


Summary Parts Story of Case

The Trajectory is Never Straight:



Mentorship Strategies that Stray from the Predictable

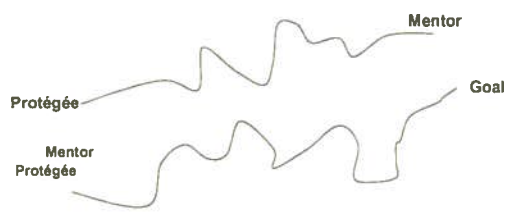
Jacqueline McLemore, Ph.D.
McLemore Consulting Associates, Inc.
Gestalt Institute of Cleveland

A simple proposition

- Find one person who wants to succeed in a new job or a new role.
- Connect them with another person who has been around long enough to know how to navigate the organization and who has credibility.
- Voila! A made to order mentoring relationship.

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Not such a straight line



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The situation

- The relationships are never so straightforward.
- The goals or intentions of the mentorship often cross several levels of system: intrapsychic, dyadic, group, organizational.

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Mentorship . . .

- *Typically*, an intense personal relationship between a senior experienced colleague (mentor) and a less experienced junior colleague in which the mentor provides support, direction, and feedback regarding career plans and personal development.

(Russell & Adams, 1997:2)

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Mentorship

- Less typically, mentorship involves a network of developmental relationships. In this instance, an individual has significant relationships with people who provide career and/or psychosocial support.

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The Very First Protégé: Even the beginning isn't straightforward

- Telemachus, the son of Odysseus.
- Mentor: After Odysseus went to fight in the Trojan War, his friend Mentor showed up to help guide young Telemachus.
- Interesting note: Mentor was rather ineffectual so Athena took on the "mentor" role in the guise of Mentor (male form).

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The Objectives

- Introduce (or reinforce) the idea that mentoring is rarely straightforward or predictable in process or outcomes. As a result, agility and flexibility are highly desirable.
- Expand our understanding of mentoring.
- Expand our understanding of what contributes to a mentoring relationship that is mutually satisfying and beneficial.

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The three components of mentoring today

- Career: Sponsorship for job related tasks; exposure to challenging and novel experiences; introductions to special people; protection.
- Psychosocial: Counseling, friendship, acceptance.
- Role Modeling: Desired behaviors, attitudes, and values.

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The Old Concepts

- Mentoring involves a senior/junior dynamic.
- Mentors value passing on hard earned knowledge and experience to junior colleagues; "junior colleagues" are receptive to the lessons learned by more experienced senior folks.
- Willingness to mentor is fueled by a desire to "give back" or generativity.
- Formal, mandated mentoring programs yield higher organizational commitment, retention.

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New Imperatives

- When designing programs, choice and options are imperative.
- Mentor motivations deserve as much attention as protégée outcomes.
- Entrepreneurial behavior on the part of the protégée makes a big difference.
- Basic relationship management is necessary.
- Emotional intelligence maxims have valence here—managing oneself and having a fair degree of social competence are key.

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What do we know overall?

- Mentoring is identified as one of the most effective strategies for dealing with glass ceiling or glass cliff phenomena. (Ryan and Haslam)
- Burnout can be prevented and role stress decreased through quality supervisory and mentor relationships. (Thomas, 2005)
- High levels of achievement and status are desirable for mentors to possess because they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes for their protégées. (Payne & Huffman, 2005)

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What do we know overall?

- Residents, research fellows and junior faculty cite the significant impact of mentorship on their personal and career development. (Sambunjak, D. et al. JAMA 2008)
- Being mentored has a positive impact on research development and productivity. (Sambunjak, D. et al. JAMA 2008)
- Others note the imbalance between the desire for mentoring and access or availability. (Brown, Sells & Thompson, 2007)

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The mentorship trajectory is rarely straightforward because of:

- Generational dynamics.
- Changing workplace expectations.
- Attitudes and skills: a mismatch in this area can be thwart everyone's best intentions.
- Increased diversity of all types in organizations.
- Relational dynamics.

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Generational Dynamics

- Currently, most workplaces are dominated by two generational groupings: Boomers (1945-1962) and Gen Xers (1963-1982).
- Boomer Stereotype: Living to Work.
- Gen X Stereotype: Working to Live.
- Unfair dichotomy with (of course) some nuggets of truth.

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Generational Dynamics

- Boomers eventually adopted some of their parents work ethic attitudes.
- Differences in commitment = conflict and stress in the organization.
- Approaches to teamwork are different: Contrary to anecdotal evidence, Gen Xers have been found to be *more* team oriented than Boomers and significantly more individualistic.
- The “preferred” team approach of Gen Xers emphasizes differences rather than similarity .

(Karp, Fuller, Siriss: 2002)

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Implications for Mentoring

- Team and group approaches that serve the mentoring functions deserve more attention & innovation.
- Developmental networks provide more flexibility and opportunity for individualized customization.
- Gen Xers are likely to respond positively to one on one approaches also.
- Peer to peer mentoring has plusses—hierarchy is less critical.

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Changing Workplace Expectations

- There is greater fluidity in organizations. People shift roles or leave more frequently than they did a few years ago.
- The “psychological contract” between employing organizations and employees has changed. For example: Loyalty no longer means long term commitment to a single organization. Job stability does not equal job security.
- Work is more often outsourced, globalized or virtualized so what is “inside” may be really be “outside” the organization’s boundaries.

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Increased Organizational Diversity

- As organizations have become more diverse (gender, national origin, race, generations), there are fewer “one size fits many” options when it comes to employee development.
- Research on the career development of minorities points to the importance of having multiple developmental relationships, some of which are outside the organization. (Thomas, 1990, 1993; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999)

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Implications for Mentoring

- An appropriate mentor (someone who can still provide career and psychosocial support) may be sought *outside* the organization's boundaries.
- Multiple mentoring relationships of varying time frames make sense.

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Mentoring relationships are “intimate”

- Intimacy: According to Webster – pertains to the innermost character of a thing; is fundamental, essential; closely acquainted, familiar.
- Mentoring relationships require allowing some of our inner selves (needs, desires, wishes) to become known.
- Intimacy, in this sense, as in other types of relationships, becomes possible as we become more aware of ourselves and another person.

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Intimate relationships of any type are a challenge

- Margaret Wheatley: Intimacy between colleagues is more likely when there is valued contribution, participation and connectedness. It is less likely when there is individualism, competition and mechanistic behaviors. Intimacy happens in the workplace when who you are at work reflects what is meaningful to you.

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Yes, a relationship orientation is important

- Relationship strength matters – reciprocity, communication/contact frequency, level of emotional affect.
- A willingness to sharpen your awareness of yourself and others is necessary.
- Skills and flexible attitudes are important.
- Surprisingly, warmth and friendliness may be detrimental in the mentor relationship.

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Relationship Strength

- Whether you are the mentor or the protégée, it helps to think entrepreneurially.
 - The entrepreneurial developmental network has high diversity and high relationship strength.
 - In this context, the mentor is highly motivated to act on the protégée's behalf.
 - Strong relationship ties are built through frequency of contact, good listening skills & the ability to "track" (connect information, observations and ideas).

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Warmth and friendliness: another variation from the predictable path

- Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize (2006) recently linked findings from neuroscience and biology to leadership development application and theory: *when leaders experience compassion through mentoring and coaching others they experience responses that reverse the effects of the stress response and arousal of the sympathetic nervous system.*
- Compassionate mentoring → good for the leader or mentor, good for the organization. If the research on emotional contagion in organizations is accurate, this positive affective dynamic will extend to other places in the organization.

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On the other hand--

- Selecting people who strive to be nice and friendly as formal mentors may have detrimental consequences for protégées who, more than anything, need candid, timely and constructive criticism.
- Having effective relationship skills goes beyond being warm and pleasant.

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Implications for mentoring

- There is no one best way to mentor: everyone benefits from being exploratory and open about how to make the relationship work versus laser focused on a particular approach. If you don't have time to explore, you may not have time to mentor or be mentored.
- The substance of the relationship—the communication—benefits from a focus on what is meaningful, valued and worthy of your attention and effort.
- The mentor needs to be clear about what's in it for them—total altruism is not really expected.

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The mentor assessment tool

- It is important to increase your awareness of your strengths, readiness and underdeveloped areas when it comes to being a mentor.
- Use tool to assess some of the key factors in creating mutually satisfying and beneficial relationships.
- It is wise to formally or informally evaluate the relationship once it has been going on for a while.

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Effective mentoring relationships

- May be a single individual or a network of developmental relationships.
- May be within or outside organizational boundaries.
- Can be supervisory or not.
- May or may not be senior/junior in terms of organizational hierarchy.
- *Should be* voluntary and not forced or mandated.

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Loopy trajectories make the mentorship experience interesting

- Lessons learned about mentoring and the corresponding, less than predictable strategies have application elsewhere.
- Many of the ideas I offered this morning may apply to a range of developmental relationships.
- My perspective is that, in the end, Sophocles advice is still sound.

The reasonable thing is to learn from those who can teach. Sophocles

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