Abstract

Mentoring can be simply defined as a healthy, intellectual and mutually rewarding conversation between two or more individuals. This seems so simple, but has profound importance at both levels; individual and organizational, particularly with reference to the behavioral attitude transformation and overall growth of the systems, organizations and country, as a whole. Recently, during this year I have attended a Seminar on mentoring skills at MCR HRD, Hyderabad which prompted me to write this article. It was conducted by Director, Ministry of Defense and a faculty of Ministry of HRD. A very simple mnemonic was given to us to understand the importance of mentoring skills. DDLA i.e. Discover and Develop the Latent Ability of a person.

Mentoring has been both an Art and Science since eons and has been used for development of skills, latent abilities and accelerated learning.

1 WHAT IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is a person who has both professional and life experience, and one who voluntarily agrees to help a mentee develop skills, competencies, or goals. Put another way, a mentor is an advisor and role model who is willing to invest in the mentees personal growth and professional development.

Some folks think that mentor is really just another word for a role model. Mentors certainly are expected to be a role model for mentees in a variety of areas, such as relating to peers, work-life balance, and ethics, but merely being a role model does not make you a mentor. Being a mentor means interacting with a mentee and providing support, advice, and feedback to the mentee in other words, it requires involvement with the mentee. So, Mentors are more than role models.

2 What makes a good mentor?

- A desire to help others succeed
- A willingness to pass along information
- A willingness to give and receive feedback
- A desire to work with others
- A desire to engage with others on an interpersonal level
- A desire to learn
- A motivation to mentor
- Good listening and communication skills
- Good questioning skills
- Good common sense
- Good people management and leadership skills
- Knowledge of the industry, organization, or field in which the mentee works or aspires to work in
- Self-confidence and self-awareness
- Strong ethics
- Lack of prejudice
- Openness, honesty and trustworthiness
- Patience
- Empathy

3 WHAT IS A MENTEE?

A mentee is someone who has identified a specific personal or professional goal and who believes that the guidance and help of a mentor and being held accountable to the mentor can help him or them achieve his or their goal. The mentee's potential:

Before agreeing to enter into a mentoring relationship, a mentor must believe that the prospective mentee possesses qualities that will increase the likelihood and the mentee will benefit from the relationship. Qualities to look for in mentees
• A willingness to learn about themselves
• A willingness to learn from others experience
• Commitment to their personal and professional growth
• Strong interpersonal skills
• Good listening skills
• An easy ability to learn
• An open mind and a willingness to try new things
• An ability to accept feedback and learn from it
• Patience and ability to take a long-term view
• Good communication skills
• Flexibility
• Respect for other people’s time and effort
• Realistic expectations
• A strong work ethic
• A strong initiative
• A clear commitment to being mentored
• A willingness to take responsibility for their career
• Openness, honesty and trustworthiness

There is a Japanese Proverb which says that Better than 1000 days of diligent study, one day with a great Teacher. Here a great teacher refers to a Mentor. There is a basic difference between a Teacher (guru) and a Mentor. Mentor is a person who is genuinely interested in developing the key skills of his Mentee. A grand example is quoted from Mahabharata quite often to explain the difference between a Teacher and a Mentor. Dronacharya was the Guru or Teacher of both Arjuna and Duryodhana. However, at the time of Kurukshetra War, Arjuna has to rise to the occasion, stand up against evil and also against his own teacher to fight. This was just because of his Mentor Lord Krishna who guided him for the right thing at the right time. So all that a Mentor wants is Mentees success in whatever he is doing, after guiding him for the right cause. So during this course, many practical examples on how to become Mentee and how to become Mentor etc. were discussed through case studies and role modeling of an organization. Some more examples of the mentor-mentee:

Mentor Mentee
1) Chanakya Chandra Gupta Mourya 2) Vikramara Bhai Abdul Kalam 3) Ramdas Shiraji Maharaj 4) Bairam Khan Akbar

Basic qualities a Mentor should possess as a decodified mnemonic:
M - Mature & Motivating
E - Energetic & empathetic
N - Nurturing
T - Trust Worthy
O - Open Minded
R - Resourceful and Responsive

Above all, a Mentor should have the ability of converting the weaknesses or short comings of his Mentee into genuine qualities and abilities.
Mentor should be amicable and should have quality of thought and contextual in speech.

DDLAA: How to become a Mentor:
D - Discover: Mentor should have the ability to discover the latent abilities in Mentee and for that proper relationship building, development of rapport and keen acumen to introspect into the needs and culture. He should be an example in analyzing the behavior and have a clear understanding about the cause in which he needs to develop the Mentee. Mentor has to be an effective listener and should have his own SWOT analysis first and must be capable of SWOT analysis of his Mentee in the initial stage itself. Later on, Mentor should develop in himself the capability of turning the weakness into strengths after successful implementing and ensuring this.

D - Development: Development of a Mentee can be done through skilful counseling and try to resolve the problems of Mentee. As it is very difficult to go into the depth of the problem in one or two meetings, Mentor has to fix up more than one meeting to understand the problem and then finally arrive at counseling session for bringing about behavioral changes in the mentee based on SWOT analysis. He has to develop such skill and attitudes suitable to the specific need of the Mentee. The various developmental activities and support needed for that should be given to the Mentee. More often, the growth of the Mentee is through psychological success. The mentor should also monitor the performance during this period and advise formative feedback for implementation. He should take all care not to criticize his Mentee for reasons whatsoever they may be, and always adopt SOFTEN approach during his dialogue. (S-Smile, O-Open posture, F-Forward thinking, T-Touch, E-eye contact, N-nodding). Such Mentor Mentee relationship helps in removal of mental blockages and includes the ability to develop positive activity through competency building.

LA - Latent Ability: The quality of being able to do something, especially the physical, mental, financial, or legal power to accomplish something in
Mentee lying latent and yet to manifest.

The whole specimen of mentoring activities has different phases starting from the contact phase, support phase, reviewing phase and mentoring phase. In Micro and Macro level, the success criteria should always be measured in terms of the purpose and summative feedback at the end of the session. In the end, a Mentor should always leave the option of doing or not doing to the mentee without forcing upon him. There are many books and references that focus on Mentoring skills like Art of Mentoring by Shri Ravi Shanker Gundlapalli.

This Mentor Mentee relationship should extend to the organizational level for the development of the organization which essentially involves handholding in skill development and is particularly relevant in all technical fields.

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**Recent Achievements:**

1. Railway mobile Apps like UTS for unreserved paperless ticketing along with Geo-fencing based on GPS technology were rolled out initially over complete ECoR in a single go and then extended countrywide.

2. TTE App for ticket checking & Handheld terminals for TTEs of Rajdhani & Shatabdi trains.

3. ECoR Yatra App for easy & wide dissemination of information of Special trains, passenger amenities etc. to lakhs of passengers on the occasion of Jagannath Rath Yatra at Puri in 2018.

4. He has done instrumental work in putting an end to the era of PCT by 100% computerization of ECoR Unreserved ticketing arena including UTS for Passenger Halts from nearest location.

Currently, he is working as Professor (Tele) at IRISET/SC and has been a student of spirituality all throughout his life. He is an enthusiast in traditional Yoga of Patanjali Yog Peeth, Hardwar and a preceptor in Heartfulness Meditation to make Peaceful, the Powerful under the guidance of global guide, Daaji of Heartfulness Institute, having its presence in 130 countries across the globe.