

MentorInk Newsletter™

MentorInk is the online publication of
Corporate Mentoring Solutions Year 16 Issue 9 October 2002



About our lead item



Mentoring Scenario - Test Yourself

Here's an interesting and challenging situation culled from real life. How would you -- if you were in the situation -- respond? Whether you are a mentor, a protege, a co-ordinator, a supervisor, or a colleague, you are bound to have an opinion. What will it be? (See also The H section of our alphabet for another example....)

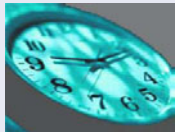
"The ancient human question 'Who am I?' leads inevitably to the equally important question 'Whose am I?' since there is no selfhood outside of relationship." - Douglas Steere

Other features:



The Intelligent Thinkers Guide to Mentoring (Part 7)

This month we continue our focus on components of a mentoring program. Last month, MentorInk contained one of eight recommendations for co-ordinated mentoring programs. These recommendations have a link to the overall theme of this portion of our Guide to components. Now read five more tips for success... (next page)



The Mentoring Timeline

In this issue, Sherlock Holmes meets Charles Darwin. What's the connection? As Newton said of the chain of knowledge, "If I see, it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants." Read on to follow the link from Darwin to his protege... (next page)



Mentor Muses - The Alphabet According to Mentor (H, and I)

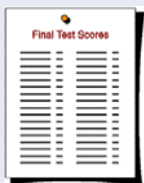
As you may know, if you have read earlier issues, Mentor is working through the alphabet. He understands that what appears in *MentorInk Newsletter* is but an abbreviated version of what appears in some books on mentoring, for example... (next page)

Mentoring Benchmark Survey 2002

This is our third survey of mentoring programs. In year one (2002), we published results from our very extensive 15-question study. Answers came from dozens of mentoring program co-ordinators around the world. In year two, we trimmed back the number of questions based on feedback from respondents.

This year, the survey will be divided into several parts -- one part each month -- with fewer questions so respondents need take only a minute (or less) to answer.

Each set of survey results will be reported in MentorInk. If you value intellectual capital on mentoring, make certain you participate. Thanks in advance.



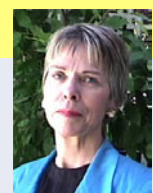
[Click here to participate](#)

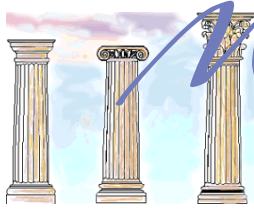
Please participate

From the Editor

Past issues have carried every thing & any thing mentoring-related with a focus on programs. Happy reading to all.

Your editor: *Marilynne Miles Gray*





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Mentoring Scenario

The following scenario is one contained in a forthcoming book with the following working title: *Athene's Secret: Mentor's Wisdom - The Book for Self-Directed Mentoring*.

The situation: Your organization, if it has a mentoring program, has one that can't accept any more mentors or proteges for the next six months.

Imagine you are someone with an urgent need for assistance from a mentor. Suppose you don't want to wait that long? -- your need is now. Whatever the case, you've asked around and have had one person "nominated". Here's some background on her...

Marla is a veteran with 17 years of experience. Your Department Head nominated her as a prospective mentor because: "She's the kind of person who would model collegiality for new hires." telling you "Marla feels it's an honour to be asked to work with a rookie."



Via the grapevine, you hear Marla also thinks: "There's a lot of status attached to being a mentor. You've got to let them [newcomers] try it out. I don't really expect to be the only person to help out. I haven't got the time to handhold."

"After all, from what I've seen of this new crop of hires, they're keen to try out what they've learned and it's not my place to dictate to them what to do. So I see my role as a sort of guide. When they need my help, they'll ask. They're professionals now and need to be treated that way."

You are of two minds after hearing some of this -- there isn't always someone around to help at this level and there are some issues that you can't and won't go to your boss about. That's why you hope to work with a mentor. And, to your way of thinking, you're not exactly a rookie because you've been with the organization for about ten months.

If there were others available to choose from that would be different but you aren't too sure about Marla... Additionally, it's taken you close to three hours just to track this one possibility down and you haven't even had a preliminary meeting with her. You start weighing the pros and cons. What will you do? Would you select any of these as a possibility?

- Option 1: Go for it and hope for the best. Quit the relationship if it doesn't work out in the first month.
- Option 2: Keep on looking and hope to meet another.
- Option 3: Put yourself on the program wait list and hope to be accepted.
- Option 4: Read some books on mentoring to see if you could do something more about your situation.
- Option 5: Reconsider your boss as your mentor.

Turn to page 4 for commentary.

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For more details contact CMSI.

The Alphabet According to Mentor

H handling unforeseen problems: one of the most vital of the program co-ordinator's roles... not only that but it really is an issue the mentor and protege also must do with finesse, in a timely fashion and with all seriousness. Here's an instance: The relationship is launched then the organization is hit by a strike. What to do? -- continue or let it slide? The relationship is launched then... well, you get the idea. If you want a challenge, refer to the scenario section to see how you respond to the unforeseen problem.



"None of us has gotten where we are solely by pulling ourselves up from our own bootstraps. We got here because somebody... bent down and helped us." -
Thurgood Marshall,
U.S. Supreme Court Justice

I interviews: Experience suggests that some of the most successful, long-lived mentoring programs are those with pre-selection interview components. That is, a Steering Committee has interviewed prospective participants as to their attitudes, availability and the like.

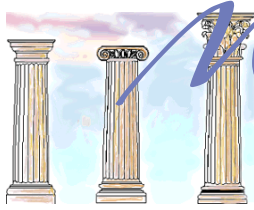
What type of questions are typical? Though it's clear there is no "typical" program, a few items seem to turn up perennially on the Committee lists. Here are seven from the mentor side of the equation:

- Define what you think mentoring is and is not.
- What prompts you to be a mentor? What do you believe you will "get out" of the relationship?
- In your own words, describe the goal(s) of this program.
- A friend has been asked to describe the strengths you would bring to the mentoring relationship. What would your friend say?
- Think back to your formative years, in what way(s) could a mentor have helped you / did a mentor help you?
- If there are value differences between you and your protégé, in what way(s) will you handle with them?
- Are there any questions you still have about the program and your role in it?

implementation: Every mentoring initiative has its own set of implementation Guidelines with dozens of details covering phases of the initiative and the respective "participants". Here's a cross-section of tasks for a Coordinator --

- at Orientation session, describe format, requirements (reports, assessments), etc. to prospects
- track how things are going or handle problems as they arise
- sit on Mentoring Steering Committee / Task Force

November issue - The letter J and more.



The Intelligent Thinkers Guide to Mentoring: Pt 7

3. Co-ordinated mentoring

In previous issues, we've looked at two types of mentoring with this being the third type. We also re-viewed one tip for ensuring success in a co-ordinated program. Here are a number of additional tips based on CMSI experience since 1978 with a wide range of initiatives.

Tips for success #2-6

#2. Each program must be designed around the specific goals (or intended outcomes / benefits) to be promoted. These goals relate to the needs of participants, determining mentor and protégé selection, and what type of training to provide.

It is not useful or productive to have a collection of individuals pursuing whatever goals they wish without this being in harmony with the overall mission and goals of the organization.

3. Begin small. Carefully plan a short pilot for a few participants so that inevitable start-up bugs can be rectified. Employ a research and development approach to ensure that the pilot is working as desired before expanding it to a larger audience.

4. Prospective participants should participate in an Information / Orientation session before they sign up. At such a session, the Co-ordinator clearly outlines items such as: the organization's expectations related to intended goals, duration of mentoring relationship, time requirements, tools to be filled out, etc.

This orientation provides one means for enabling prospective participants to buy in and become knowledgeable, committed volunteers.

We advise program champions (e.g., Mentoring Steering Committee or Mentoring Task Force) that there must be no surprises in a mentoring program when it comes to things like -- the boss knowing that one of his / her supervisees is in a mentoring program or that there is an expectation for participants to fill out reports on the status of the relationship, etc.

5. [Editor's note: Much of what follows in tip 5 was written

before sophisticated, electronic systems came along. However, much of this advice still holds true.]

Carefully select mentors and protégés from the pool of eligible volunteers. Match them without forcing this. Match so that intended goals can be achieved. Mentoring-appropriate tools comes closest to guaranteeing matches that are color and gender-blind, break down silos, undo the status quo -- while at the same time furthering some of the typical mentoring program.

When asked why he wasn't getting results with his countless tries to successfully develop the light bulb, Thomas Edison replied, "Results? Why, man, I've gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work."

6. Research over the years has clearly pointed to one key factor: not training participants is the primary cause of unsuccessful mentoring in co-ordinated programs.

Training must be provided for mentors and protégés so they know what is expected and how to fulfill those mentor-protégé roles and functions requisite to achieving intended goals. It is a mistake to assume that just because mentors have greater experience and practical wisdom, they automatically know how to fulfill essential mentor roles.

For this reason, CMSI has come to employ a joint training strategy with matched partners working together during the session to jump start the process by 25% or more (by client report).

(Source: excerpted from "Advice on Planning Mentoring Programs by Dr. William A. Gray, *Mentoring International*, vol 3 #3, summer 1989)

Next issue: More tips on successfully running a mentoring initiative and a further look at components.

Special note:

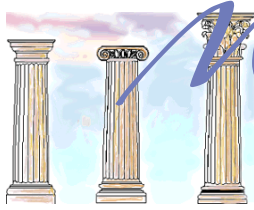
November is the last issue for the year. MentorInk does not publish in December.

The Mentoring Interest Profiler™ (MIP)

Here's a starting point to answer questions such as: "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 to be used organization-wide to determine the interest in mentoring. And it's FREE to appropriate organizations!

This 7-question survey takes approximately two 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. If your organization is interested in using the MIP, please contact sales@mentoring.ws.





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Mentoring Scenario

(cont from page 2)

Commentary

While it would take some time to completely explore the implications of each choice, the following should be noted...

Option 1: Go for it and hope for the best. Quit the relationship if it doesn't work out in the first month.

- Could have future negative outcomes when it gets around that you quit (especially if you did this without informing your mentor).

Option 2: Keep on looking and hope to meet another.

- Remember, the scenario implied you were desperate? Hope won't necessarily get you what you need and want.

Option 3: Put yourself on the program wait list and hope to be accepted.

- Good idea but you may not meet the program criteria so this should be a fallback position only, however good it seems initially. And, you need to do something immediately.

Option 4: Read some books on mentoring to see if you could do something more about your situation.

- Excellent idea. However, this requires discipline, and organization (on your part). No book will do it for you (books definitely don't mentor, people do)

Option 5: Reconsider your boss as your mentor.

- Typically not a good idea especially for all those confidential issues shared between mentors and proteges.

Here's two challenges: (a) rework the scenario imagining yourself in that situation, then (b) strategize additional options given your own unique mentoring situation.

Wise Words from Edgar Schein

[Editor's note: Because we recently concluded our series on mentoring trends and because Schein has spoken in the past about mentoring, we thought it might be interesting to offer this excerpt.]

Q: Has anything important changed in management over the past twenty or thirty years?

ES: We go through cycles... When you look over the last forty or fifty years there is nothing much that is genuinely new. It is a recycling and elaboration of something that has been proposed as far back as Plato. Perhaps the one exception, the one idea that is really new, is the emphasis on speed and variety. The information revolution and globalization has made the management task much more complex and demands much greater speed...

Studies of variations in organizational cultures between industries and countries make it perfectly obvious that the management process is different in different places. Even something as general as management by objectives doesn't hold everywhere. I think the ability to improvise and quickly feel what the situation needs are the most important skills a manager needs to have.

Edgar H. Schein is the Sloan Fellows Professor of Management Emeritus and Senior Lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management. (Source; HR.com July02)

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Mentoring Timeline™ 1882-1917 BC

Indirectly, the photo of Jeremy Brett as television's Sherlock Holmes (right) links to Charles Darwin and his protege -- and neighbour -- John Lubbock. Brett is seen admiring a flower -- one of the spurs to Lubbock's work on entomology (specifically) and generally on solving puzzles posed by Darwin's theories.

Darwin was so convinced the structures of flowers had coevolved with insects, he predicted the discovery of a moth with a 12-inch coiled tongue that could pollinate the Christmas Star orchid of Madagascar. With Holmesian logic, he concluded that if the flower existed, so did the pollinator. It took a mere 40 years (of ridicule for Darwin) to prove him correct.

Lubbock, like his mentor, wrote about nature (1882 and 1888) by showing through experiment how insects and flowers shaped one another. Lubbock proved bees have colour vision and, in turn, paved the way for Karl von Frisch to investigate the role of bee dances, and scout bees. While this seems esoteric to many (especially city folk), this type of knowledge has been invaluable.

Curiously, the fictional Sherlock Holmes retires from solving crimes and becomes a beekeeper on the Sussex Downs even producing a monograph on bee culture (1917). We can make a reasonable guess the good doctor would have consulted both Darwin and Lubbock. (Source: *Natural History*, May 1999)

