

Unlock the Power of Your Knowledge

By Kathleen Goolsby

Knowledge and information equate to power. Many people in an organizational setting, however, misunderstand what this really means. Individuals who view their peers as competitors tend to think, “If I keep my knowledge to myself, I’ll have more power to leverage myself into better career positions.” That’s a mind-set that will only backfire on them.

Yes, personal knowledge and information are highly valued in today’s businesses. But a significant part of the value comes through sharing the knowledge in a collaborative manner to allow creativity that leads to innovation—the hallmark of competitive advantage. So there’s a compelling reason to share one’s experiential learning and information with others in an organization.

Unlike many other tools that facilitate sharing insights and knowledge, one of the unique characteristics of mentoring is that it produces a win-win-win result. It’s not just aimed at a mentee’s personal development. Consider, for example, what happened at a museum in a small U.S. community.

Today the community is just a cemetery and a museum; but in its glory days in the mid-1800s, its location at the fork of a river on trails headed west made it an ideal location and many westward-bound settlers decided to stay. The museum located there today is an old mansion now a repository of valuable American artifacts. But its real draw to visitors was unique displays that its artistic director, Allen, put together to make the visitors feel they had gone back in time and were part of the display.

When a local professor joined the museum’s advisory board two years ago, he was appalled at the situation that existed at that time. The museum was under-funded and the building was in total disarray. The museum was a small business with a four-member staff, and Allen was not only the artistic director but also had the responsibilities of executive director. However, he had no skills around managing a business, obtaining funding, marketing, and managing the other three staff members who reported to him. The board wanted to hire an executive director to take over these functions, but Allen became hostile, fearing he would lose his job.

“An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and who manages to avoid them.”

- Werner Karl Heisenberg (1901-1976), awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1931 for the creation of quantum mechanics, the application of which led to the discovery of forms of hydrogen

Since the professor had prior experience in mentoring others, he established a mentoring relationship with the artistic director to teach him the necessary executive-director skills. As a result, Allen came to realize the board valued his artistic talents, he stopped being hostile, and he readily acknowledged the board should hire a qualified individual for the director position.

The mentoring relationship created a win-win outcome all around. The professor gained experiential insight into working with a hostile individual, the artistic director's stress level decreased when he no longer had to handle the director responsibilities, the board endowed the museum and its new director with \$70,000 more than requested for the following year's budget, and the community now has a refurbished and well-managed museum.

Structure: A Key to Success in Mentoring

A mentoring relationship is a highly effective tool for facilitating information-sharing. On a personal level, mentoring can help train an employee moving into a new position, help an individual manage change, enhance one's skills and abilities, increase one's confidence, and help build personal networks.

Among other benefits on an organizational level, mentoring can ensure knowledge transfer and business continuity for succession planning, improve the playing field for minorities, improve employee retention, enable collaboration, increase the organization's intellectual assets, and create an environment that encourages employees to develop their potential.

Unfortunately, some leaders who could mentor other individuals view mentoring as just one more item on an already-full plate. And most people don't know how to mentor. If mentoring is done poorly, the benefits will not be achieved. It's easy for this to happen without an effective framework for the mentoring.

While a mentoring relationship is a personal relationship and, thus, is often self-paced and informal, it still needs an operating structure or framework. The structure the professor and the artistic director used for their successful outcome was the Partnering Intelligence mentoring program. The [Partner Mentoring Workbook and Discussion Guide](#) is designed to structure the dialogue between mentor and mentee, making sure that important issues are addressed. It guides mentor and mentee in how they communicate, how they determine their objectives, how they form their agreements, and many other aspects that are necessary as a mentoring relationship evolves over time.

When you're ready to unlock the power of your knowledge and create higher value through a mentoring relationship, you'll have all the materials you need for success in the Partner Mentoring Workbook and Discussion Guide. The workbook is a roadmap that will facilitate the collaboration and interaction with your mentor or mentee so you can

work together to enhance your skills and build a relationship that benefits you both personally and professionally.

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