

Good news- Very good article; easy to read, simple principles and filled with practical examples and lessons. I came upon it through a client and friend at Microsoft and have already applied learnings from it with two other clients (ABB and Wilmington Trust Bank).

Bad news- It’s a little slanted toward professional service firms, but only a little. It’s pretty easy to translate and apply to other kinds of organizations.

Good news- As usual, I have gleaned the best and most practical ideas from it, and offer you some meaningful applications. Hopefully they are helpful and timely.

Summary:

Professional service firms (PSFs), like so many other companies, are juggling the modern challenges of global competition, increased regulation, and rapid employee turnover. In a people-oriented industry, attrition has special import. DeLong and Gabarro, of Harvard Business School, along with former Morgan Stanley and Ernst & Young executive Lees, argue that a PSF (and other organizations) can gain a much-needed competitive edge by renewing its focus on mentoring. The authors’ in-depth interviews with professionals from more than 30 PSFs have yielded four principles for firms to heed as they rediscover this lost art.

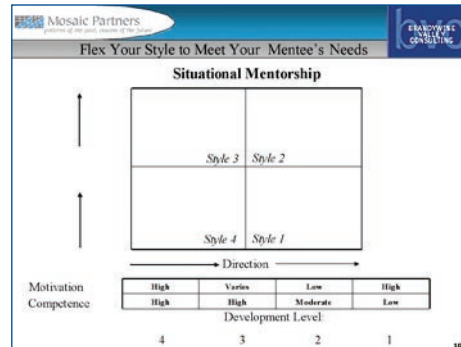
Principle One: Mentoring is Personal. Rather than only relying on standardized programs, mentors must also frequently, and fairly provide authentic advice and nurturing. Partners at PSFs know how to use their ample people skills effectively with clients; the benefits of using them with junior colleagues are even greater.



Principle Two: Not Everyone is an A Player. A small dose of attention given to a B player goes at least as far as a large one offered to an A player. Since B players constitute about 70% of PSF staff, that’s time well spent.



Principle Three: Choice Assignments are in Short Supply, which limits the number of learning opportunities available for associates. Good alternatives include shadowing senior professionals on assignments and taking on research or other projects that are not client-related but that nonetheless build expertise.



Principle Four: Mentoring is a Two-Way Street. Protégés should not only learn from their senior counterparts, but also be taught to attract mentors, and to co-mentor one another.

Applications:

(for each of the principles)

Principle One: Mentoring is Personal. The authors refer to mentoring as a lost art. It may not really be a lost art, but here are 10 tips I have learned over the years regarding mentoring that might add some science to the art:

- Be authentic and vulnerable with your mentee. Don’t try to be anything or anyone else. They chose you for who you are!
- Expand your mentee’s thinking. Mentoring really can be a life-long experience; assimilating into new situations, career planning, technical learning, networking.

(See Lifetime Mentoring Model below)

- Change your mentee’s perspective prior to changing their behavior.
- Help them build on strengths, don’t focus on weaknesses.
- Expand their comfort zone (and yours).
- Plan and manage mentoring meetings like you would any other meeting.
- Flex your style to meet mentee’s needs. (See Situational Mentorship-Model)
- Act as your mentee’s brand manager: help her/him focus on passions, greatness and stretch goals; (Linked In, My Space, U Tube, etc.). (See 3 Circle Model)
- Facilitate discussions, don’t solve problems.
- Practice real mentoring skills; listen first.

Principle Two: Not Everyone is an A Player. No offense, but there really is a bell shaped curve of people in most organizations; some A performers, lots of B’s and some C’s. The A’s get most of the attention in formal mentoring programs. Some really benefit from the attention, some don’t really want it or think they need it, and some like the attention but still leave. Spend time with you’re A’s, but spend some quality time mentoring the B’s too. They really matter!!

Principle Three: Choice Assignments are in Short Supply. Think creatively. Maybe a routine assignment for someone is a choice assignment for someone else. Trade people for awhile. Get a project off the back burner. Ask your people what they think might be a choice assignment before you start assuming and handing them out. Push, stretch, think out of the box.

Principle Four: Mentoring is a Two-Way Street. Pay it forward, make sure your people pay it forward, and expect to learn something yourself too!

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Mentoring, Executive Coaching, Career Development and Organization Change issues and have already put aspects of this article to use with some of them. I intend to continue using these principles (and my own) with more clients in the future. If you want more thoughts about this article, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com> This opinion and others are posted on my web site: www.rsbc.com

To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.