



## WITI LEADERSHIP

### Inspire and Be Inspired: 3 Steps to a Mentoring Action Plan By Marian Cook



People are hungry for mentors and, as you advance in your career, to be a mentor. ASTD reports what we already instinctively know: that over 75% of executives surveyed target mentoring as one of the key factors in their business successes. And for those new in their career, over 60% of college and graduate students listed mentoring as a criterion for selecting an employer after graduation (MMHA).

In my own life I can point to mentoring relationships of all types that have given me career buoyancy and personal joy. As I look at them now, I see strong, smart, caring women generous in their time, advice and support.

When my dear friend Lisa moved out of town, we scheduled a monthly 'coffee talk.' We are peer mentors, not one junior and one senior. Broaden your definition of mentoring to include a "continuum of development alliances," as Psychology Today once called mentoring. Don't limit yourself to only seeking or being the wise gray hair. Lisa and I are sounding boards for each other and, although in different business disciplines, always offering each other valuable advice, resources, contacts and support. We've done this for over a decade now, and it continues to be invigorating, valuable and just plain fun.

Connie and I both started our careers at IBM. She stayed and I left, but we stayed together. Again, trusted peer mentors in different areas of business but with much to offer each other. We created a safe space for dialogue, reflection, learning and laughing. This inspirational and rich relationship continues to thrive for over two decades.

In my current position, I have reached out to every Vice President and scheduled a monthly lunch. I have been invited to a weekly breakfast of our women Vice Presidents where we share what is going on in the company and strategize solutions. It is like having a powerful web that catches and shares information that no one of us would have and allows us to see a much bigger picture. And the expertise around that table is phenomenal.

Creating these relationships requires thought. Just meeting and talking is not as constructive as it could be. Below is a 3 step planning method for a mentor/mentee relationship. It is simple and logical and leads you thoughtfully through what you should consider.



#### **Step 1 - Determine Your Top 3 Mentoring Goals**

- List your mentoring goals in order of priority.
- Choose one or two goals as a starting point from which to develop a mentoring action plan.

For example, I mentor a young man in our company. His goals are to strengthen his skills and experience in finance, presentation and strategy. I work with him to find projects and make contacts that help him to reach these goals.

**Step 2 - Create a List of Learning Activities.** The most successful plans are those that have a range of learning activities that encourage:

- Learning by doing (ex., special project, writing a memo, etc.)
- Review and choose activities from tomorrow's post of activities
- Learning from others (ex., shadowing, situational mentoring, etc.)

- Learning from challenging experiences or "stretch assignments" (ex., project outside of department, leadership role, etc.)

In the second article in this series are 20 activities mentors and mentees can do together.

### **Step 3 - Set a Timeline**

- Determine how many hours, days or weeks it will take to complete each activity
- Set a target date to assess progress and adjust as necessary.

According to David Hutchins, Society for Human Resources Management, "The mentoring relationship has as its core purpose the professional development of the protégé through the counsel and guidance of the mentor." This can best be achieved through thoughtful goal setting and planning.

*This article "Inspire and Be Inspired: 3 Steps to a Mentoring Action Plan" is part 1 of 2. In the next issue of WITI 4HIRE STRATEGIST "Inspire and Be Inspired: 20 Mentor / Mentee Activities"*

*Marian Cook is currently the head of IT for a midmarket healthcare market leader of products, services and education for the pathology market. She leads the 100 person IT division and has a major Oracle R12 implementation underway. Among her many accomplishments she was once the Network Director for WITI Chicago and is currently on the Chicago's Mayor's Council of Technology.*