

# MentorInk Newsletter™

the online monthly of Corporate Mentoring Solutions Vol14 Issue 6 October 2000



## The Legacy of Mentor©

### Part 3 - Reading the past

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 must be put in context. \*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.

Under the microscope, Ulysses turns out to be a small time, scrappy chieftain overseeing a minuscule territory and wealth (mostly sheep and goats), striving with rivals for increased prestige and assurance that his kingdom will survive. Odysseus turns phrases and situations to his own advantage. Homer sketches a physically somewhat oafish leader endowed with great stamina. Ingenious, wily — these more than any other qualities are mentioned. When readers pick up on descriptors like "arrogant," "grasping" and "grudge-bearing," they scarcely seem like labels we'd want for mentors today though Gordon Gecko in the movie, *Wall Street*, seems a good exemplar.

Extremely suspicious of strangers, Odysseus was almost as mistrustful of men he had known a long time. Above all, he never lost sight of his own narrow self-interest.\* In Homer's day, these qualities were admirable

(con't on page 2)

*Inside...*  
**What's your  
"mentorability quotient"© ?**

From the Editor: Welcome to *MentorInk Newsletter*™ . If you've read earlier editions, you'll know that past issues have carried everything and anything mentoring-related with a focus on mentoring programs.



Let us know your interests and your reactions.

If you wish to unsubscribe, send an email to: [mentor@uniserve.com](mailto:mentor@uniserve.com) with the subject line "unsubscribe", your name and e-mail address in the text so we can find your entry and delete it. Happy reading to all.

Your editor: *Marilynne Miles Gray*

### Mentor Answers FAQs©

Q: "Recently, our company put all of our contact information (for mentors and proteges) into a bulletin board. We've had complaints that just having these lists of contact names and expertise isn't enough. Is there a better way?"

A: It doesn't matter if it's electronic or posted on the wall. You've got some problems. Here's why:

People have to take the initiative to make the contact. Some won't do that.

Second, there could be a real mismatch in terms of personalities. And nothing will come of this sort of match except bad feelings.

Third, and probably most important, it's too much work left on the shoulders of busy people.

What can be done to solve this series of challenges?

At Corporate Mentoring Solutions, we've developed and been beta-testing *The Mentoring-Builder*© which electronically identifies best candidates, selects and matches (for compatibility), indicates mentoring styles, identifies and matches protege needs with mentor expertise. *The Mentoring-Builder*© will even report on the progress each protege's makes on his/ her needs and goals. Finally, our electronic database helps you evaluate the entire program and relationships.

What's next? Online Mentoring Training. Anywhere, anytime. Field-tested.

What more can you ask? Especially if your own efforts need an upgrade. More information on our OMS Online Mentoring System can be found at our new website. ~~

**Benchmark**  
**your Program --**  
**Survey for Co-ordinators**

If you are the Co-ordinator of a Mentoring Program, you are eligible to answer our survey of mentoring program development & implementation practices. We hope to make this an annual event.

Only one survey response (i.e., from the Co-ordinator) will be used per program. We will accept entries for different programs within a given organization.

If you participate, the results will be emailed to you in December.

**Click here to fill out  
our 2000 survey.**

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and understandable. Years ago, we coined a saying: "The protégé of today is the mentor of tomorrow." If the only thing protégés learn focuses on self, radical short-changing occurs.

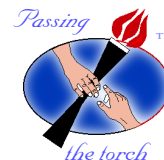
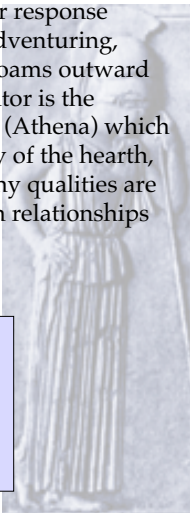
Odysseus would have desired certain training for a successor and for this training to be done only by the most trustworthy of people. Naturally, a successor and his instructor would be taken from inside the family and not outside if at all possible.

In ancient Greece, a young boy from the upper classes usually was educated within the family or clan structure by his father and close relatives for seven to fourteen years — similar to home schooling of today. Following an initial education by the mother, starting at the age of seven, more formal instruction emphasized Greek social values and leadership more than intellect, speaking ability, athletics, or academics. Given this set of guidelines, the goddess of war and wisdom, Athena, in the guise of Mentor, assists Telemachus not so much in his search for Odysseus as she serves in a variety of roles as father figure, trusted adviser, confidant, educator and protector.

One derivation suggests that the root of Mentor's name comes from the word "men" or "to remember, think or counsel." The task of the learned was to "remember" on behalf of the tribe and to tell the tribal stories. Freed up as we are today from this role by computers, video and audio tapes and books, for instance, this tribal role has withered, and perhaps not all for the good. So, on the surface, Mentor represents the professional or classroom side of Telemachus' life. He skill-builds widely during the various adventures and temptations that Telemachus faces. To us, very much an *ad hoc* process but to people of that period, perfectly logical and reasonable and understandable a process.

More importantly, he is the still, quiet, inner voice of experience that we'd like to hear in moments of stress so we don't fall back into bad habits or poor response patterns. While Ulysses represents the adventuring, warring, brave, masculine spirit which roams outward to the world beyond for new ideas, Mentor is the introspective, judicious feminine quality (Athena) which looks homeward to ensure the continuity of the hearth, community and family are secured. Many qualities are needed in a balanced fashion to maintain relationships both at home and abroad.

*The great thing about getting older  
is that you don't lose  
all the other ages you've been.  
~ L'Engle*



## Mentoring Myth #2:

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Myth: "People in this company don't need mentors or a program. I didn't have a mentor and look at how successful I am. It's a sink-or-swim world, survival of the fittest."

Reality: Thousands of people in their exit interviews are telling companies: "I'm leaving because nobody seemed to care." A good mentoring program will help to overcome this perception.

Reality: It's possible for a small percentage of people to be successful without the aid of a mentor. This may have been for any one of a number of reasons -- timing, a maverick personality that will not work within a mentoring relationship, someone with a misperception of how and why this relationship works. Lu Ann Darling's research suggests that 15% of the population may fit into this category.

The important thing to understand is that, as individuals responsible for the lives and careers of others, we do not have the right to make personalized judgments and impose them on others when there is data to the contrary.

Reality: Over the years, the negative survival-of-the-fittest approach has unnecessarily claimed victims. The suggestion is that only those who, on the surface, appear to be "fit" should reach the top. It casts all "winners" in the same mould. What will happen come the time that we need the talent of the person who has been cast aside?

A word of caution to those of you who are program co-ordinators -- if you dig deep enough, you might discover people in your organization who think in this outmoded way. How will you deal with it?

Reality: The person speaking (at the outset) equates informal mentoring with what occurs in a planned program. Again, if you are the program co-ordinator, it will be up to you to deal with this misperception. In turn, this means you will need to know the various differences between informal mentoring and planned mentoring programs.

## Words that Matter™

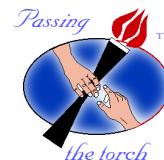
Q: What's your "mentorability quotient"© ?

A: "Mentorability quotient" is a term we coined in-house during a recent meeting.

Simply put, it's a two-way measure of: (a) the ability of a mentor to carry out mentoring roles and (b) the receptivity level of the protege such that the mentor is able to carry out his or her roles. ~~

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## Planned mentoring: Aiding key transitions in career development

Authors: Marilynne Miles Gray & William A. Gray Excerpted from: *Mentoring International* 1990, Vol 6 #.3 (Fall), pp 27-32. rev ver ©2000 CMSI Corporate Mentoring Solutions Inc.

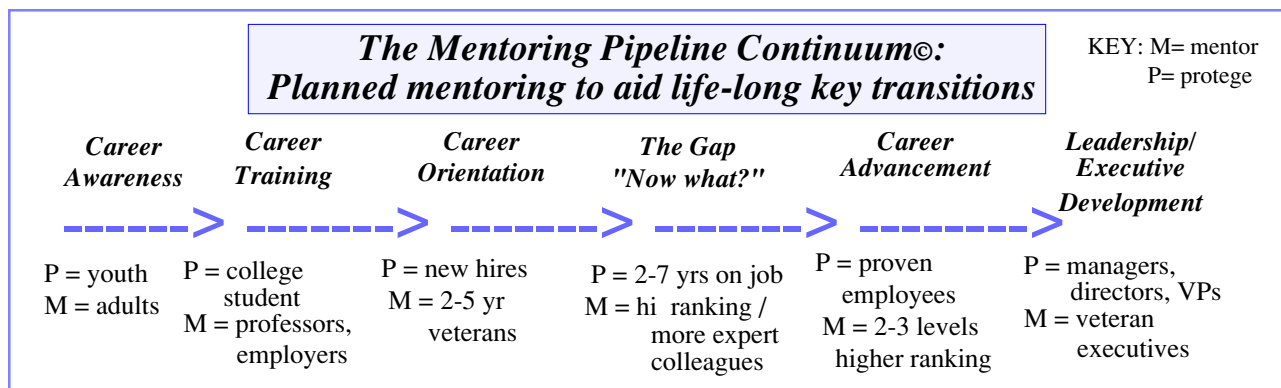
### Part One: The first 2 transitions

As planned mentoring programs are so various, they can help a wide range of individuals navigate through the major transitions or stages encountered during any career development. Every transition has 3 phases each with its own particular challenges. Neglect one phase, and the transition is made more difficult, flawed or not completed at all.

**Phase 1.** This encompasses decisions and activities that must be made before a protégé decides to make a major transition, for instance: choose a university major, enter a professional training program (like law), accept a new job or position, change careers or relocate, re-enter the workforce. A mentor can acquaint the "transitional" (the protege) with the realities of what lies ahead so that informed, realistic decisions to proceed (or not) can be made.

**Phase 2.** As the protégé is making the transition, the mentor can smooth the way, prevent potentially disastrous naive mistakes, and help the protégé get off on the right foot.

**Phase 3.** This phase is probably the one least considered and the point at which the ball is most likely to be dropped so to speak. Once into the transition, typically the protégé needs other, new kinds of mentor help to become ultimately successful. It is premature to believe that once the protege has arrived that support can immediately be withdrawn. Almost all of us need some early assistance to ensure survival in the new situation simply because it is new -- the responsibilities associated with it are new, as are the expectations; the concerns differ from those experienced during the transition, our horizons are new, we deal with new people, and so forth.



### Transition 1: Gaining career awareness

Some of the very first mentoring programs described in the literature in the late 1970s were those aimed at helping youth. As our own research from the 1980s shows, this seems appropriate point for mentoring program development because, until the advent of public education, youth learned about careers primarily from adult mentors. For example, formalized mentoring is making youth aware of: career possibilities, what it takes to be successful in particular careers, how organizations function, various academic disciplines and so forth. Formalized mentoring in North America aims to motivate at-risk youth to complete high school and become contributing members of society. As the Pipeline Model indicates, a variety of mentor give precious time to make certain tomorrow's workers remain in the pipeline leading to career development.

### Transition 2: Career preparation

Before higher education of the sort we know today was instituted, men (primarily) often prepared for an occupation through the guild system or an apprenticeship with a master (mentor). Contemporary college students experience what is likely a much more complex career preparation process. Freshmen have difficulty adjusting to academic learning that emphasizes theories, hypothetical situations, right answers and a linear thought process for solving problems. Often, the gap between theory and practice hinders the preparation of college graduates for the work place. To remedy these problems, there are at least two distinct flavors of mentoring programs in higher education:

- A. College student retention programs and
- B. Co-op mentoring programs. Again, as the Model shows, a variety of people fulfil the mentoring roles. Often these are different from those at other points along the continuum.

**NEXT MONTH: more transitions.**

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