

Mastering Mentoring 15 Show Gratitude

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



I have written several times in this series that a good mentoring relationship benefits both parties, so it is logical that both parties should show gratitude for those benefits. Sometimes not enough conscious thanks is shared in either direction. Try to get more creative with how you reflect the benefits you are receiving.

Gratitude usually expressed in one direction

In reality, the gratitude is most often shown in one direction only. The protégé is thankful for the wisdom and ideas that the mentor shares. Typically the protégé will express thanks also for the time commitment made by the mentor. It is like a gift given to the protégé by the mentor.

The gratitude is often verbalized as a simple “thank you,” but there may be some small gifts involved or perhaps the purchase of a lunch or other tangible reflection.

Consider the reverse logic

If the mentor is truly gaining by the relationship, then gratitude should be expressed for that. The protégé is also giving of his or her precious time, so that should be acknowledged as well.

While the mentor is giving help in the form of knowledge of things, the protégé is giving valuable insight to the mentor about things that he or she cannot see personally. The protégé exists in a sea of information about how people are reacting to their leaders.

If there are misinterpretations of intentions, the protégé can tip off the mentor that a gap in understanding is starting to develop. That allows the mentor to make corrective actions when problems are small and manageable. That action will prevent a significant trust withdrawal.

The protégé is often of a younger generation than the mentor, so some reverse coaching can take place when the mentor is coming across as “old school.” This keeps the mentor from losing credibility with the younger generation of workers.

Both people should show gratitude

By expressing thanks for the benefits each person is receiving in the relationship, it tends to solidify the bond between the two individuals and further enhance the value gained by both people.

If you are in a mentor relationship, regardless of which role you play, look for where you are benefitting and make your gratitude obvious to the other individual.

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