

So, what about The Mentor???

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In April this year we launched the joined industry mentoring program. Over 135 mentors and mentees registered and after a successful launch entered a journey that for most of the attendees was a new experience.

Not only were the mentees anxious and a little nervous meeting their mentor. Mentors also felt a bit out of their comfort zone. What are the expectations from their mentee, do they have to know everything, what if there is no 'chemistry', these were just some of the thoughts that went through the mentor's head.

Last week, the first mentoring program workshop on decision making gave me an opportunity to check in with some of the mentors to ask - 'What *do* mentors get out of the deal?'. Aside from the gratification of seeing a former mentee go on to succeed in her career, what really motivates great leaders to share their hard-earned success secrets with someone else?

Does helping mentees turn your dreams into reality and showing a genuine interest in using your knowledge to help others grow, have its rewards??

In my career I have been lucky enough to have amazing mentors and also becoming a mentor to some extraordinary people. From my own experience as a mentee, I was lucky enough to not just have a mentor, but a sponsor, somebody who held me most accountable if my career (and yes at times my personal life) did not go the way I had planned. **My mentor and sponsor** empowered me to take the steps I needed to take in my career and business and his questioning and advice still resonates in my head. I grew up in a house where teaching was a viable part of our daily conversation, so the role of becoming coach was natural for me. I started my 'coaching/mentoring' career by meeting a handful of young women on a regular basis, and I decided to be on call for them, to make sure that I was pushing them in a direction that they wanted, and to make solid introductions that could help them further their careers.

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One of mentors I spoke to last week mentioned that his mentees remind him what it felt like at age 26. When you meet with young men and women, it reminds you that their goals are very similar to what your own goals were at that age. Sometimes you forget to stop, breathe and take stock of all the beautiful life lessons you've learned, because it's so easy to only look forward. But mentoring helps put everything into perspective.

Another mentor mentioned that when his mentees would come and talk to him about what was happening in their jobs, he would share ideas and stories that he thought might be relevant. (The mentor mentioned that he did not feel like he was sharing anything of value but his mentee definitely felt otherwise and the mentor was amazed when the mentee came back in the next session and said: *“Thank you so much, I did what you said and it worked so well!”*)

The reason this happens makes sense once you think about it. The things you know don't seem fascinating or impressive to you because you already know them! And this gets me to the reason you should be a mentor...

1. You can change the world for someone

For people who are younger and less experienced than you, when you share your knowledge and experiences you can change the world for that person. One of the greatest gifts of value you can give someone is to help them get something into their imagination.

By sharing that *“this is a possibility, and it is a possibility for YOU,”* you can open up entirely new paths in their life.

2. You learn stuff

When you become a mentor you learn things about how things work at different levels and in different places. Additional context always makes you smarter.

You learn things that make you a better manager and leader. You learn things that improve your judgement. You are building your network and extra team. You become more valuable.

3. Your career benefits

I wouldn't say that this is the main reason to be a mentor, but you do get several career benefits. People who are seen as mentors are granted higher credibility and are seen as higher performers.

4. You feel like you did something that matters

Many weeks or even months can go by in an executive job that leave you wondering, *“What did I accomplish?”*

So often, executives tell me that they wish their job had more meaning. So if you feel like a cog in a heartless machine, help someone else. You will feel something!

5. Everyone benefits

I love to think that if the many people who read this blog, all mentored one additional person, that more than a few truly great things would come of it, and something in our industry would be at least a little better for many more people.

If you build mentoring into your team culture and values — that everyone should be a mentor to at least one person inside or outside the company — our industry will benefit.

There is really no downside.