
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----
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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: PREVENTING MENTOR BURNOUT

A subscriber writes: "Within an established mentoring program, how can mentors stay energized and engaged to continue to give their best to mentees?" This is an excellent question. To answer it in this newsletter, I'm going to break down some of the components of mentoring, because mentor burnout often follows from a lack of definition of the mentor's role. We'll take a look at other factors that can help mentoring programs prevent burnout, and recommend a book that has served as a partial resource for the material developed in this month's edition. The book will be listed in Section 2: "Recommended Books and Entertainments." Keep your questions coming, and please help me reach my goal this year: to TRIPLE (yes, TRIPLE!) my subscriber list. Just forward this month's edition to two friends and tell them briefly why you find these newsletters of value. Thank you, and Happy New Year!

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief."
-- Gerry Spence

"It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot, irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it." -- Jacob Bronowski

"A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right." -- Thomas Paine

1. PREVENTING MENTOR BURNOUT

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MENTORING AND COACHING

The goal of coaching is to correct inappropriate behavior, improve performance and develop skills that an employee needs to perform a job or take on new responsibilities. The goal of mentoring, on the other hand, is to support and guide the personal and career growth of the mentee. Coaching is typically done by one's boss, but mentoring is often not done by one's boss. In fact, it is often preferable to create mentoring relationships uncomplicated by the direct-reporting relationship. That's because a mentor who is not one's boss can become more free to provide independent advice and counsel uncomplicated by the immediate needs of a boss in a reporting relationship. Coaching tends to occur over a shorter time span, while mentoring relationships ideally last longer, perhaps even years. While coaching involves more direct feedback and instruction, the mentoring role involves more listening, support, facilitation, questioning and guidance through suggestions. Mentoring relationships are ideally voluntary, though some structured programs can be helpful in connecting those interested in mentoring with those who seek to learn through mentoring. Coaching relationships are easier to program through mandates, but they can also be voluntary. Many so-called mentoring programs in organizations are really about coaching, and many such programs fail because they do not adequately distinguish between coaching and mentoring. With the best of intentions, programs that attempt to merge the two functions create role confusion and conflicts among the expectations of all concerned (mentor, mentee and the organization) that can sabotage a program and foster mentor and mentee burnout and disillusionment.

IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT ROLES OF A MENTOR

Just as confusion about the differences between coaching and mentoring can sabotage a successful mentoring program, so too can a lack of clarity regarding the various functions that comprise the mentoring role itself. Mentoring includes both career functions and psychosocial and personal development functions. Let's break those down a bit more. The career functions of mentoring include sponsorship (introductions that facilitate growth and advancement), coaching (teaching and giving feedback), protection (acting as a buffer, shield or career advocate), challenge (pushing the mentee to think and behave differently in support of growth), and providing exposure and visibility (steering the mentee into roles or projects that gain attention from top management). Whew! That's a lot!

Let's look at the components of the personal development role involved in mentoring. These roles include role modeling (behaviors, attitudes, decision making strategies and values), counseling (guiding a mentee through difficult social, political and professional dilemmas), acceptance (providing support, encouragement and positive reinforcement for growth) and friendship (showing personal caring that transcends strictly defined business or professional relationships). When designing a program that supports the development of mentoring relationships, it is important to consider whether or not all of these functions are to be part of the organization's intended program, and whether they are critical to the organization's goals in providing a mentoring program. If mentors and mentees do not understand all of these potential roles up front, and do not understand which roles are to be included and excluded, there will be a lot of room for misunderstanding, lack of preparation and disappointment.

DEFINE THE ROLES OF YOUR MENTORS INDIVIDUALLY

Take a look at the many different roles that a mentor can undertake above. Realize that not all of those who may volunteer to serve as mentors will feel able or equipped to provide all of those functions. That's okay, because not all mentees will want, seek or need a mentor to provide all of those functions. The key here is to define each potential mentor's role in terms of the functions that the mentor feels able to fulfill. Don't take a one-size-fits-all approach to the definition of a mentor's role. And of course, do not require all people in, for example, a given job category, to become mentors. Some people have an interest in mentoring, and genuinely enjoy supporting the growth of others, and some don't. And some would be mentors actually should focus more on dealing with their own personal issues before trying to turn another person into their personality engineering laboratories. Let the mentoring programmer beware! Volunteers for mentoring should be screened, and in many cases, personality profiling tools would not be inappropriate to employ as a precondition for voluntary participation.

MATCH YOUR MENTORS AND MENTEES BY PERSONALITY AND BY MENTORING FUNCTIONS THAT FIT

A key insight here is that a mentoring relationship can't be mandated. As the old saying goes, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. There is either a good fit between mentor and mentee, based on individual chemistry and clarity of roles and expectations, or there isn't. If a program requires periodic reports of progress and ongoing meetings between mentors and mentees without recognizing that a bad fit can do more harm than good, then the program will be a bad program. Not only will many mentors burn out and become frustrated, but so will the mentees. By using the list of the various roles and functions of a mentor above to select and match mentors and mentees, a program can help

maximize the chances of a positive outcome for any program. The key here is to adopt an individualized approach to each mentor and mentee relationship, and each potential relationship can be defined differently, if not all components of the mentoring function are sought or available for provision by a given mentor. Obviously, a program will also have the most success when the person doing the “matchmaking” knows both the mentor and mentee well enough to match people with similar personalities, cultural affinities and values. Cross-cultural matchmaking can work very well, and should not be excluded, though data also tell us that’ all other things being equal, similarities in cultural backgrounds and demographics tend to facilitate the development of positive mentor-mentee relationships. A mentoring program should not primarily serve a diversity promotion and tolerance function. Diversity and tolerance promotion are positive goals, but pro-diversity programming should be distinct from (though not undercut by) mentoring programs.

Want to improve your effectiveness in dealing with all kinds of people?

“99 Negotiation Nuggets for Winners,” my new book, offers quick shots of wisdom designed to help you get what you want and need in your life, work and career. This is not a book of theory. It’s a book of best practices distilled from many years of experience and from many experts in the field. The information is conveyed in quick bits, the way you might find in any edition of USA Today.

To purchase your copy of “99 Negotiation Nuggets for Winners” at a 10% Discount for “What’s Up, Doc?” subscribers, just click [here](#).

OBTAIN OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR YOUR MENTORS

It’s a universal truth that people who work in helping professions – teachers, social workers, psychologists, nurses, etc. – absorb a lot of stress from others. They burn out, and unfortunately, tend not to get the support they need themselves to prevent this. Being the kind of people who reach out for others to help, they are not very good at asking for help themselves. Mentors do not have the same degree of vulnerability, generally speaking, because they are not full time mentors. However, though mentors will not absorb the same degree of stress, the stress absorbed is still of the same kind. That can also lead mentors to burn out. Signs of impending burnout include avoidance of the mentee or delay in returning the mentee’s calls, annoyance with the mentee, or even the other extreme: getting too wrapped up in a particular mentee’s life and career to the extent that it interferes with the mentor’s own life, work and peace of

mind. If you are a mentor, it would be to your advantage to network with others who perform mentoring duties, just to help you keep your perspective. If you run a mentoring program, you should consider creating a forum through which your mentors can rely on or communicate with each other about the process of mentoring on a semi-regular basis. An issue discussion group or forum, perhaps facilitated by a professional in the field, can go a long way toward preventing mentor burnout. In this case, an ounce of prevention is definitely worth a pound of cure.

SUMMARY OF ADVANTAGES OF WELL-DESIGNED MENTORING PROGRAMS

Well designed mentoring programs help organizations to retain their most promising, career oriented people. Especially in today's economy, knowledge, relationships with customers and relationships with others in the organization all create critical competitive advantages. The retention and cultivation of institutional knowledge is critical to information age success, and so an organization's best human assets are therefore its most valuable assets, even if they are not identified as such on a balance sheet. The transfer of tacit knowledge (knowledge that is not written down but which is essential to an organization's efficiency and growth) and the retention of top people go hand in hand. And when you retain your best, you are in a better position to attract higher caliber people as you recruit for the future. Very few organizations truly become talent-based, with a talent strategy that includes the identification, recruitment and development of the best people. Every organization talks about it, but in effect, most organizations settle for processes that allow them to hire and promote many below average performers. But organizations that determine to develop different processes, forming a talent strategy that becomes a true competitive advantage, are few. But they become far more successful than their competitors. A well designed mentoring program can form part of such a strategy.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL COSTS OR DISADVANTAGES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

When leaders put time and effort into mentoring, they necessarily take time away from other activities, including activities that can generate immediate revenue. This is a cost. It may be an investment, and it may yield multiple dividends, though they will be hard to trace by following an income statement from quarter to quarter. Mentoring is only a good investment if it is done correctly, and if the time and energy devoted to mentoring is focused on the those people who have the most talents and ambition: those who have a real desire to grow and who would like to remain with a given organization. Mentoring should not be undertaken as a remedial activity, targeted to turn around weak performance or weaker performers: that's what coaching is for. Mentoring, on the other hand,

succeeds best when it is focused on targeting those twenty percent of top performers who have the talent, drive and ability to fuel eighty percent of an organization's future growth and success. When a mentoring program is established on that basis, and when the practices outlined in this newsletter are taken into account, the costs of mentoring will most assuredly yield a high, multiple, long term return.

2. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND ENTERTAINMENT

BOOK: "Coaching and Mentoring: How to Develop Top Talent and Achieve Stronger Performance" Harvard Business Essentials, Harvard Business Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 2004.

This little book, available in soft cover, neatly condenses much that will be useful to mentors, mentees and designers of mentoring programs. It provides a very helpful and accessible overview of the issues, based on the body of research already undertaken regarding coaching and mentoring. Some of the categories and concepts I've applied in this newsletter come from this book, and I recommend it for anyone interested in further research. You can purchase the book from Barnes and Noble [here](#).

ENTERTAINMENT: Music CD "Begin the Beguine," by Artie Shaw and his Orchestra, RCA, 1987.

Artie Shaw, the great bandleader and clarinetist whose popularity in his day rivaled that of Benny Goodman, died last week. He was over 90 years old. An artistic purist, Artie was arrogant and independent, and hated the music business – but boy, could he play! He was a consummately skilled clarinetist, commanding the whole range of the instrument with ease, and playing with subtle textures of tone. Even modern classical clarinetist marvel at his pure musicianship. A greatly skilled arranger and assembler of talent for his bands, Artie walked away from the clarinet at his commercial peak, saying that he had already done all he could do with the instrument and wanted to move on. A serial husband, Shaw included among his eight (eight!) wives some of the biggest film stars of his day, including Ava Gardner and Lana Turner. This disc provides the best single collection of his work on one disc for those who do not know his music. There are many Artie Shaw collections out there, but if you want to try just one, this is it. Artie felt that perhaps his best single clarinet solo came in his Bluebird label recording of the jazz standard "Stardust," and when you hear it on this disc, you'll understand the easy, seductive,

inventive way he could play with a melody without breaking it. You can find this disc at Barnes and Noble [here](#).

3. CHUCKLES

Short and sweet this month:

“I’m not saying that the customer service in my bank is bad, but when I went in the other day and asked the clerk to check my balance ... she leaned over and pushed me.”

4. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

You don’t have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

5. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership, negotiation and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

6. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

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7. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

NEWSLETTER ETHICS: This e-Newsletter will be sent to subscribers only upon REQUEST, though subscribers may forward this letter to anyone they wish. Subscriber identities or contact information will NOT BE DISCLOSED to any other persons or entities under any circumstances. (An attorney friend recently pointed out that, technically, I'd have to give up my list if compelled to do so by a court of law. He's technically right, of course, but let's face it: that won't happen!)

Have a great month. . .

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Schuler Solutions, Inc.

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"Make each day your masterpiece." -- John Wooden

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend! Thanks . . . AJS