MENTORING
A to Z

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CONTENTS

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PREFACE

WHILE THE CONCEPT of being a mentor and mentoring others goes back—literally—hundreds of years, mentoring in the business world has come and gone in popularity but has enjoyed a huge resurgence of interest and use in the last decade. The reasons for this are many, and while most would like to believe that increased breadth and depth of usage is due to the value of the mentoring process above all other aspects, the reality is that many use mentorship instead of, as well as alongside, staff development. Mentorship is used as part of or in place of significant orientation and for acculturation of individuals to new or changing programs. In addition, contemporary mentoring programs are used as infrastructures for succession planning to ease transitions and ensure continued policies and processes during times of change. While none of those reasons are bad or inappropriate ones for using mentoring, those interested in implementing either single-mentor relationships or even expansive mentorship programs should study the whys of mentoring, the hows of mentors and mentees, and the benefits as well as the negative aspects of mentoring.

That being said, all employees or members (whether they are mentors, mentees, or neither) in an organization, association, or institution should be familiar with the vision, outcomes, and practice of mentoring as well as the application of mentorship policies and processes. If the concept is vetted and determined to fit the situation, *all* individuals should become knowledgeable about the positive and negative aspects of mentoring as well as what it does do, doesn't do, can do, and won't do. This book attempts to give that information as well as tackle the harder issues such as the big

successes *and* the big failures of mentoring, as well as the mistakes and best practices of mentoring.

Mentoring A to Z takes a look at the process of mentoring as a successful means of growing and building individuals and organizations, institutions, and associations in virtual and actual environments, in both the long and short term and for both classic job responsibilities and special relationships.

INTRODUCTION

WORK, ACTIVITIES, AND functions at "work," work in associations and work for other purposes (church, hobbies, and so on) consume much of our time. In fact, when the number of hours we spend "working" in all of these other areas is added up, we spend more time with others outside our family or friends "at work" than we do *with* our family and friends. It is critical, therefore, to explore, design, build, and even perfect these relationships within these other environments and areas in order to have the best possible experiences.

One successful process used in designing and building relationships is the process of identifying activities and contacts outside the normal management and leadership structures that can lead to successful relationships and thus result in enhanced work and expanded commitment to the organization. This process—"mentorship"—is realized through a variety of approaches.

This book attempts to cover the widest variety and broadest of definitions of these approaches, including the classic mentor techniques and processes individuals and groups today use to develop interest and talent in others. These techniques and processes used for mentoring teach management competencies for enhancing or expanding work relationships; developing mentees to build organizations by fostering leadership skills and abilities; and using mentor practices to increase positive work culture as well as knowledge bases for all employees to excel at work. Mentoring also helps mentees to move into higher-level functional or discipline-specific or management positions. In addition, using the concepts of mentoring in organizations is designed to not only increase retention of

employees but also to sustain members through encouraging their becoming committed, active association or organization members and member leaders.

Although some mentorship content techniques and processes outlined in the book aren't new, they are presented in expanded ways (case methods, best practices, critical questions to challenge suppositions, and checklists). These techniques and processes provide newer approaches to designing both virtual and in-person mentorship programs; choosing and educating mentors; critical elements of mentorship curriculum; and choosing, educating, and "growing" mentees. Choosing what's right for anyone or any one group includes the review of all techniques and processes, the needs assessment of a workplace or group, and a match of identified needs with appropriate mentoring techniques and processes.

The chapters in this book have both general information and information by type and size of library, and each chapter includes one or more techniques used to illustrate or display content such as a critical question and answer, a case or scenario, or a grid or checklist that can be used for assessment and evaluation.

The content in chapters includes a mentorship overview and definitions; job descriptions with roles and responsibilities; mentor and mentee styles and profiles, with examples including unique aspects such as gender, age, culture, race, ethnicity, and classic aspects of mentor and mentee relationships; twenty-first-century aspects of mentor and mentee relationships; benefits and liabilities of relationships; curricula for mentors and mentees' orientation and training; best practices; and bad news of mentorship mistakes, pitfalls, and hazards. In addition, the book's appendixes include expanded content for internal assessment, examples of programs with both internal and external mentors and mentees, special project approaches, mentor and mentee evaluations, and recommended communication plans.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

FOR MANY PEOPLE and projects, names are everything. What something is called or identified as can project fame and fortune, indicate levels of importance, or at the very least, status; drive or imply costs; "brand" a project or environment; represent time; identify goals or outcomes; and illustrate worth or value. So, while seemingly unimportant, the identification of mentoring, mentors, and mentees needs to be thoughtfully considered. Obviously, many names are derived from what mentorship in general is, and although twenty-first-century mentorship is the focus of this book, background information on mentorship includes the following.

- There are more formal mentoring programs in academic institutions, and therefore in more libraries in academic institutions. Many terms, therefore, are derived from educational settings.
- Many associations have mentor programs to advance member involvement in and commitment to the association—primarily with a focus on leadership and leadership activities to grow organizational leaders. Leadership content is often used in defining not only mentor terminology, but the general curriculum for mentors and mentees in all programs.

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This applies especially to mentors, because their primary responsibility is to lead others.

- A number of mentoring programs exist—both informal and formal—for other types of librarians and library workers, including those in K–12 schools, special libraries, and public libraries. Many of these mentoring programs, however, reside in the associations or organizations that serve or support these environments due to the size of the institution, the number of staff, and the lack of critical mass of people available not only to plan but also to mentor.
- A larger number of short-term mentor possibilities with some longer-term mentoring processes exist in mentorship relationships today. Many identifiers are for time lines and timeliness, because time can often drive mentoring relationships.
- Mentoring processes to complement education programs represent a growing number of mentorship opportunities in both practice and in educational settings. These use faculty in teaching roles and include typically an educational offering (one day, one week, and so on) with a cohort of learners in mentorship roles and continuing education activity. The terminology for many mentor programs characterized by these activities often includes educational terms and designates not only cohorts but time lines for following up on teaching and learning.
- Many newer mentorship programs have been designed to provide online-only graduate library programs opportunities for online-only students. The terminology for online mentor programs will typically use terms to illustrate the digital or virtual nature of the program and specifically program communication.
- Many more mentorship programs and processes exist for librarians, managers, administrators, and leaders rather than for support staff, non-librarians, or board or stakeholder group members.
- Mentoring programs substituting for processes libraries cannot fund or fully fund such as staff development and training

and professional development for individuals are often wrapped into mentorship goals and outcomes. Many organizations use the terms of activities they can't afford as names or subtitles under mentorship program articulation.

• CASE METHOD •

"BUT WHAT ABOUT ME?"

Although Frankie participated in the focus groups and initial design phase of the library's mentorship program, she was surprised at how she felt when the mentee's name was announced and the roles and responsibilities of both the mentee and Frankie, the mentor, were outlined. As she assessed her calendar and her department's time plan with the mentee, she wondered at how this position would benefit her and her area—outreach. For general guidance, but also specific answers to her questions, she decided to e-mail her manager and ask for a meeting about "integrating the proposed mentee training" into her already busy and overbooked schedule. She knew she had to participate in orienting new mentees; however, she was wondering how her time spent would benefit her busy department.

Case Steps/Exploration

In using case method, readers are asked to repeat some steps after assessing what they have read. Readers then illustrate that assessment by marking text to guide case exploration of content.

1. Read the mentorship assignment, or case, thoroughly without underlining or noting case elements. Take no immediate position or role. Then, during the second reading, note elements of the case by underlining or circling case individuals or "characters," case facts as stated, case suppositions, and implied as well as clearly stated issues and actual, perceived, or possible problems.

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2. Prepare lists of the important or relevant facts and statements in the situation.
   - The institution has a mentor program.
   - The design of the program included input from existing staff members—specifically through providing feedback in focus groups.
   - The primary person identified in the case—Frankie—participated in at least one focus group.
   - Frankie appears to be surprised by feelings that have come up upon announcement of the mentor chosen and by the roles and responsibilities identified in the announcement.
   - Frankie is questioning how the mentor program—but specifically the mentee—benefits her department—Outreach.
   - Frankie has questions about the mentor program and how it will integrate into her roles and responsibilities. Specifically, Frankie is seeking answers to how she will manage to train someone when she doesn't have time and when mentor training doesn't appear to add value or opportunities to her department.

3. List the characters or "players" in the situation, and—if possible—list them in relevant categories such as those directly involved, those indirectly involved, and those affected by the situation. Other categories or descriptors for characters can be: decision makers, primary vs. secondary characters in the case, and so on.

   - Frankie—primary
   - The mentee—primary
   - The person who will answer Frankie's questions—primary
   - The head of the mentor program—primary
   - Frankie's boss—secondary
   - Other future mentees—secondary
   - Other future mentors (short and long term in the process)—secondary
   - Others in the organization with similar issues regarding mentees and mentor processes—secondary

4. Review the underlined, marked case elements and list the primary or most important issues, elements, and problems in the case/situation.

   - **Issue/Problem:** Frankie is questioning how the mentor program, and specifically the mentee, benefits her department—Outreach.
   - **Fact:** The primary person identified in the case—Frankie—participated in at least one focus group *but* . . .
   - Frankie appears to be surprised by feelings that have come up upon announcement of the mentor chosen and by the roles and responsibilities identified in the announcement.
   - **Issue/Problem:** Frankie has questions about the mentor program and how it will integrate into her roles and responsibilities. Specifically, Frankie is seeking answers to how she will manage to train someone when she doesn't have time and when mentor training doesn't appear to add to her department.

5. Prioritize the most important and least important issues or problems in the situation. At this point in case review, the

time lines indicated by the case should be taken into consideration; however, other aspects of the case may contribute significantly toward prioritizing case elements. Other ways to prioritize could include now vs. later; immediate vs. can wait, and so on.

Can Wait

"Can wait" elements are important, but should be considered at a different time. For example, the manager of the mentor program should question general program information distributed to the managers as well as information and discussions in the focus groups as this content should introduce and explain *how* managers are involved and what the benefits are to their departments immediately. No one should have left a focus group confused and while the confusion should be handled first (see the "Immediate" list), future steps should include a review of general and focus group content.

- The institution has a mentor program.
- The design of the program included input from existing staff members—specifically through providing feedback in focus groups.
- The primary person identified in the case—Frankie—participated in at least one focus group.
- Frankie appears to be surprised by feelings that have come up upon announcement of the mentor chosen and by the roles and responsibilities identified in the announcement.

Immediate

- Frankie is questioning how the mentor program—but specifically the mentee—benefits her department—Outreach.
- Frankie has questions about the mentor program and how it will integrate into her roles and responsibilities. Specifically, Frankie is seeking answers to how she will manage to train someone when she doesn't have time and when mentor training doesn't appear to add value or opportunities to her department.

6. After review and discussion of the prioritized situation content, and given the players, elements of the organization, list "what can be done."
   - Frankie needs to ask for clarification on the mentor program and on mentee roles and responsibilities.
   - The administration (and those who manage the mentor program) needs to clarify and communicate the value of the mentor program for Frankie's department.
   - Frankie needs to find time to work with the mentee in accordance with the mentor program.

7. After review and discussion of the prioritized situation content, and given the players, elements of the organization, and so on . . . list "what can't be done."
   - Frankie's boss can't ignore Frankie's concerns and questions.
   - The administration (or those who manage the mentor program) can't ignore Frankie's concerns and questions.
   - The administration must not ignore potential problems of a poorly articulated or explained mentor program.
   - Choose the best one or two solutions given what data is available, and what is missing.
   - Frankie's boss should answer the questions for Frankie and clarify benefits to Frankie's satisfaction but also inform the mentor program manager (and the administration) that program elements may be unclear.
   - Because the program is not clear to someone who participated in the design of the program, mentor program management must assess communication surrounding the program and—if appropriate—revise, but certainly redistribute, program information.
   - Even though it isn't clear whether or not others in the organization are confused about the mentor program, program processes and values as well as *all* employee roles and responsibilities in the program must be clearly communicated.

8. Speculate on the outcome(s) and impact if the solutions are used and put into effect.
   - Frankie's mentee has a successful mentee experience with Frankie and in Frankie's department.
   - Frankie and Frankie's department have a successful mentor and mentee experience.
   - The mentor program is revised—and in particular, the program's value for the entire organization is clearly communicated throughout the organization.

9. Build in an evaluation mechanism.
   - Although the value of a program for a mentee should be easy to assess, evaluating perception and value for the organization as a whole is challenging. Mentor program managers must assess not only mentee success but also conduct assessments of the organization before, during, and after mentor activities. Assessment of perception and value is achieved through evaluating focus groups and overall participant perceptions through pre- and post-focus group interviews with potential mentors; pre, during, and post surveys of departmental employee and mentee perceptions; department head perceptions; mentee work products (such as quality, timeliness, outcomes met); and overall employee attitudes toward the program.

INDEX

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