

Mentoring As A Development Tool For Women Coaches

Mentoring is all the rage, and with good reason. In a productive mentoring relationship, mentor and protégé reap many benefits, from the sharing of personal and professional experiences, to contributing to a vibrant and confident future generation, to providing rewarding professional development opportunities.

Mentoring is occurring in a variety of circumstances and configurations and has become standard practice in most professional environments in Canada, including sport. Writing in the eighth issue of the *Journal*, Dru Marshall clarifies what mentoring is and describes the qualities mentors and protégés need for a successful relationship. She analyses the many types of mentoring, explains options around the structure and the duration of the relationship, and describes the various types of mentors.

In examining the role of facilitated mentoring, which is widely used in Canada's coaching environment, Dru draws attention to the highly successful mentoring initiatives of the Women in Coaching program, including the most recent innovation, the Online Mentor Program. She points out how the traditional reluctance of experienced women to serve as mentors and the dearth of qualified women coaches is creating a human resource dilemma in this country. And while she cautions that mentors may not be able to solve every problem, she maintains that under the right circumstances, they are a reliable and valuable expert source of potential solutions.

Her conclusion? Mentoring can be a boon to Canada's developing women coaches. The watchword should be *flexibility* accompanied by careful matching of mentor with protégé. — Sheila Robertson

Understanding Mentoring As A Development Tool For Women Coaches

By Dru Marshall

Although many assume mentoring to be a modern business trend, the roots of the practice are found in ancient times. Legend suggests that when Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, an island off the western coast of Greece in the Ionian Sea, went off to fight in the Trojan War, he left behind his trusted friend and adviser, Mentor, to educate and look after his son. Over time, the word *mentor* came to connote a wise and trusted teacher and counsellor. For much of the 20th century, the use of mentoring as a human resource development tool was lost in a climate of social change and corporate restructuring. At one time thought to be reserved for a limited few who were "in the loop" or "in the network," only relatively recently has mentoring become the focus of much research and discussion. This is in part because

mentoring is being used across many disciplines and fields of work and study to develop the next generation.

Mentoring is used in a variety of settings:

- the not-for-profit sector. For example, Big Sisters matches young girls with adult mentors who serve as positive role models
- in business, where one finds a range of mentor/protege relationships, from informal contacts with a superior to formalized matching within a company-recognized mentor program
- in the academic area, in programs ranging from peer tutoring of students to formalized mentor programs for professors
- in the coaching arena, where we find examples of formalized programs, like the Women in Coaching Long-Term Apprenticeship Program, and more informal programs, such as the matching of national coaching institute candidates with mentor coaches in their sport.

Regardless of the setting, it appears that comparisons between non-mentored and mentored individuals generally yield consistent results: individuals with informal mentors report greater career satisfaction, career commitment, career mobility, and more positive job attitudes than individuals without mentors (Ragins et al. 2000). Salmela (1996) suggests that one of the best ways to develop as a coach is to take advantage of the advice and actions of a mentor. Wickman and Sjodin (1997) suggest that all of us are where we are today because somebody, at some point in time, saw something in us that we may not have seen in ourselves.

The purpose of this article is to describe mentoring and the various forms it takes, to highlight key findings from research on mentoring, and to specifically examine the role of mentoring in the development of women coaches.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring, in its simplest form, is people helping people; it means helping, advising, teaching, counselling, instructing, and guiding another person. A mentor is someone who helps us learn the ways of the world (Wickman and Sjodin 1997). Kram (1985) defines a mentor as an individual with advanced experience and knowledge who is committed to providing upward mobility and career support to a protégé.

Why Mentoring Works

Mentoring works for a variety of reasons:

- Mentors have a tremendous amount of personal and professional experience. Through professional experience, the mentor has "inside knowledge" of an organization's norms, values, and procedures. Access to this knowledge allows the protégé the opportunity to develop more quickly than if she did not have access to the information, and to receive support during her development (Roed 1999).
- Mentor and protégé, if well matched, can create more energy and accomplish larger goals than can a single person alone. That is, two people together create a synergy to accomplish things they might never have attempted as individuals (Wickman and Sjodin).

- The mentoring process helps to perpetuate positive action. It allows the secrets, tips, and tricks of a master, those that have allowed this person to be successful, to be passed on to the next generation - without the information finding its way into the public domain (Wickman and Sjodin).
- Mentoring is part of a naturally occurring transitional process. The relationship between mentor and protégé typically helps the mentor address mid-life issues and provides a sense of making a contribution to future generations (Erickson 1963), and helps the protégé meet early career needs for guidance, support, and affirmation (Levinson et al. 1978). For many sport organizations, mentoring offers a cost-effective way to provide professional development opportunities for coaches.

Successful Mentor Qualities

The primary resource of a successful mentor is "inside knowledge," along with years of practical experience. Mentors should be able to identify and model professional behaviours and best practices and should be able to communicate them to the protégé. Insider information allows mentors to open doors for protégés that would typically be otherwise closed (Wickman and Sjodin) and to help short-circuit errors that protégés might make. But although mentors open doors, they allow protégés to walk through them themselves and be responsible for their own behaviour. In other words, successful mentors focus on the protégé's development and curb the urge to produce a clone (Roed; Wickman and Sjodin). Mentors must be willing to give of their time freely, share their learned knowledge, and serve as a confidante/counsellor in times of professional and personal crises. A successful mentor can thus alleviate some of the intense aloneness that a protégé feels in times of stress. Mentors must be able to provide constructive criticism in a non-judgmental fashion and establish an environment where the protégé feels free to make mistakes without losing self-confidence.

Successful Protégé Qualities

Dougherty and Turban (1994) found a high degree of correlation between certain personality traits and successful protégés. These personality traits include an individual's belief that she could influence her own success, sensitivity to social cues, and overall level of self-esteem. Successful protégés must assume responsibility for their own professional growth and development and be dedicated to improving their level of knowledge (Roed). It is also important for protégés to be able to clearly articulate their needs. Wickman and Sjodin suggest that successful protégés must respect the mentor's time, take action on the information provided by the mentor, show respect for the mentor's efforts to open new doors, and eventually pass on the gift of mentoring to a new protégé.

Benefits of Mentoring

The benefits associated with mentoring are shared among the participants - the mentor, the protégé, and the organization or business - and vary depending on the level of commitment of each participant.

Benefits for the Mentor

Wickman and Sjodin (1997) suggest that we all have an implied responsibility to future generations to impart knowledge to those who come after us. As the adage suggests, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Passing on insider information should provide the mentor with a sense of personal satisfaction. Mentoring also serves to keep the mentor mentally sharp. It forces the mentor to reflect on best practices, encourages creativity, and provides opportunities for continual learning. The mentor typically provides a variety of options for the protégé to consider. This can force the mentor to think outside the box to develop options (Wickman and Sjodin). As a result of reflecting on best practices, the mentor is forced to set an example, thus becoming a role model. Typically, peer recognition for the mentor is the result.

Benefits for the Protégé

While there are many benefits for the protégé, I would like to highlight the following:

- Doors are opened for the protégé that might otherwise be closed, resulting in increased social interaction and networking that may lead to other opportunities (Wickman and Sjodin).
- The protégé receives assistance and advice on setting realistic career goals and strategies (Wickman and Sjodin).
- Mentors can help the protégé save time and money. The mentor has "been there before," and can help the protégé avoid errors (Wickman and Sjodin).
- Protégés typically report greater career satisfaction, more positive job attitudes, and greater career commitment (Fagenson 1989; Scandura 1997; Mobley et al. 1994; Colarelli and Bishop 1990). Typically, if you are satisfied with your job and happy in your environment, your commitment and loyalty to the organization increases (Wickman and Sjodin).

Benefits to the Organization

Because mentored individuals have greater career satisfaction and more positive job attitudes, organizations benefit from better-trained staff and increased productivity. The training tends to be time efficient and cost-effective. There is increased communication amongst staff, creating a sense of stability within the organization. Further, insider information is handed down from one generation of worker to the next, resulting in a solid organizational legacy (Wickman and Sjodin).

Categorizing Mentoring

For the purposes of this article, mentoring will be categorized by type, by the degree of structure and the duration, and by type of mentor. It is important to note that mentoring relationships fall along a continuum, from those that are very short term and informal in nature to those that are highly structured, long-term partnerships. While many mentoring relationships are highly satisfying, some may be only marginally satisfying, dissatisfying, or at the extreme, dysfunctional or harmful (Eby et al. 2000; Ragins et al. 2000). Mentoring relationships are fluid, suggests Kram.

She hypothesized that "[mentoring] relationships are dynamic and changing; while enhancing at one time, a relationship can become less satisfying and even destructive." Thus, the matching of mentors with protégés becomes a key issue in mentoring relationships.

Types of Mentoring

There are three types of mentoring: supervisory, informal, and facilitated (Coaching Association of Canada, 1998).

Supervisory mentoring typically takes place in a work environment and is considered to be a function of a supervisor's duties. While this is a nice model in theory, it does not often work in practice, particularly in today's hectic world. It also relies on the ability of the supervisor to communicate knowledge about the job. This, unfortunately, is not always guaranteed.

Informal mentoring is the unofficial, natural pairing of two individuals, characteristically based on mutual chemistry and trust. The protégé typically initiates this pairing by finding a trusted adviser or teacher whom she perceives can help her meet her personal and professional needs. While this is a popular style of mentoring, it also is limited in effectiveness because the mentor may not be aware of the role she is playing. That is, while the protégé sees the mentor as a role model, the mentor is unaware of her role in the partnership. Additionally, informal mentoring may be limited because it frequently does not cross gender lines (women look for female mentors, men for male mentors). This can hinder the capacity to advance a career.

Facilitated mentoring, the style of mentoring endorsed by the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), requires

- a strategically planned mentoring program design
- facilitated matching of mentors and protégés
- developmental training for both mentors and protégés
- a no-fault termination clause
- a formalized career development plan and tracking system
- a coordinator, whose primary role is to implement the program, match the pairs, and then monitor progress, counsel, and evaluate.

Degree of Structure and Duration

Unstructured (informal) mentoring programs are characterized by a more personal, relaxed atmosphere. Typically, informal relationships develop by mutual identification, where mentors choose protégés they view as younger versions of themselves, and protégés select mentors they view as role models (Ragins et al.). These informal programs have been effective in enhancing job attitudes and career commitment.

Many organizations have attempted to replicate and build on the benefits of informal mentoring by developing formal, *structured* mentoring programs. Examples include the facilitated mentoring programs found at national coaching institutes or in many business mentoring programs, where protégés are matched to corporate mentors with organizational assistance or intervention. In some cases, mentor and protégé have not met before the match is made. Formal mentors typically enter a mentoring

relationship to meet organizational expectations or to be good corporate citizens (Ragins et al.). Thus, formal mentors may be less likely to receive intrinsic rewards. Therefore, they may be less intrinsically motivated to be in the mentoring relationship and may be less personally invested in their protégé's development than informal mentors (Ragins et al.)

Unstructured mentoring relationships usually last between three and six years, with pairs meeting as often as desired or needed. Formal mentoring relationships, in contrast, are usually contracted to last six months to one year, with meetings being either sporadic or specified in a contract (Ragins et al.). Since formal mentoring relationships are typically shorter in duration, mentor influence on the protégé may be reduced. Wickman and Sjodin suggest that a person should enter into all mentoring relationships, whether as a mentor or protégé, with the assumption that they will be short term, as the future of a mentoring relationship is always uncertain.

While we know that informal mentoring programs improve work attitudes, little research has been done comparing work attitudes among protégés in formal and informal mentoring relationships. One glaring methodological issue in most studies is that researchers have failed to control for quality of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship when comparing informal and formal mentoring. In one of the few studies that did, Ragins et al. found that satisfaction with a mentoring relationship had a stronger impact on job and career attitudes than the presence of a mentor, whether the relationship was structured or unstructured. That is, individuals in highly satisfying mentoring relationships reported more positive work and career attitudes than non-mentored individuals, but the attitudes of those protégés in dissatisfying relationships were equivalent to those of non-mentored individuals. Good mentoring may lead to positive outcomes; bad mentoring may be destructive, and it may be worse than no mentoring at all.

Ragins et al. studied a national sample of 1,162 employees representing social workers, engineers, and journalists from professional associations. Program purpose was found to be critical. In programs in which the purpose was to promote the protégé's career, there was a significantly stronger relationship to positive work attitudes than to programs in which the purpose was to orient new employees. Another key finding in this study was that protégés in programs with mentors who were in the same department as the protégés expressed significantly less satisfaction with the mentoring relationship than protégés in programs with mentors from other departments. The authors hypothesized that mentors from other departments may provide fresher insights and a broader organizational perspective.

The gender differences that were reported in this study are also of great interest. Women who had formal mentors were less satisfied with their mentoring program than men were, and these women reported less career commitment than formally mentored men and non-mentored men and women. Ragins et al. suggest that formal programs may be less effective for women than men, and further suggest that although the selection of effective mentors is important for all programs, it may be critical for programs aimed at women. Experienced women have traditionally been more reluctant to serve as mentors than their male counterparts. Some studies have suggested that women are sensitive to the overall risks of mentoring, particularly to the increased visibility one has as a mentor, and the potential reflection of failure if a protégé is unsuccessful. Wickman and Sjodin suggest that if this is a reason why women choose not to be mentors, then we need to be more aware of it and work

towards creating environments where women don't feel threatened by the risk of a protégé's errors.

Types of Mentors

A *primary mentor*, the one we think of as being most important, is likely to change throughout various stages of life and career, but is the person to whom we talk about a variety of issues (Wickman and Sjodin). Merlin was the primary mentor for King Arthur, for example, and Yoda was the primary mentor for Luke Skywalker while he was on his way to becoming a Jedi warrior in *Star Wars*.

A *secondary mentor* is an individual we go to for specific issues. A secondary mentor tends to be a specialist in a particular area. You may have a primary mentor who has been or is a coach in your sport or another sport, and you may have secondary mentors in a number of areas such as physiological training, mental training, ethics, team building, and technical and tactical training. Meetings tend to be more intermittent with secondary mentors, as they are typically set on an as-needed basis.

A *momentary mentor* is an individual who is in your life briefly, who gives you a pearl of wisdom, and then is gone. Momentary mentors are people who make you stop and think, and sometimes cause you to view the world differently (Wickman and Sjodin).

Mentoring and Coaching

It is important to note that while mentoring enhances other types of training, it does not replace it. A mentor can help the protégé to use all the tools available to enhance success, but ultimately success lies in the hands of the protégé. To be successful, a coach has to be able to access all the tools that are available, such as videotape analysis, computer analysis, and physiological and psychological analysis. A good mentor will help you to access these tools and will help you to work with them more effectively. Mentors may not have the solution to every problem, but they should be able to help you find the solutions.

Expert coaches in Canada have identified mentoring as one of the best ways to develop as a coach (Salmela). The 22 expert coaches in Salmela's study unanimously supported a mentorship program and also acknowledged their obligation to serve as mentors for other coaches. However, they also suggested that if mentorship was going to become a viable and standard part of training for professional coaches, mentorship programs had to be funded to a greater degree.

A number of programs have been developed in Canada for coaching mentorship. From 1977 to 1998, CAC offered full-time coaching apprenticeships that provided \$12,000 for living expenses to the apprentice, \$3,000 for travel expenses, and \$4,000 for a mentor coach salary. In its heyday, as many as 12 coaches per year were involved in this program.

The Women in Coaching program has also offered apprenticeships. For example, there have been three mentoring projects attached to major Games: a Commonwealth Games apprenticeship program in 1994; the Pan American Games apprenticeship program, directed at coaches in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, in 1999; and this year, the Jeux de la Francophonie Apprenticeship Program, which benefited seven coaches from abroad ("A Practical Lesson About Developing Women Coaches," *Journal*, September 2001).

The Pan American Games program marked the first time all of the apprentice coaches were brought together as a group for professional development and networking. While different doors might have been opened by their respective mentor coach, these apprentices had a chance to share their collective experiences. This resulted in a very powerful learning environment, and strong connections within the group. When these coaches reach the pinnacle of coaching in their sport, they will have a built-in support group because of their experiences within their apprenticeship program.

In 2000, the Women in Coaching program made a three-year commitment to the mentoring of a select group of younger female coaches by implementing the Long-Term Apprenticeship Program. This program involves 17 apprentices from 15 sports, matched with a mentor coach.

In each of these programs, the matching of mentor coach to apprentice coach was facilitated by the national sport federation (NSF) involved in the apprenticeship program. Unfortunately, many NSFs have human resource limitations. Mentor coaches should typically have more experience than apprentice coaches and they should have a broad-based understanding of the requirements of both the apprentice's current position and potential future positions to which they aspire. However, a group of mentor coaches with these qualifications does not always exist. This can be a particular problem if female apprentices want female mentors, as the number of female head coaches of national teams in Canada declines.

How might we address this human resource dilemma? A first and obvious strategy, and certainly one that is used frequently by NSFs, is to involve retired coaches in their coach development plans. This way, there are opportunities to share the vast amount of information that has been collected by these individuals over many years of coaching. An immediate criticism of this suggestion might be that retired coaches may not be current in terms of technical and tactical knowledge. However, I suggest that it is possible to get current technical and tactical information from other sources - coaches of the top competing countries in the world, for example, who might serve as secondary mentors. While retired coaches may not have all the immediate answers, they are likely terrific at figuring out how to find the appropriate information. A second strategy may be to have primary mentors from other sports. As Ragins et al. hypothesized about mentors outside of departments from their protégés, perhaps coaches from other sports would provide fresh insights and broader perspectives. After all, there is some communality in coaching. Whether these strategies are employed broadly or not, research indicates that the selection of mentors for women is critical. More research needs to examine this issue in women in coaching.

The Online Mentor Program, another Women in Coaching initiative, warrants discussion. Thirty-six women coaches (3M NCCP Level 3 certified at a minimum) registered to be online mentors, and 34 relatively inexperienced women coaches have requested an online mentor. Director Cyndie Flett has made 13 pairings to date, with other pairings soon to follow. Matches of protégé to mentor are based on specific requests, primarily of a technical and tactical nature, from the protégé. As she becomes more experienced and her technical and tactical knowledge develops, the protégé's needs for information and advice will become broader. This is an exciting program that has the potential to be another cost-effective method of coach development. However, the program will only be as good as the volunteer mentors

that enlist. Unfortunately, in some sports in which a protégé has requested a mentor, no mentors have stepped forward.

Overall, mentoring programs offer great potential for Canada's developing women coaches. Careful consideration, however, must be given to the matching of mentors with protégés. In the facilitated mentoring programs that are used widely in coaching, if relationships are not working, there should be procedures developed to allow the mentor, the protégé, or both individuals to gracefully terminate the relationship, without fear of repercussions. The time frame for these relationships should be flexible and not forced, and there should be opportunity, if possible, to shift mentors as the protégé grows and develops. Further research in the area of mentoring and coaching should be conducted, to ensure that we maximize the benefits of mentoring as a developmental tool.

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