

MentorInk Newsletter™

the online monthly of the Mentoring Institute Vol14 Issue 1

Welcome to *MentorInk Newsletter™* a publication of the Mentoring Institute since 1986. If you've read earlier editions, you'll know that past issues have carried everything from mentoring in history, tips, definitions, excerpts from timely articles to research information and book reviews -- everything and anything mentoring-related with special emphasis on formal mentoring programs. With the advent of a revised website, items that were clickable buttons could well appear here in future editions. Let us know your interests and your reactions to *MentorInk Newsletter*. Happy reading to all.

"The proteges of today



are the mentors of tomorrow."

Inside MentorInk™

This issue:

- from The Virtual Mentoring Library™
- Words That Matter: Role models
- The Legacy of Mentor: Leadership
- Mentor Answers FAQs™
- Mentor Muses™

MentorInk™ next issue:

We will carry items from The Virtual Mentoring Library™, Mentor Answers FAQs™, Words that Matter™, features of interest, such as your questions to us. Here's an abbreviated sample...

- "Where can I get more details about The NEW Mentoring Paradigm™?"
- "I am doing research on a European company whose mentoring program is viewed as not working effectively....I want to know if one of the main reasons for the failure is a lack of support the mentors receive."

Stay posted for some answers. If you have any other items of interest to you, please let us know. Email: mentor@uniserve.com or fax: 250/655-0324

Your editors:

Marilynne Miles Gray & Bill Gray



from The Virtual Mentoring Library™

Q: I can see how proteges benefit but what's in it for the mentor?

A: That's a great question to ask. There are many benefits. Here's a cross-section:

Studies show that those who volunteer (which is usually the case with mentors) may be happier and healthier than those who don't. So, on one level, being a volunteer mentor could have a positive impact on your life emotionally and physically.

The key here is the term "volunteer." In mentoring programs, we recommend that participants be volunteers rather than volunteered. From time to time, we meet people who tell us "*I was volunteered for this program and I'm not happy about it.*" It would seem self-evident that programs will be more successful with one approach as opposed to the other.

In one study of (volunteer) mentors, a very wide range of benefits was reported on 4 dimensions: personal esteem, skills, professional, relationship. For example, mentors said they increased their workplace effectiveness, felt rejuvenated professionally, contributed long-term to the organization, experimented with new ideas, sharpened abilities to help others effectively, and so on.

Another issue: those who are chosen to be mentors typically are both good with people and skilled at what they do.

Is your premise that anybody can be a mentor? Certainly, anyone can try. However, this doesn't translate into success at any time for any given mentoring relationship.

So, a word of caution. There are benefits waiting to be harvested. That's clear enough from all the evidence. One of our ongoing challenges is in knowing who will make the best mentors and how to prepare them to be the best mentors possible. ~ ~

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The Editors

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The legacy of Mentor™

Words that Matter™

Q: The other night, on television, I heard someone say of a famous movie actor: "He's my role model."

In this case, the person speaking obviously didn't know the actor. What is a role model? What is its place in a mentoring program?

A: All of us are role models for others. A mentor will be a role model by default. While there are other roles the mentor may or may not undertake (such as coach or teacher, etc.), this is one core role.

The protege may be oblivious to the role-modelling aspect of the relationship, but nonetheless it does operate.

Though role-modelling is basic to the mentoring relationship, a role model can be read about, and observed from afar with no direct interaction occurring. That is, someone can be a role model without being a mentor (e.g., sports celebrity, historical leader). One can learn positive and negative things by observation of a role model. Simply put, this person is a model for a specific role.

Since people have strong ideas about roles, training, education and life choices, role-modelling programs are created to help participants win access to a wider variety of occupations and nontraditional careers, for instance. When certain groups are confined to limited roles, society is seen as being the loser. Our mentoring programs can (a) capitalize on the fact that there are role models all around and (b) generate deep and useful discussions out of the observation of our role models. ~

First thoughts about leadership

Two hundred years from now, people will have difficulties interpreting our actions and words unless they look at our motives, events and societal norms. Everything in context, as the wise person advises.

In ancient times, leadership was at a premium in an under-populated world in which the average life span was 35 years. No one could afford premature loss of a leader nor could anyone afford to throw away key lessons the leader had learned. Thus, mentoring for leadership was one of the first forms of the relationship that we come across.

Why look to the past, for example to *The Odyssey* or *The Bible*, for any contemporary lessons?

Because good leaders and good learners don't ignore history. History has the ability to make us wise. In mentoring terms, wisdom is based on past experience. We triangulate between past lessons, current conditions and future possibilities. An incredible amount can be learned about human nature by a backward glance.

That's where the story always begins — with people. To set the scene: as we know, Odysseus entrusts the education of his son, Telemachus, to Mentor. The act of mentoring is actually not dependant on just one person (Mentor). Look closely at the original story, and you'll discover that, much like what happens in good mentoring programs, the interplay between the process of mentoring and the provider is what counts.

Again, if you look at the story, the young protege asks for and receives some dozen different behaviors (roles) from people who have travelled the road of life a little further: guidance, advice, teaching, role-modelling, skill-building, gate-opening and so on. Each role is appropriate to the moment and the need. Nothing is simulated and nothing is just for fun. It's serious and complex. Nitty-gritty, real life leadership-in-training. Failure (in this case) can lead to loss of life. Today, it might be loss of one's market share or a downward turn of a career or making a wrong transition. (to be continued) ~~

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Mentor Answers FAQs™

Q: When I read descriptions of many mentoring programs, I don't see much about design. Seems to me there's a lot of emphasis on other activities. Why bother with design? Does the time and care spent designing a Pilot Mentoring Program actually payoff?

A: Yes, absolutely.

In the late 1970s when we carried out some of the earliest research on mentoring programs, we made discoveries about mentoring programs that we now take for granted.

We discovered that every mentoring program has basic components: design, identification and matching of best participants, training, providing follow-up and then evaluation. That's what makes it a program.

Without careful design, each of these elements will not flow smoothly from one to the other with success building on success (the multiplier effect). At the Mentoring Institute, we regard design as the single most important factor for success. After all, isn't success what we want for our mentoring programs?

Here are two brief examples: In a program for a company, from one location to the next, each site Co-ordinator sets the ground rules and operates it in whatever fashion desired. The report backs are highly negative. Many pairs don't continue meeting past the first two months; they complain they don't know how to proceed or what is expected of them. Careful design, in this case, is not a consideration.

In a program for a Fortune 100 manufacturer, after the training session, several participants drop out unexpectedly due to downsizing or relocation. Despite this, the Program achieves its intended goals. Formal evaluation shows that over 85% of participants (a) rate the Program as very good/excellent (b) say it met /exceeded expectations, (c) felt well-matched (d) say the training had prepared them in every way.

How is this possible? A reasonable amount of upfront design time ensures that, for one thing, the Co-ordinator has been prepared in advance to meet a wide array of possible challenges. The metaphor we use is to think of the design of a bridge, If it's not done properly, it will fall down. Because we have a great deal of experience in running mentoring programs and in the design arena, we can anticipate the challenges and proactively prepare for them.

Put another way, some organizations are prepared to sacrifice excellence in favor of expediency. Happily, that wasn't the approach taken by the Fortune 100 company referred to earlier. It doesn't take a Fortune 100 size to obtain superior quality. It was (and still is) a case of the right mindset about design.

Here's a test... which approach will your organization take to your mentoring program? Good design takes your challenges into consideration proactively. Without good design, you won't have high levels of payoff. ~~

Mentor Muses™

Q: Recently, I saw a magazine which has a panel of mentors: business mentors, executive mentors, etc. Each month, a question from a business owner is submitted for a solution. Is this really mentoring?

A: It would be mentoring if the mentor actually knew the person well and the circumstances. What is being offered is an Advisory Panel. Giving advice is one of many role mentors can fill.

NB: It takes more than one role to make someone a mentor. But more of that topic in a future issue of *MentorInk*.

If you think it through, the answer could be way off the mark. For the readers, there are some problems too.

First, the reader has to extract (on his/her own) the application to their own situation. Is it appropriate? Is it doable? What's the cost? Second, it's a lot of work. Third, it's impersonal.

Mind you, it's a catchy way to bolster readership. ~~