

Mentoring

Importance of Mentoring

The concept of mentoring has roots deep in history and culture. It has long been accepted that mentoring passes on valuable knowledge and helps those mentored to mature into their roles in business or society. Although the concept of mentoring was rarely formally addressed or studied prior to 1975, recent research on the effects of mentoring in business (coaching) and education indicate that higher retention rates, rapid career advancement, a stronger power base, and enhanced academic success are all outcomes of a successful mentoring program (Campbell 136). In the areas of education, students state a stronger sense of the college mission and greater commitment to lifelong learning after engaging in a mentoring experience. A successful mentoring program in the academic context can tie in the overall success of academic programs in the areas of instruction, supplemental instruction, tutoring, and financial assistance, which subsequently integrates into the success of the business, and civic communities.

Mentoring in ethics has increasingly been acknowledged in both academics and in business as an important factor in improving ethical behavior and decision making. In fact, the results of mentoring in ethics have been shown to exceed those of training in ethics. In analyzing data from a 2002 survey of more than 7,000 biomedical and social science researchers Anderson et al found that, while ethical training had no apparent effect on behavior, mentoring in ethics did produce tangible effects in the questionable behaviors of researchers. Mentoring, possibly because of its personal dimension, seems to have long term effects on those involved in mentoring programs.

One of the greatest challenges in mentoring is creating a specific definition that separates mentoring from teaching or training. Healy and Welchert suggest

that the key to mentoring is the creation of a “dynamic reciprocal relationship” between the mentor and the mentee. The mentoring experience must be life changing for both people involved in the experience. The person being mentored naturally benefits from the wisdom and experience of the mentor. They have a resource to go to in times of difficulty; they have an example to emulate, and they have a sense of investment in the organization represented by their mentor. The mentor, however, must also benefit. Mentoring provides the rewards of what developmental psychologist Erikson called “generativity.” It provides sense of creation and nurturing. The mentor is rewarded by seeing another individual shaped and improved by their guidance. Both parts of the mentoring relationship undergo what is called a transformation; who they are and how they perceive their role is changed by the mentoring activity.

*We make a living by
what we get, we make a
life by what we give.*

~~Winston Churchill

That mutual benefit of mentoring tends to create a sense of relationship, a bond of trust, between the mentor and mentee. That relationship serves as one of the primary rationales for the effectiveness of mentoring in ethics. Ultimately, ethical behavior is a matter of personal responsibility. Ethical choices are influenced by organizational codes, policies, and training, but the final decisions are frequently made by individuals. Those individuals are more likely to be influenced on a personal, lasting level by a relationship. Mentoring in ethics provides a different perspective on ethical decision making. It takes ethics out of the faceless context of the organization and places it in the relational context of mentor and mentee. The sense of personal trust and investment that frequently blossoms from mentoring have far greater reaching impacts on ethical behavior than any impersonal policy or training.

Furthermore, the leadership example of a mentor may indeed generate a desire to lead and to be an example in those being mentored. The process of mentoring provides inspiration and the promise of future ethical leadership.

In the past, mentoring has been viewed as something that “happens.” Recent interest, however, has sparked more intense evaluation of the mentoring process, and a more structured approach to mentoring. As research proves the effectiveness of mentoring, more organizations are putting formal mentoring programs into place. Natural mentoring, or mentoring as the result of a natural relationship that grows between a more experienced individual and a member of an organization is usually highly productive and should be encouraged. However, planned mentoring, or active creation of these relationships has also proven effective as long as certain criteria are met.

Planning Mentoring programs

In order to be successful, mentoring programs must meet certain criteria:

- **Mentors must be chosen carefully. They should**
 - Exhibit experience and proficiency as well as enthusiasm and a nurturing spirit
 - Show a willingness to engage on a personal level
 - Demonstrate a commitment to the time and effort required to truly nurture a transformational mentoring relationship
- **Mentees should**
 - Commit to the mentoring program with enthusiasm and expectation for transformation
 - Be willing to express their expectations and give the mentor an active, frank, ongoing evaluation
- **The program must**
 - Nurture relationships and encourage openness and trust
 - Maintain a sense of purpose and continue to offer benefits and challenges

Student Mentoring Opportunities

In the context of education, students may find mentoring opportunities with:



- High school and college counselors
- SGA advisor at college
- Local churches
- Local boys and girls clubs

Establishing these mentoring relationships early on can be incredibly valuable. By beginning mentoring programs as students, young people gain a strong sense of personal ethics and an investment in the community.

References & Resources

“Articles of Interest.” American Physiological Society. 15 August 2008. American Physiological society .9 April 2009. <<http://www.the-aps.org/careers/careers1/mentor/articles.htm>>

Campbell, Toni A. & Campbell, David E. “Outcomes of Mentoring At-Risk College Students: Gender and Ethnic Matching Effects.” *Mentoring and Tutoring* 15.2 (2007): 135-148. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 Mar. 2009.

What does it mean to mentor? Mentoring Exercise

Mentoring is an active commitment to a long-term relationship. Before beginning mentoring or planning a mentoring program, you need to think through your perceptions. Take the time to answer the questions below, and evaluate your expectations of a mentoring relationship. Mentoring is a journey of self-discovery, and understanding your expectations is the first step on the journey.

- 1. Define “mentoring” - what does it mean to you?**
- 2. Write 5 words that describe your “perfect” mentor**
- 3. What would I expect the mentor to do?**
- 4. What would I not want the mentor to do?**
- 5. How much time and planning would I expect our meetings/relationship to involve?**
- 6. Do I feel I need a mentor? Why or why not?**
- 7. What benefits would I get from a mentor?**
- 8. What goals or objectives, both personally and professionally would I like a mentor to help me reach?**

Meeting in the middle: Mentoring Exercise

Purpose

To help participants see the value of mentoring and to evaluate their own skills as a mentor.

Set Up

Choose two of the activities from pages 37-38 of this program, or another scenario of your choice. Pair participants into teams and give each team the scenarios. Assign one member of the team as a mentor and the other as a mentee. Have the pair role-play a mentoring session in which the mentee brings one of the scenarios to the mentor, and the mentor provides advice and guides the mentee in making a decision. The roles may then be reversed for the second scenario.

Timing

Allow approximately 30 minutes for the exercise—

- 10 minutes for each partner to act as “mentor”
- 20 minutes for discussion and group learning

Discussion

Did participants feel they were given helpful advice? Was a personal bond formed by the relational situation? Did the role of mentor “feel” different to them? Did they feel responsible to act differently in any way? What benefits or detriments can they see in a mentoring relationship? After playing both roles, which do they prefer?

Additional Resources:

Gladis, Steve. "Executive Coaching Builds Steam in Organizations." *T+D* 61.12 (Dec. 2007): 58-62. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO. Lake-Sumter Community Coll. Lib., Leesburg, FL. 6 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.linccweb.org/eresources.asp>>.

"The article discusses the significance of an executive coaching program in order to enhance the quality of leadership skills among employees. The results of a study indicate that training alone can increase productivity by 22 percent while a combination of training and coaching can increase productivity by 88 percent. The coach works to help the client identify the factors that motivate them to perform, thereby creating self-motivating tools for the future. Furthermore, the author suggests that coaches should take time to explain how coaching works and identify the level of commitment which is needed for the training to be successful."

O'Neill, R.M., & Blake-Beard, S. D. "Gender Barriers to the Female Mentor-Male Protégé Relationship." *Journal of Business Ethics*, 37 (2002): 51-63.

Parra, Gilbert R., et. al. "Mentoring Relationships for Youth: Investigation of a Process-Oriented Model." *Journal of Community Psychology* 30.4 (2002): 367-388. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 Mar. 2009.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P.T. *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Rose, G. L. "Enhancement of Mentor Selection Using the Ideal Mentor Scale." *Research in Higher Education* 44 (2003): 473-494.

Snowber, Celeste. "The Mentor as Artist: A Poetic Exploration of Listening, Creating, and Mentoring." *Mentoring and Tutoring* 13.3 (2005): 345-353. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 Mar. 2009.

Stone, Florence M. *Coaching, Counseling & Mentoring: How to Choose & Use the Right Technique to Boost Employee Performance*. New York: American Management Association, 2007. netLibrary. Web. 6 Aug. 2008.

The title of this book describes the three-step process author Stone suggests for developing high-quality employees. Problems with the coaching process, specific ways to counsel employees, and mentoring traps to avoid are presented.

Mentor: Someone whose hindsight can become your foresight.

