few minutes a tremendous cheering was heard outside the gate of the Stadium, and a man in the dress of a Greek peasant ran up the steps and onto the track, making his way towards the King's throne, in front of which had been placed the finish line. His appearance showed the tremendous effort that he had made, and the fearful ordeal he had undergone owing to the condition of the roads. He was covered with dust and grime, the sandals that he wore on his feet were in rags, and his drawn face showed the strain he had suffered. His name was Loues and he was a Greek donkey driver from the little town of Marousi."

"As soon as the people were able to recognize him, the cheering and clapping of hands that broke forth was deafening. Hundreds of pigeons which had been kept concealed until then were set free, with Greek flags tied to their feet, hats were thrown in the air, the Crown Prince walked onto the track and congratulated Loues, and all the pent up enthusiasm that the Greeks had been saving up during the past six months for this very event, broke loose with a vengeance. It was almost a half-hour before any sort of peace was restored."

By winning this race, Loues won for himself everlasting glory throughout Greece. *"His name has been carved over the entrance to the Stadium, he was given 25,000 francs by an enthusiastic Greek banker, he succeeded in marrying his sweetheart, whom her father had hitherto kept from him on account of his poverty, and wherever he went he was received with shouts of welcome as the man who had vindicated the glory of Greece against the athletes of all the world."*

"One thing only remained to keep us in Athens after this, and that was the giving of the prizes which consisted of an olive branch cut from the sacred grove of Olympus, a large silver medal especially designed, and a diploma, consisting of a symbolic engraving giving the name of the winner, the race won, etc., in Greek letters. During the week following the Games, in our progress through the streets, we were greeted with cries of "Nike, Nike" [Victor]." Shopkeepers gave them small trinkets and gifts -- hankies and neckties -- that the athletes were embarrassed to take gratis.

"We arrived in Boston on May 7, after a trip of a little over seven weeks, a trip which I think few of us will ever forget."

[Sources: Mohammed Allie, Cape Town; MIT's alumni magazine, Technology Review, July 1924]