

Mentoring or 'Tormentoring'? It's all in the program design!

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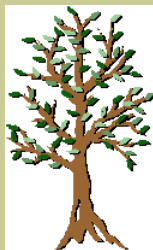
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Let's Give Back

This June, n-gen is teaming up with **Green Toronto** to help in the revitalization of the Don Valley, and we'd like for you to join us! We are arranging a private group tree planting, followed by a picnic lunch. The exact date is yet to be set, but it will take place on a weekday, from 10am-12pm. For more information, or to sign up, please contact [Tracy Yan](#).



Mentoring or 'Tormentoring'?

A participant at a recent conference mentioned that the mentoring program at his company had been re-named the 'tor-mentoring' program by participants. Mentoring can be an invaluable mechanism to help younger colleagues learn about an organization's formal practices, tacit culture, transfer knowledge and help build professional skills. However, unless the program is well designed, the results won't meet the objectives. Some innovative leaders and organizations have recognized that mentoring does not automatically require a more experienced (or older) employee sharing knowledge with a younger employee. While not yet in wide spread use, reverse mentoring (where younger colleagues mentor more experienced colleagues) can also be a useful practice to build productive, engaged teams. In this newsletter, we highlight considerations for a successful mentoring program.

Mentoring

Whether it is built formally or informally, a mentoring relationship should have a structured framework with objectives, developmental goals, shared roles and outcomes.

A well structured mentoring program offers numerous benefits, including:

- * Guiding new employees to help orient them in the organization
- * Helping mentors / mentees gain knowledge about other parts of the organization
- * Elevating knowledge transfer

Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Alana McPhee**! She won our monthly GAC Survey draw for a \$50 gift certificate!

- * Enhancing professional and personal development of employees
- * Increasing talent retention
- * Lowering turnover costs
- * Providing management with an opportunity to showcase leadership skills
- * Obtaining first-hand information about how the younger generation thinks and works
- * Creating an organizational culture of shared knowledge

It is important to distinguish mentoring from performance management or coaching. Mentors don't develop people; rather, they support mentees as they learn for themselves by sharing experiences, asking great questions, challenging decision-making, and expanding problem-solving skills. Although there is no one correct way to mentor, the following components are key to ensuring an effective and mutually beneficial mentor-mentee relationship:

- * **Meaningful feedback:** Criticism needs to be positive, clearly communicated with specific examples, and constructive. Both mentor and mentee should agree on a feedback model to be used during their partnership.
- * **Action plans:** Results will be achieved more reliably when there are formal, written and evaluated goals. Establish a follow-up plan and discuss the plan at every session. Modify the plan as necessary to take advantage of changes and opportunities.
- * **Learn from each other:** Mentors and mentees should learn from each other. Empathetic and self-aware mentors will constantly assess their own effectiveness and adjust their efforts accordingly.

Join Our GAC

Click [here](#) to learn about our **Generational Advisory Council**. GAC members are entered into a monthly draw to win a \$50 gift card!

Reverse Mentoring

Learning from a more junior person may be a foreign concept for many leaders and colleagues. Traditionally, mentoring has been viewed as a mechanism by which a more experienced (usually older) employee passes on knowledge and expertise to a less experienced (usually younger) employee. But the roles are reversing and younger employees have become valuable mentors, able to pass on knowledge and expertise up the organization.

There are many relevant skills Gen Ys (defined as age 10-29) bring to the workplace. Not surprisingly, their technical skills as a generation surpass all other generational cohorts. Many Gen Ys can teach older generations how to use software or hardware (such as

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PDA's, Blackberrys or iPhones) more efficiently. As a generation born with a laptop in the house, Gen Ys instinctively know how to maximize or re-program technology and business leaders can, and should, harness this ability.

Historically, mentoring was viewed as a way to shape and guide an employee into an image of the "ideal" employee. Spearheaded by Traditionalists, this hierarchical relationship, similar to an apprenticeship model, became the standard by which subsequent generations were mentored. Baby Boomers, who were mentored by Traditionalists, had to comply and work hard to be accepted by their mentor in order to move up the organizational ladder. Baby Boomers may now try to use this type of apprenticeship format with Gen Xers and Gen Ys. However, this format often fails because these two generations opt out of mentoring programs that don't focus on their interests and needs.

Gen Xers don't want to emulate their mentors and Gen Ys believe their mentors should emulate them. They expect a mentoring relationship to focus on their learning needs, not on the mentor's teaching desires. For both Gen X and Gen Y, it is imperative to create a successful mentoring relationship based on two-way respect and feedback.

Sometimes, the experienced generations are reluctant to accept the notion that younger generations have anything to offer. As one engineer said to his colleague, "I have socks older than you." To overcome this reluctance, HR professionals and leaders should raise awareness of the skill sets younger colleagues bring to the table. They can also highlight examples of informal reverse-mentoring successes. For example, ask colleagues what they have learned from their children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren to demonstrate that, even outside of work, they frequently learn from younger generations.

Reverse mentoring allows all four generations to interact and learn from each other. Organizations that actively promote this form of mentoring may find increasing numbers of Traditionalists, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers who wish to participate as mentees. And, as an added bonus, Gen Ys will be engaged early on as successful contributors to the business.

E-Learning

n-gen's e-learning course, **Four Generations**, is now available for individual purchase.

Click [here](#) to visit the n-gen store.

GAC Survey Results

We want to thank everyone for participating in our Generational Advisory Council Survey. We also want to congratulate **Alana McPhee**, who won our monthly draw for a \$50 gift certificate!

This month's survey focused on the topic of mentoring.

The majority of Gen Ys and Gen Xers (73% in both groups), and 44% of Baby Boomers report that their employers **do not** offer a formal mentoring program.

For those organizations who **do** offer a formal mentoring program, the majority of respondents in all generations rated the program as "successful" or "very successful" (50% of Gen Y, 83% of Gen X, and 60% of Baby Boomers).

Reverse mentoring is reported as being almost non-existent among our GAC members. Only 9% of Gen Ys and 11% of Baby Boomers (and no Gen Xers) say that their organizations offer a formalized reverse mentoring program.

We saw an inverse relationship between age and mentoring; the older generations report more frequently that they have been mentors: 79% of Baby Boomers, 56% of Gen Xers, and 27% of Gen Ys.

Interestingly, this inverse relationship doesn't hold true when it comes to age and being a mentee: 54% of Gen Ys, 50% of Gen Xers, and 56% of Baby Boomers said they have been a mentee.

All three generations agree that the two most important benefits of mentoring are: 1) enhancing the professional and personal development of employees, and 2) elevating knowledge transfer.

Our respondents also provided some insightful comments. Below are a few excerpts:

"I have been a mentee and mentor in the field of HR. It was greatly beneficial for me to have a mentor to ask questions about HR and the industry in general. As a mentor, I have been able to pay it forward and let someone know the things I wish I knew when I was graduating."

- Gen Y

About n-gen

We have worked with 10 of the 14 Canadian Fortune 500 companies, as selected by Forbes magazine in 2008.

We have trained over 8000 people through our various workshops.

We have delivered keynote presentations to more than 18,000 individuals.

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"I found my experience as a mentee very rewarding. I worked for a woman who had her own consulting business, and she took me under her wing. I grew as a business woman and gained a lot of knowledge in the process."

-Gen Y

"I consider myself a mentor to the students I teach and, in the past, to the junior staff that I managed. In both situations, mentoring was/is my favourite part of the job."

-Gen X

"I still connect with my mentor on a yearly or twice yearly basis. He has given me guidance in career matters, and I know I can turn to him for an open and honest opinion when I need to."

-Gen X

"A mentoring role came through HRP (professional association), and matched me with a junior, less experienced practitioner. It was a rewarding and enriching experience and we still communicate to this day."

-Baby Boomer

"The most significant mentoring result is the bond and trust that is created. Mentoring is not always equated to faster upward progression as many think; it is in my view helping employees better understand themselves and their potential."

-Baby Boomer

Newsletter Sources

Reversing the roles: Why Gen Ys can make great mentors (Canadian HR Reporter); May 2009, Adwoa K. Buahene & Giselle Kovary

Making Mentoring Memorable (SHRM); March 2010, Aparna Sharma

Make Mentoring Memorable (SHRM); May 2009, David C. Pease

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