

Mastering Mentoring 12 Keep It Fun

by **Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD**



Even though mentoring is a serious process with important objectives, it should be fun rather than boring or painful. Keep the discussions light and enjoyable by following the suggestions below.

I need to emphasize two important caveats before suggesting ways to make the relationship have variety. There are some topic areas where it is important to keep things confidential between the two people. That precaution needs to be given

priority over the other methods of enhancing the relationship. If a topic area is private, then the discussion should be as well.

Also, It is a good idea to check that both parties are totally comfortable with whatever techniques you use to liven up the relationship. There could be cultural or gender issues that may make one party feel slightly uncomfortable with a particular method. If so, just avoid doing that.

Change the Venue

Many times a mentoring relationship will lead to a set schedule of meetings. These are often scheduled in the office of the mentor. That can be a good thing, since there may be references or materials that are handy in the mentor's office. On the flip side, if the pattern never varies, the relationship can get boring for either party.

Liven up the relationship by occasionally meeting in a different place. You might want to go out for a coffee or a lunch. You might meet on the weekend at the home of one of the participants. You might even go shopping with the other person or play a round of golf together.

Get creative and keep the atmosphere light while information is being shared between the two individuals. For example, if you are manufacturing managers, you might want to have a meeting while walking around the operation. In the Lean Six Sigma parlance, this is called "Going to Gemba."

Invite Others to Participate

There is no rule that all interfaces between a mentor and protégé must always be between those specific two people. If you are going to be discussing a supply chain issue and neither of you has that as a core strength, by all means invite a supply chain expert to join that particular discussion.

Sometimes the mentor might invite the protégé into a staff meeting as an observer. This might be for the purpose of modeling efficient meeting techniques.

In some situations, it might be helpful to get the family members involved in the activities as long as confidential matters are not discussed.

Share Videos and Books

The libraries of each person should be fair game such that each person can tap into the collective knowledge that has influenced the other in the past. This sharing of content really helps to extend the knowledge and does not require the pair to be face to face in order to learn.

Travel together

If the operation includes plants in different cities or countries, plan to travel together. The ability to discuss ideas during a plane flight really allows some deep thinking. This practice encourages a stronger relationship while also demonstrating unity for the groups that are visited.

Sometimes the quirky things that come up when traveling allow a kind of bonding that is just not possible in the home office.

Summary

Try to vary your techniques and locations as you enjoy a good mentor relationship. By being creative, you can enhance the relationship while you are learning.

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