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Mentoring – The Invisible Ingredient in Developing Leaders

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Introduction and Definition

I have always admired Vince Lombardi, Green Bay football coach. In addressing leadership and what it takes to be Number One, he said, “Winning is not a sometime thing; it’s an all the time thing.” On the other hand, it, too, was Lombardi, who said, “we never lose, but some time the clock just runs out.”

I think most of us all have a goal of being good leaders and contribute in a meaningful way to the profession. Lombardi said, “leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile.” What are the components or ingredients that must be developed, if we are not born leaders? Some would say that having academic talent; others might say having persistent drive and motivation; others might say having an exuberant personality; and still others might say that having life-long experience might be the most important ingredient for success. It is my serious belief that **mentoring** is **the** essential, yet invisible ingredient, in the development of leaders for the profession.

Mentoring; what is it? Who are the Mentors? Are Mentors born or made? I think we all know, or think we know, what mentoring is all about. If we are not sure, we will surely “know it” when we see it.

Actually, the word and meaning is an ancient concept. The word “mentor” comes from *The Odyssey*, written by the Greek poet Homer. As Odysseus (Ulysses), the king of Ithica in Greece is preparing to go fight the Trojan War, he realizes he is leaving behind his one and only heir, Telemachus. Since Telemachus (Telie) is only in “junior high”, and since wars then tend to drag on for years—the Trojan War lasted for ten years, Ulysses recognizes that Telie needs to be coached on how to “king” while he is off fighting. He hires a trusted family friend named Mentor to be Telie’s tutor. Mentor is a wise, trusted teacher, and sensitive friend — all-important ingredients of world-class mentoring.

The history of the word “mentor” is instructive for several reasons. First, it underscores the legacy nature of mentoring. Like Ulysses, great leaders strive to leave behind a benefaction or legacy of added value. Second, Mentor combined the wisdom of experience with the sensitivity of a friend to convey “kingship” skills to Telie. We all know the difficulty of conveying our hard-won wisdom to another, particularly a son or daughter, without stubborn resistance. Thus, the successful mentor, as a friend, not family, is able to carry out the mission without resistance.

Effective mentors are like friends in that their goal is to create a safe haven for growth. However, they are also somewhat like family in that their focus is to offer an unconditional, faithful acceptance of the protégé. Friends work to add and multiply, not subtract. “Family” members care, even in the face of mistakes and errors.

A mentor is defined in the dictionary as “a wise, trusted advisor.....a teacher or coach. In general, a mentor is simply someone who helps someone else learn something the learner (protégé) would otherwise have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all.

The traditional use of the word “mentor” denotes a person from outside one’s usual chain of command. Not all mentors are supervisors. However, many effective supervisors are mentors. Likewise, good leaders mentor.

Mentoring and Leadership

In our own lives, we all have been affected by someone or several persons that have truly changed our lives, propelled us to achieve more, challenged us to grow, prompted us to look at people and the world differently, and perhaps even have changed some of our personal or professional values. In essence, all of us in this room probably have had mentors. Think about your mentors—the unique person or persons that changed your life.

As I thought about this presentation, my thoughts went to identifying my own mentors. Some were somewhat logical and easy to identify. However, as I began contemplating identifying my mentors, those who have made a profound impact on my career, I found, I have indeed, been blessed with many mentors throughout my life.

First, there was Don Nichols, my track coach and basketball coach in high school. A giant of a man who I guess took pity on a kid in a small town in western Kansas. He taught me how to develop confidence in myself and yet how to develop a collective confidence as a team with all members sharing roles and responsibilities. He taught me to be competitive yet how to be competitive in a responsible manner. This wisdom has served me well.

Then there was Harriet Dyer, dietitian and manager of the University of Kansas cafeteria, where I worked my way through college as a captain or head of the student employees in the cafeteria. As one of my first bosses, my first women boss, Mrs. D. truly influenced my understanding and appreciation of the importance of personnel management. At a young age she taught me how to get things accomplished through the work of others. I learned about the concept of "open management" and "participative management" long before these terms were in vogue and in all of the management textbooks. She indeed left a mark on my life.

Of course, one of the master mentors of all, was Clif Latiolais. He taught me so much about dedication to a cause, about the "Big E" for enthusiasm and energy, passion for the profession, and the responsibility of being a leader. My relationship with Clif was very unique since I was transitioned from being in a resident relationship with him, then as a departmental manager-educator with him, and finally as a colleague and friend as I started my own career back in Kansas. Yet, I have to state that the relationship

throughout all of these stages was that of mentor and protégé. While I was a colleague and friend he was teaching me and challenging me to the end.

One of my first administrator bosses was Herman Jones, Administrator, at the University of Kansas Medical Center. He recruited me to return from Columbus back to the Kansas area. He was a former Col. in the Army, was a “good ole boy”, but he helped me immensely by teaching me how to work with authority and cope with a variety of management styles of those above you in the organization. He provided me with insight and skills to work with those in authority and still accomplish your goals. He always said, “everyone has a boss.” I have never forgotten that lesson. The lesson of developing synergy with your boss has been vital to my career.

I also owe much to Dan Nona, retiring Executive Director of the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE). Dan taught me patience, persistence, and a continued passion for pharmacy education as a life long mission. He provided me with the wisdom for change (being a change agent) and that the change is not always the issue but that the timing of change is most critical factor.

Lastly, and most recently there was, Bill Bartholome, M.D., Chair of our IRB, who recently died very prematurely at 50 years old from cancer. He taught me about the value of life, its beauty, its fickleness, it’s fleeting nature, and responsibility to give to others. Once Bill was diagnosed with esogophical cancer he was given six months to live. He lived for five years. During those years, he did not care for himself nor indulge in self-

pity, but he taught all of us on the IRB about life. About the need to accomplish the best we can for today and establish principles for tomorrow. His insight about having a terminal illness and his “mentoring” the KU community about life and death was truly an experience I think about often. His comment “being terminal is nothing more than being mortal in a shortened time frame” touched us all. He continued to “teach” us as he left us.

I am sure I have omitted some mentors that have affected my professional life but the ones mentioned here are the ones that are most prominent. Why do I dwell on my mentors? Well, I think there is a theme or common elements that we gain from our variety of mentors throughout our life that influence us all. This unique experience provides us all a special spirit or insight in order to be effective leaders.

Thus, the mentor is a teacher, a guide, a sage, and most of all a person acting to the best of their ability in a dedicated, compassionate way to help a protégé. A mentor is not a power figure but simply someone who helps another learn to succeed. Mentoring is being honest and being real, being a catalyst, and sometimes a prophet. Some have said mentoring is a special kind of “magic.”

Characteristics of a Mentor

Someone once asked Notre Dame head football coach Lou Holtz what he considered to be the toughest part of the job. His answer was that the hardest part was teaching lessons that “stay taught.” Mentors have a similar challenge.

Another characteristic is that if you asked people who had great mentors what attribute was most prominent and crucial; most will say that their mentors listened. Mentoring is unique in that someone is giving valuable feedback without getting resentment in return from the protégé.

There is an understanding that the price for the value of mentoring is being open and with a special give and take. This give and take is a unique attribute. Neither the mentor nor the protégé feels threatened personally or personally. This mindset is not one of a father to son or daughter or one to an employee by the boss.

While the mentor is both teacher and friend he or she is neither teacher alone nor friend alone. A teacher is usually paid to influence others and guide others. A friend is usually a colleague but is not necessarily associated with career or personal development. The boss is usually a superior and thus has jurisdiction or control over the employee's actions. In the book “Effective Coaching” Marshall J. Cook distinguishes between a “boss” and a “coach” as follows:

The Boss	The Coach
Talks a lot	Listens a lot
Tells	Asks
Fixes	Prevents
Presumes	Explores
Seeks Control	Seeks Commitment
Orders	Challenges
Works On	Works With
Wants Reasons	Seeks Results
Assigns Blame	Takes Responsibility
Keeps Distant	Makes Contact

In general the coach lets the players play the game.

Cook also describes the characteristics of a good coach. A good coach is positive, enthusiastic, supporting, trusting, focused, goal-oriented, knowledgeable, assertive, observant, respectful, patient, and clear. Successful mentors understand that they are not necessarily any smarter (better) than anyone else but they understand their role as a helper of others and take that seriously. The mentoring lifestyle is one in which people

share their time, energy, and knowledge with those who are willing to aspire to be successful.

In Larry Ambrose's book entitled "A Mentor's Companion" he says that good mentors inspire their proteges to learn and grow; to see new things and new possibilities not only in their jobs, but also in themselves. Trust between the mentor and the protégé is critical forming a unique partnership. There is some level of "equality" not superiority or subservient nature between the mentor and the protégé. Sometimes the very fact of having a mentor will give a person confidence enough to move into new areas of experience and make higher level decisions involving themselves and others. Or another way of putting it, the protégé will be aspire to achieve a higher level. Thus it is the mentor's task to inspire, challenge, and direct the protégé. The mentor will also instill in him or her confidence and responsibility to take informed, calculated risks resulting in a more creative contribution to the job or profession. The mentor is the coach, an ally, and a catalyst.

A while back I was reading about an expert on the subject of management. He was speaking to a group of business students and to drive home a point, he used an illustration I am sure those students will never forget. Perhaps you will not forget either.

As this man stood in front of a group of high-powered over achievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed Mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. He produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed

them one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is the jar full?"

Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "really?"

He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. He smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?"

By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not", one of them answered. "Good" he replied.

He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He dumped the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is the jar full?"

"No!" shouted the class.

Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. He looked up at the class and asked. "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, “The point is, no matter how full your schedule is you can always fit some more things into it!” I heard the statement the other day that the day you die your inbasket will still be full.

“No!” the speaker replied, “that is not the point. What this illustration teaches us is that: “If you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in a all.” The protégé can always learn from the wise but sharing mentor.

Is mentoring like parenting? Well, somewhat in that there is transference of teaching, wisdom, and experience. But there is always the authority issue, the obligation issue, and probably a fairly significant age difference, which might interfere with the process. However, there are some similarities. As Chip Bell demonstrates, bluebirds are wonderful mentors. Bluebirds just do not hatch their eggs and leave. They must act as a coach or mentor to get the young bird capable of establishing security (birdhouse) and also develop the serenity of flight. When to the “parent” bluebirds know when to push the young birds from the nest? Bluebirds have genetically coded weaning instincts and an innate sense of timing. They watch for certain subtle signs of maturity; restlessness, wing strength, and the eagerness of the infant’s lunge toward the birdhouse exit. Bluebird parents often perch some distance away and call out to the baby bluebird, as though to gauge reaction time—how fast does junior respond to the chirp. Baby bluebirds (proteges) need teachable moments. The timing of the moment is important. It is a combination of the learner’s readiness to learn, the quickness with which learning can

be applied, and the special conditions likely to foster or support learning. As Bell indicates, the challenge for all mentors is “when does too much support become rescuing?” and “When does too little support become a sign of callousness?” When do you intervene as a mentor? Back to the bluebirds. Soon some morning the baby bluebird will take that first clumsy flight from the birdhouse to the nearby bush or tree. Both parents are on hand to see this event. Another lesson for the mentor from the bluebirds is the living courage to let the learner fall. Then once they see the reward of their efforts they are off to other neighborhoods. Mentors provide support and encouragement as proteges’ work to transform shaky new skills into confident mastery. If the mentor does not show the protégé how, he will never learn to be competent.

We have talked much about the value of mentoring, the characteristics of mentoring, and the mentoring process. Have not all of us been mentored to the extent it positively affected our personal and professional lives? I think we all have similar stories to mine. Part of the mentoring process is the transition process, which makes the mentor responsible to mentor others. It is this transition which is so important and critical for the profession.

Mentors for the Profession

Where have all the mentors gone—the Whitney, the Francke, the Gonzales, Latiolais, Parker, Webb, and many others in this room? Were we not mentored by many and are we not responsible to mentors those behind us? Wickman and Sjodin in the book

“Mentoring” states that all these greats were proteges to mentors and became mentors to proteges. If everyone were a protégé to a more experienced mentor and a mentor to a less experienced protégé, how much better off the profession would be.

Where have all the mentors gone? Or are they gone? This raises the question of whether or not one knows when you are mentoring or are being mentored. This is not always so easy to determine. The open relationship between mentor and protégé as we have discussed this is obvious. However, I contend that there are many examples of somewhat fleeting moments where a “mentor” has had an impact upon a “protégé” and it might not be apparent. Often leaders do not realize the profound influence they have on others. I guess I would call these “mini mentor” experiences or being a stealth mentor. Some particular lesson or event might make a significant impact upon an unidentified protégé. It is unfortunate that this was not a dynamic event and a recognized event by both the mentor and the protégé all along. There may an instant impact upon a protégé without fully recognizing this influence until years later when the mentor and protégé exchange this fact.

We have stated the value of mentorship. We have said that this event or series of events provide the protégé with the confidence, the drive, the advanced knowledge, and the wisdom to perform at a level much higher than would be possible with out this experience. In essence, mentorship is one of the ingredients, often the invisible ingredient in training leaders. This balance between the mentor and protégé or dependence and independence is critical. There is probably a point in this relationship

where the bond between the mentor and the protégé is not dependent versus independent but interdependent. It is this transition that creates life-long personal bonds and a life-long dedication to the cause (the profession) as mutual success or a synergism occurs. This transition produces not a clone of the mentor but it produces a unique individual poised for the future. Because not only has the protege learned what to do but also learned what not to do in various situations. It is my contention that to lead is to mentor; to mentor is to lead. The value of mentoring in training leaders is to create a new voice not an echo. The magic has been created.

Indeed, there are values or benefits in mentoring and adopting the mentoring lifestyle.

According to Wickman and Sjodin, mentoring accomplishes the following:

- Carries on your legacy
- Keeps you sharp
- Forces you to set an example, thereby enhancing performance
- Enhances your value to others
- Encourages creativity.
- Provides a window to “receive by giving.”
- Creates a rewarding personal experience

What can we do as managers to ensure leaders for the future? As previously stated to lead is to mentor and to mentor is to lead. It is critical to recognize that we have all had mentors in order to be successful in our careers. It is important to that we pay back this significant gift of our mentors to mentor those around us. What are the recommendations for being a good, successful mentor?

- First recognize the value of those who have mentored us.
- Acknowledge (or thank) those who have made an impact on our lives or career.
- Take the time necessary and make it a priority to mentor those proteges around you.
- Know the protégé as a whole person
- Invest in the future by returning the gift of mentoring that you once received. This is gift by giving.
- Protect the profession by mentoring for the future creating a new voice and not an echo.
- Instill the process or mentorship and the transition to those to continue the path.

Throughout this presentation I have not necessarily identified who the protégés were. We have discussed the need to develop leaders for the future. As you all know, residency training is probably the single most important programmatic development in the training leaders in pharmacy over the last 30 years. The concept of mentorship is an integral part of this residency training. If we look throughout the US for leaders in organized health care settings and the profession most have been associated with residency training. It is my contention that the residency training process has been so successful because of the mentoring element incorporated into these programs. Residency programs will continue to grow and expand into community practice. These new joint standards by APhA and ASHP likewise foster mentoring as a part of the training of residents. While we point to the success of residency education to produce leaders for the future we are not limited to this element of education for the profession for mentoring. The proven value of mentoring is apparent for all levels of practitioners who aspire to achieve and reach for excellence.

Conclusion

I would like to relate a quote from H.A.K. Whitney discussing the potential for the future of hospital pharmacy. This statement was actually made in 1943 and taken from *The Mirror to Hospital Pharmacy* published in 1965. "If we can only roughly sketch the general course to be followed: if we will actively cooperate with the leaders and help all along the way; if we will have faith in ourselves, in each other, in the profession; then, and only then shall we have made a beginning..." For the mentors in our profession we have had our new beginning yesterday. However, with our guidance now there is a new generation of leaders that today is their new beginning.

The greatest gift to those that you mentor (your proteges) is to instill in them the responsibility to mentor and develop those colleagues or protégés that follow them. In this way the "torch is passed," "the baton is transferred," and the legacy continues. Success is not a destination but it is the journey.