Mentoring

A strategy for building competence and nurturing talent

By Les Chambers

White Paper

The methods organisations use to develop new skills often guarantee their people long periods of anxiety and low productivity. Connecting the learner with a mentor accelerates personal development and flows down practical knowledge that can't be found in a classroom.

Mentoring is the process of one person helping another through a period of change to achieve a well defined result.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is the process of one person (the mentor) helping another person (the mentee) through a period of change to achieve a well defined result.

The concept dates back to the dawn of humanity where older wiser practitioners passed on expert knowledge in the pragmatics of life to their younger less experienced followers.

Through exposure to a mentor in an environment of respect and trust a person undergoing a change in job function or personal life is more likely to develop an expectation of success.

Why is Mentoring Necessary?

James is a business analyst in a manufacturing organisation. He has been asked to specify the software requirements of a large production management system. His boss sends him to a two-day course on writing software requirements. Now he's back at his desk and has begun to realise the enormity of the task. He's never done anything this size before. The days go by and his stress levels grow as he realises he is not making progress with the massive complexity of the system and the brand-new methods for documenting what it is supposed to do. After two weeks with little progress he decides he needs help. But who can he ask without sounding like an idiot? After all he's been to the training.

Variants of this scenario are played out in many workplaces. Intelligent and motivated people are left to flounder for the want of some simple guidance on how to approach a new problem for the first time.

Accelerated change in your workplace is an unavoidable reality of modern life. It is driven by ever advancing technology, increased delegation of responsibility, the need to multiskill and constant pressure to do more with fewer people. It keeps you in a continuous state of having to learn new skills, often on-the-fly. As a result of being thrown in at the deep end, yet again, you may even find yourself in a state of unconscious incompetence, not even knowing what you don't know.

To compound the problem your access to formal training is limited by budgets and the period you can realistically be absent from your workplace.

When it is available, formal classroom training is only the first step (not the end game) in developing competency. Elements of personal development not addressed by formal training are:

- **Application.** Training provides awareness of the subject matter. True learning only occurs when you attempt to apply the principles "in anger" and examine the results (see *Appendix A – How We Learn*).

- **Real world problems.** Skills gained from working the toy examples you encounter in the classroom are difficult to scale up to tackle the larger and more complex problems of the real world.

- **100% relevance.** Training (especially that conducted by external vendors) cannot focus 100% on your specific needs. For example, you may receive excellent external training in industry best practice but be unable to apply it in your workplace due to lack of budget or support from management.

- **Commitment.** Attending training in a particular knowledge area does not guarantee that you will apply it in your workplace. Trying out a new technique involves change, a state of affairs that many of us find uncomfortable. Building confidence to actually apply new techniques often requires post training reinforcement by another human being.

What Does Mentoring Achieve?

Mentoring is widely used to help a mentee:

- Complete a specific task for the first time
- Develop a new competency
- Attain a professional qualification
- Settle into a new job
- Make a career choice
- Understand and assimilate the culture of an organisation
- Provide support to isolated individuals from managing directors to disadvantaged minorities

What Does a Mentor Do?

A mentor can be employed to:

- **Facilitate**, pointing the mentee at sources of information and creating opportunities to use new skills.
- **Coach**, showing the mentee how to carry out a task and providing feedback on the result.

Learning by Doing

Whatever we learn to do, we learn by actually doing it; men come to be builders, for instance, by building and harp players by playing the harp. In the same way, by doing just acts, we come to be just; by doing self-controlled acts, we come to be self-controlled and by doing brave acts, we become brave.

Aristotle
Greek Philosopher
Circa 350 BC

- **Counsel**, acting as a sounding board, helping the mentee explore the consequences of potential decisions. Being a friend, adviser, guide and guardian.
- **Network**, helping the mentee develop networks of contacts within and across organisations.

Who Can be a Mentor?

A mentor can be anyone whose knowledge and experience can benefit the mentee. Mentors tend to be more senior than their mentees with skills in personal development.

Mentors may be sourced from within the organisation with the proviso that they are not the mentee's line manager (see sidebar, *Should Line Managers be Mentors?*).

If the organisation does not have people with the required competencies an external agent with demonstrated skills may become the mentor. This mode of mentoring often flows naturally from formal training run by external providers.

Above all the mentor must be someone who can influence the mentee, someone who can be a confidant, commanding the mentee's respect and trust.

Mentoring Roles

Mentors address personal development in many contexts:

- **Training mentors** assist the mentee in applying the principles learned in formal training to real world problems in the workplace. This mentor acts as a consultant, adviser and facilitator passing on expert knowledge and reviewing the outcome of the mentee's learning experiences.
- **Induction mentors** help new employees acclimatize to a new working environment. They provide introductions to networks of contacts and advise the mentee of required levels of competence and productivity. They may also introduce the mentee to the culture of the organisation.
- **Professional mentors** help the mentee through the process of gaining professional qualifications.
- **Executive mentors** support the process of succession, grooming senior people for the next big job. In related scenarios, senior people assist junior managers in settling into a new job.
- **Prodigy mentors** accelerate the development of gifted people. This class of mentor is often expert in a particular knowledge area with the ability to advance a prodigy's knowledge at a higher rate than would be possible in a standard learning environment.
- **Education mentors** support students at school and during higher education. They help the mentee to make subject choices and ultimately career choices.
- **Affirmative action mentors** develop mentees belonging to disadvantaged groups such as the poor, ethnic minorities, the disabled and young offenders.

The Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring is a survival mechanism in its most primal form. Even the caveman understood that he who does not take his

The mediocre coach tells,

The good coach explains,

The superior coach demonstrates,

The great coach inspires.

William Arthur Ward
US author

son on the hunt for the woolly mammoth dooms his decedents to starvation and extinction.

Organisations with a strong culture of mentoring are characterized by longevity, motivated and productive people, professional management and long term employees. The process of mentoring benefits the mentee, the mentor and the organisation as a whole.

Mentee Benefits

- **The confidence to succeed.** Through observation of the mentor as a role model the mentee becomes confident that he can achieve his goals. This can apply to anything from succeeding in a challenging job to staying out of jail.

- **Accelerated personal development.** The mentee develops the required competence sooner than she would if left to her own devices.

- **Job satisfaction.** The mentee's general satisfaction with the job improves as a natural consequence of being more productive, achieving something in a new field of endeavour and feeling that the organisation respects his needs and cares about him.

- **Higher profile**. Mentees can achieve a higher profile within an organisation through a mentoring relationship. Through networking they meet more people faster. For example, a new hire may get the opportunity to socialize with (and impress) individuals from all up and down the organisational hierarchy.

- **Business perspective.** Through contact with senior mentors the mentee gains a better understanding of the workings of the organisation and its business imperatives.

Mentor Benefits

- **Personal satisfaction** is gained from helping someone else achieve a good result.

- **Personal development.** The mentoring process develops the mentor's interpersonal skills. To gain the respect and trust of the mentee he must not only talk the talk of qualities such as humility, honesty, integrity and empathy, he must also demonstrate it by his actions.

- **Staying current.** Coaching others helps you to question, crystallize, express, reinforce and update your own knowledge.

- **Gaining new perspectives.** Mentees often bring fresh and useful perspectives to business problems.

- **Staying in touch with the talent.** Being a mentor and networking with other mentors gives you the opportunity to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the young Turks in your organisation. This knowledge will be invaluable when, at some future date, you go in search of intelligence, analytic skills and people skills to populate your project team.

Organisational Benefits

- **Increased return on investment in training.** Valuable principles, practices, tools and techniques presented in formal training are more likely to be effectively deployed at coalface.

- **Enhanced productivity.** Well-trained and motivated staff are more productive and require less supervision.
- **Loss prevention.** Losses through failed projects and uninformed decision-making are reduced.
- **Keeping good people.** Satisfied people stay with the company becoming more valuable with each new day. Losses due to employee turnover are avoided.
- **Early recognition of talent.** Mentoring provides a vehicle for showcasing and fast tracking talented employees.
- **Communicating the culture.** Companies with a strong set of shared values use mentoring to communicate the culture throughout the organisation. Values such as professional integrity, product quality, employee safety and customer focus are introduced to the mentee and reinforced in the mentee's actions and concrete decision-making.

The Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring demands a one-on-one relationship of confidentiality, trust and respect. Successful relationships are:

- **Confidential.** The mentor should view the mentee as his client. The mentor may not divulge details of conversations without the permission of the mentee.
- **Relaxed/egoless/informal.** The mentee feels free to broach any subject with the mentor. For example, personal fears, dumb questions, needs and wants, ambitions and career goals. The mentee looks upon the mentor as a friend not a superior.
- **Driven by goals.** The relationship is formed to achieve the mentee's clearly defined goal. For example, demonstrating a competency, passing a test or completing a project.
- **Time boxed.** The conditions that will signal the end of the relationship are clearly defined at the beginning.
- **Positive.** If a critique is required it is constructive rather than destructive.
- **Consultative.** The mentor questions, guides and advises. He does not direct.
- **Empowering.** The mentee makes all final decisions on courses of action and takes responsibility for the consequences.
- **Non-exclusive.** If the mentor cannot answer a question the mentee may be directed to one or more people who can help. In this way the mentee develops and widens her network of contacts.
- **Communicative.** The parties to the relationship agree on a regular schedule of meetings and stick to it.
- **Honest.** Both parties enter into a pact to be honest with each other.
- **Unemotional.** The mentor does not get emotionally involved with the mentee's issues. She takes an objective view of the mentee's needs and maintains a professional distance.
- **Fun!**

Mentor Profile

Effective mentors are most often senior people with strong people management skills. If you can truthfully answer yes to all the following questions - congratulations you are a perfect specimen of humanity! Failing that be advised that successful mentors have at least a critical mass of these qualities.

ARE YOU:

☐ **Committed to the process?** This is a volunteer only mission. You must be enthusiastic about the process and want to take the role. For example, a common motive is to give something back to the younger generation.

☐ **Competent in the relevant knowledge domains?** To command the mentee's respect you must have knowledge and experience relevant to the mentee's learning objectives and be up to date in the field.

☐ **Available and accessible?** Does your busy schedule allow you to set aside time for regular meetings with the mentee? In between meetings do you have an open door policy, that is, can you be easily contacted and are you willing to stay in touch?

☐ **Competent in people management and development?** Are you a practitioner of listening, motivating, negotiating, influencing, fact-finding, problem solving, liaising, counseling, time management and people development?

☐ **Humble and approachable?** Are you prepared to treat the mentee as an equal even though she may be very much your junior. Are you prepared to show respect making her feel that her questions and opinions are important (even if you hold a contrary view)?

☐ **Empathetic?** Are you willing to show interest in the mentee. That is, make an effort to understand his ideas, opinions, feelings, wants, needs and personal ambitions?

☐ **Discreet?** Are you prepared to keep the substance of all conversations confidential?

☐ **Well connected?** Does your credibility and political savvy in the community, organisation or profession allow you to open doors for the mentee? Are you able to be his advocate, introducing him to an appropriate network of contacts? Note that this may extend to interceding with the mentee's line manager to satisfy his personal development needs.

☐ **Empowering?** Do you believe that experience is the best teacher? Are you willing to let the mentee make his own decisions and not attempt to impose your own solutions or do the job for him? For example, if an idea needs to pass from mentor to mentee will you **SELL and NOT TELL**?

Mentee Profile

Faced with the need to work through changes in our lives we all silently wish for a guru to appear with magic answers for the great questions of "what do I do?" and "how do I live?". A mentor can help in only a small number of these situations. Use this checklist to determine if you are a candidate for mentee.

When the student is ready the teacher appears.

Mentees must have a compelling reason to seek out the advice and guidance of a mentor.

☐ **Do you have a clear developmental learning objective?** For example, completing a specific task, developing a new competency or gaining a professional qualification.

☐ **Are you undergoing a change of some kind?** For example, are you starting a new job or acclimatizing to a new organisation and feel you need help?

☐ **Is reaching your goal very important to you?** For example, does your life depend on gaining that professional qualification or completing that project?

☐ **Are you self actuating?** Subject to the advice and guidance of your mentor, are you willing to take ultimate responsibility for setting your own goals and making your own decisions?

☐ **Are you motivated?** Are you willing to put in the hard yards, doing the work rather than expecting it to be done for you?

The Mentoring Process

Mentoring relationships have a natural life cycle. They commence with the matching of mentor and mentee and wind down when the mentee's personal development goals are achieved.

Figure 1. Five phases of the mentoring relationship.

Matching	⇨	Preparation	⇨	Kickoff	⇨	Performance	⇨	Wind Down

Matching

A mentor can be matched with a mentee by one of two processes:

1. **Mentee chooses mentor.** The mentee admires the mentor's special qualities, knowledge and achievement and pursues the relationship.

2. **Third party match.** The match is made by a third party mentoring co-ordinator.

Regardless of how the players come together the following issues should be addressed before making a final determination:

- **Mentor competency.** The mentor must have the prerequisite knowledge and experience to assist the mentee in reaching her personal development goals.

- **Internal or external mentors.** If the required competencies are not available from within an organisation an external mentor may be appointed. This strategy is often used to ensure that the benefits of external training are fully realised. External mentors advise and review the work of trainees to ensure that new techniques are correctly applied at the coalface.

- **Compatibility.** Mentor and mentee must be personally compatible. Factors such as personal style, age, gender, ethnic group and personal interests should be considered.

- **Background.** The shared experiences of people from similar backgrounds can represent a ready made bond between mentor and mentee. For example, a self-made

man from a poor background is more likely to bond easily with a mentee from a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

- **Access.** The mentor must be able to schedule time with the mentee and be easily accessible for adhoc communication.
- **Functional competency.** If the mentee's life transition involves a move to a new functional area within the organisation the mentor should have knowledge of the target business function.
- **In-line or off-line.** Matching a mentee with her line manager (an in-line relationship) is not recommended. A Mentee is likely to be guarded in a relationship with a mentor who is also responsible for evaluating her job performance. Off-line relationships (where the mentor is not the mentee's line manager) are more likely to be frank, honest and open. See sidebar, *Should Line Managers be Mentors?*

Should Line Managers be Mentors?	
Arguments For	**Arguments Against**
Part of the job. Effective managers make good mentors. If the mentee chooses his line manager the match will probably work, serving to strengthen the working relationship.	**Lack of openness.** It's hard to be candid with your boss. Most of us want to display confidence and competence to our superiors. Would you want to ask dumb questions and expose your vulnerabilities to the person who will determine your next pay rise?
Effective for networking. The manager has good knowledge of the organisation. An external mentor cannot network the mentee effectively within the organisation.	**Stale perspectives.** If we're all thinking alike possibly nobody is doing any thinking. The mentee will benefit from fresh perspectives from outside his normal workplace.
Propagates organisational culture. If an organisation has a strong cultural base, mentoring is an excellent vehicle for propagating the organisational culture. Culture is the guiding values of the organisation, it is the shared set of basic assumptions, habits and approaches. Culture influences relationships and productivity and determines the way things are done.	**Bias to results.** Line managers find it difficult to give objective advice. They are often too focused on getting the work done at all costs at the expense of developing the mentee.
Reinforces empowerment. Line managers are likely to succeed as mentors in situations where the nature of the mentoring relationship has much in common with the management culture of the organisation. For example, if managers are normally encouraged to empower their people, a mentoring relationship will serve to reinforce this cornerstone of the organisation's culture.	**Honesty.** It is sometimes difficult to be honest with your boss. Especially if your boss is the root cause of your problems.
	Competency. The line manager may not have the required knowledge.
	Conflict of interest. The line manager may not be prepared to advise on career strategies for fear of losing good people.
	Over commitment. Busy managers may lack commitment feeling they have been conscripted into the task.
	Privacy. Mentees may not feel comfortable discussing personal issues with co-workers regardless of where they sit in the hierarchy.

Preparation

Once the match has been made and initial introductions completed both parties to the relationship need to prepare for the first contact – the kickoff meeting. The following checklists for mentor and mentee provide some pointers:

Mentor preparation

☐ **Mentoring process briefing.** Study the mentoring process (e.g. this white paper) including the role of the

mentor, mentor qualities and mentoring objectives. Distribute this briefing material to the mentee.

☐ **Mentee objectives.** Understand the mentee's fundamental objectives. They can be fleshed out in greater detail in the kickoff meeting.

☐ **Mentee background.** As far as possible obtain some background on the mentee. For example, personal background, professional skills and training, academic qualifications, hobbies and interests, type of personality (confident, nervous, quiet, shy) and current job description.

☐ **Risk assessment.** Reflect on what could go wrong with the relationship. Can you take any preventive action now? Refer to sidebar, *Why Mentoring Relationships Fail.*

☐ **Kickoff meeting.** Set up the kickoff meeting in consultation with the mentee. Address the meeting strategy. For example, will the meeting be outside the work environment, will you meet in or out of business hours and so on. Prepare an agenda (see *Kickoff* for suggestions).

Mentee preparation

☐ **Mentoring process briefing.** Study the mentoring process briefing material (see *Mentor Preparation*).

☐ **Personal background.** Prepare background briefing material on yourself.

☐ **Goals.** Think about what you want to achieve from the relationship and prepare a list of measurable goals (see sidebar, *Setting SMART Goals*).

Kickoff

The kickoff meeting is the first face to face contact between mentor and mentee. Its broad objective is to introduce the players, establish the goals of the relationship and plan the way forward. Issues to address include:

- **Mentor's background and experience.** This is the first step in confirming that the mentor can indeed help the mentee.

- **Mentee's background.** The mentee discusses her background and general life ambitions.

- **Confidentiality.** The mentor stresses his commitment to maintaining all conversations in the strictest confidence. In some situations the mentor may be obligated to state the boundaries of confidentiality. That is, the circumstances under which the mentor would be bound to break confidentially. For example, if the mentee reveals information regarding any illegal activity. If the mentor is external the issue of discussing the company's trade secrets may also be on the agenda.

- **Mentee objectives goals and plans.** The mentee discusses his general expectations of the relationship. Where possible they are couched in terms of general objectives and specific goals. If they exist, the mentee presents any agendas or plans currently in place.

- **Third party relationships.** To avoid a situation where a third party might give the mentee conflicting advice, the partners should discuss the existence of other major influences such as line managers, lecturers and other

advisors in the target knowledge domain. The mentor should understand the roles these people play in the mentee's life and set his boundaries for advice and guidance.

Setting SMART Goals	
S	Specific
M	Measurable
A	Achievable
R	Realistic
T	Time-related

- **Goal setting.** Mentor and mentee work together to set short and long term goals mapping out how the relationship will support the mentee's development.

- **Exit criteria.** The partners determine the event or circumstance that will signal the end of the mentoring relationship. For example the completion of a task or the passing of a test.

- **Communication strategy.** The various modes of mentor to mentee communication are discussed. For example, open door, regular meetings, telephone conversations and e-mail.

- **Next meeting.** The next meeting is scheduled.

Performance

In the performance phase the partners progressively develop rapport and come to grips with the mentee's personal development issues. There is no standard formula or structure for success as each mentoring relationship will take a unique pathway in the mentee's quest for learning.

Human nature however provides some invariants that all mentors must deal with. For example, the mentor must be in a position to influence the mentee if he is to be an effective advisor and guide.

Influencing the Mentee

The fundamentals of influence were first documented in 350 BC by the Greek philosopher Aristotle who deconstructed influence into three base elements.

1. **Ethos.** Character expressed as integrity, honesty, sincerity, credibility and demonstrated values.
2. **Pathos.** The passion you have for your subject and the empathy you have for others.
3. **Logos.** The reasoning you use to build an objective, logical, rational, persuasive and defensible argument.

Aristotle's thesis was that all these elements must be present for one person to influence another. Viewed in the context of a mentoring relationship we can see that credibility and empathy must be present before logical reasoning will be accepted. Refer to *Appendix B - The Fundamentals of Influence* for further discussion.
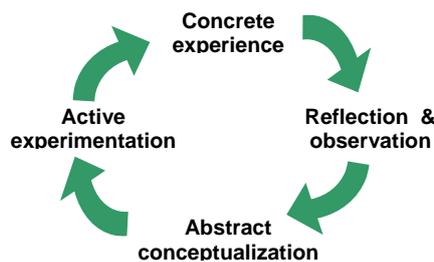
Creating a Learning Experience

The mentor is responsible for making the relationship a learning experience for both parties.

So how do people learn and are there concrete steps a mentor can take to guide the mentee down a path of enlightenment?

In 1984 American psychologist David Kolb developed a model for adult learning that can be used as a tool to make learning more efficient. He modelled learning as a continuous cycle with four classes of activity.

Figure 2. How we learn – Kolb's learning cycle

Concrete experience

Reflection & observation

Abstract conceptualization

Active experimentation

1. **Concrete experience.** You have an emotional or behavioural experience either by accident or on purpose.
2. **Reflection / observation.** You take stock of the experience in terms of the significance it has for you.
3. **Abstract conceptualization.** You develop structures or explanations for the way things work.
4. **Active experimentation.** You test your structures and explanations against the real world.

The mentor is responsible for advancing the mentee around the cycle, verifying that she is gaining practical experience, asking questions that encourage reflection and conceptualization and exploring ways of testing new ideas. *Appendix A – How We Learn* describes the cycle in detail and provides sample questions to engage the mentee in conversation drawing out observations and conclusions.

Conducting a Mentoring Session

Mentoring sessions should be patterned to suit the styles of the participants. For example, the mentor can be:

- Active – challenging, questioning, directing
- Passive – sounding board for ideas, listening
- Participative – relates experiences and brainstorms ideas

> *Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak.*
> *Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.*
>
> Sir Winston Churchill

Profile of a Good Listener

Listen more than you speak. Apply the 66%-33% rule.

Acknowledge interests and needs. Maintain eye contact and give regular recognition that you have heard and understood.

Inquire more than you instruct. Ask open questions to draw the subject out.

Don't judge. Empathize with the mentee's point of view.

Summarise what has been said to verify meaning.

During the session the mentor should observe the following DOs and DON'Ts:

DO

- Listen (see sidebar, *Profile of a Good Listener*)
- Review actions taken and give feedback
- Review future actions, prioritize tasks, set realistic targets
- Revue overall progress towards stated goals (see sidebar, *Monitoring Progress*)
- Discuss strengths and weaknesses
- Assist with problem solving strategies
- Encourage the mentee to find her own solutions
- Introduce learning resources or networking contacts if you can't answer the question

DON'T

- Impose solutions
- Direct the mentee to take various actions
- Get emotionally involved

Evaluating a Mentoring Relationship

From time to time the partners should determine if their relationship is working and should continue. Ask yourself if your relationship has the following qualities:

Monitoring Progress

☐ *What tasks have been completed?*

☐ *What tasks have not been completed?*

☐ *How well have you completed the task?*

☐ *How do you feel about the results?*

☐ *What went well?*

☐ *What was difficult?*

☐ *How did you go about it?*

☐ *What have you learnt?*

☐ *What is the next step?*

☐ **Clarity of purpose.** Do mentor and mentee understand the purpose of their mentoring relationship?

☐ **Realistic goals.** Does the mentee (and the mentor) have clear and achievable goals?

☐ **Non-threatening.** Is the mentee confident about raising issues for discussion?

☐ **Honest.** Is the mentor able to give honest feedback?

☐ **Mutually satisfactory.** Are there mutual expectations between mentor and mentee and are these fulfilled?

☐ **Regular.** Are there regular purposeful meetings?

☐ **Productive.** Is there a sense of continuing progress and development?

☐ **Observable benefits.** Do others notice a positive change in the mentee (and mentor)?

Wind Down

Your mentoring relationship will come to a natural end when it has achieved its objectives. For example, the agreed period has passed, the qualification is gained, the new competence can be demonstrated or the mentee feels comfortable in a new job environment.

It may also be terminated by mutual agreement if it is not working as planned. Alternatively new objectives may require a different mentor.

If a strong bond has formed between the partners some consideration should be given to winding down the relationship as opposed to terminating it abruptly. In this way any mutual dependency can be gradually released over time.

Can C&A Help?

This paper provides an overview of the mentoring discipline distilled from our experience with clients in the field of software and systems engineering. If you need help in developing your organisation's project management, quality management, requirements definition, design synthesis, testing, configuration management and safety management skills please consider Chambers and Associates Pty Ltd as an option for an external mentor. We offer the following services:

Chambers & Associates External Mentoring Services
- Project management
- Quality management
- Requirements definition
- Design synthesis
- Testing
- Configuration management
- Safety management

- **Training and development.** We provide formal training in software quality management, managing software and systems projects and writing software and systems requirement specifications. Our post training mentoring program is designed to assist our seminar participants to apply the principles in their workplace. For details of our courses please visit www.chambers.com.au.

- **Task based mentoring.** If you have people that are tasked with creating software/systems development deliverables for the first time we are happy to work with them towards a good result the first time around. We have substantial experience in developing quality plans, project plans, configuration management plans, safety plans, hazard analysis, test documentation, software or systems requirement specifications and design documentation.

- **Third party document review.** We will perform an objective review of any software or systems development document, providing you with specific suggestions for improvement. Charges are based on the number of pages

reviewed. This is a low-cost way of obtaining an industry benchmark on your document prior to release.

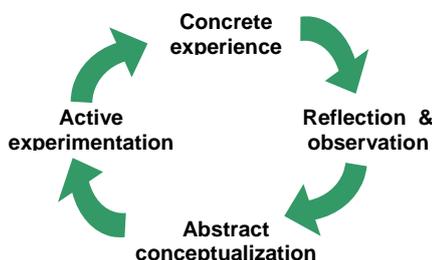- **To contact us** call Les Chambers on +61 7 3870 4199 or via e-mail at les@chambers.com.au.

Thank You

Thank you for your interest in this paper. Please e-mail us if you have comments and suggestions for improvement. If you have a friend who could benefit from this paper please let us know and we will provide them with a free copy.

Appendices

Appendix A – How We Learn

Figure 3. Kolb's learning cycle

The role of mentor has placed you in control of a learning experience. Your job is to create an environment that facilitates and enhances mentee learning. Gaining an understanding of how people learn is the first step in the process.

The Kolb Learning Cycle provides one of the most useful models available of the adult learning process. You can use the model to ensure that learning activities derive maximum benefit from each stage of the process.

Kolb modelled learning as a continuous cycle with four classes of activity (see Figure 3). In the cycle, immediate experience creates a need for learning which transfers to reflective observation of the experience which is followed by the introduction of concepts to integrate the immediate experience into what is known. After integration, testing is induced and, because this action results in new experiences, the cycle repeats.

As mentor you can assist the mentee in progressing through each cycle, maximizing the value from each activity by asking questions which encourage reflection, conceptualisation and ways of testing ideas. (The concrete experience itself may occur outside the mentoring session).

Now let's describe each phase of the cycle in terms of the mentee's actions and experiences and the questions you might ask.

Concrete Experience

Mentee: You have an emotional or behavioural experience either by accident or on purpose. For example, you attend a formal review of a software requirement specification as an observer.

Mentor: You help the mentee re-live the experience.

☐ What was the experience?

☐ What did you do?

☐ What did you get from the experience?

☐ How did you structure the experience to get maximum benefit?

Reflection & observation

Mentee: You take stock of the experience in terms of the significance it has for you. You reflect on what you have learnt from it. You may accept or reject its significance. For example, you take note of the review process, the roles of the review participants and the format and content of their software requirement specification.

Mentor: You help the mentee focus on the experience and explore its significance.

☐ Did it go as expected?

☐ What went wrong?

☐ What went right?

☐ What did you learn?

☐ What would you do differently next time?

Abstract conceptualisation

Mentee: You intend to develop structures or explanations for the way things work. You develop theories and rules that explain chains of cause and affect. For example, you reflect on why a review is necessary and why requirements need to be expressed as they are in the target specification. You develop your own software requirement specification standard and review procedure.

Mentor: You help the mentee deconstruct the experience in terms of processes, rules, techniques and models.

☐ Did you understand the rules?

☐ Can you describe the rules?

☐ What was the process?

☐ Can we model the process?

☐ What was the technique employed?

Active experimentation

Mentee: You test your structures and explanations against the real world. You verify your predictions against your experience. For example, you attempt to write your own software requirements specification and run a requirements review.

Mentor: You review the mentee's plan for putting what she learnt into action.

☐ What is your plan of action?

☐ Do you have the resources you need?

☐ How will it employ what you have learnt?

☐ What are its strengths and weaknesses?

☐ What could go wrong?

☐ Do you have a contingency plan?

Conclusion

Kolb's model formalized the ancient wisdom that "you learn by doing". The learning cycle also features continuous improvement by constant trial and error with progressive analysis of the processes involved – a basic tenet of modern quality assurance practice.

We can therefore conclude that effective learning involves more than just watching things happen. Your mentee must also spend time reflecting on what happened, figure out why it happened and make it happen for himself.

Appendix B – The Fundamentals of Influence

*Convincing a mentee to act on your advice can be difficult. Our brains are wired to filter out most of the information presented as input. To be an agent of change in the life of your mentee you must apply the skill of **INFLUENCE**.*
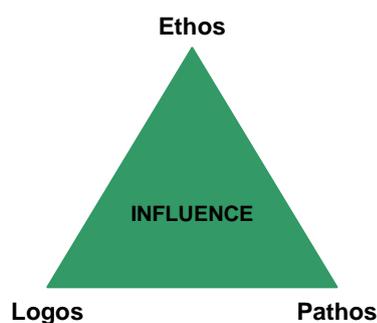
What is influence?

To influence is to induce beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours in other people by influencing their thoughts and actions through specific strategies. Influence is the science of understanding how people process information and the skill of presenting it in a way that causes it to be received, valued internalized and acted upon.

Neuroscientists tell us that there is no such thing as objective reality. To prevent our brains from being swamped by the torrent of information that flows over us every day, we have become masters of filtering. We absorb what our minds deem to be important and ignore the rest. This filtering process is controlled by emotions expressed as our values, beliefs and attitudes. We believe something to be true only if it is consistent with our strongly held beliefs. Reality therefore is only what we perceive it to be.

Facts, in isolation, have no value. It is our personal belief that a fact represents the truth that makes it significant. In the process of personal development we come upon a new fact, determine if it is worthy of passing through our filter, reflect on its value and either incorporate or exclude it from our perception of truth.

As a mentor your job is to take your perception of the truth and pass it on to your mentee. Supporting this emotional commitment requires you to exert INFLUENCE.

One of the most useful and widely applied tutorials on influence has been in the public domain for over 2000 years. The Greek philosopher Aristotle published the classic *On Rhetoric* around 350 BC. Aristotle suggested that a speaker's influence over his audience flows from the use of three essential devices: ethos (character), pathos (passion) and logos (reasoning).

Ethos is character expressed as integrity, honesty, sincerity, credibility and demonstrated values. Human beings are highly judgmental. Primal forces drive us to classify everyone and everything, squirreling away out shorthand take on the world in our memory banks to drive subsequent conscious or unconscious evaluation and action. Within four minutes of meeting a stranger you will pigeonhole their character in some way. Are you honest? Can I trust you? Are you qualified to be an expert in my area? If the answer is "yes" your advice stands a chance of making it through the mentee's emotional filter. If it's "no" you may as well be speaking to the wind.

Some ethos can be derived purely from reputation. Is there a software company chief executive who wouldn't want Microsoft's Bill Gates as a mentor? Reputation aside a mentor must also demonstrate ethos by his ability to provide relevant knowledge. His character is also judged in a more general sense by the degree to which his actions are consistent with his words – especially when he is under pressure.

Don't expect others to listen to your advice and ignore your example.

Jack Gibson
Rugby league football coach

Pathos is the passion you have for your subject and the empathy you have for others. Before you can persuade others to follow a course of action you need to transparently and passionately believe in it yourself. If you aren't personally convinced, your unspoken emotional queues will be picked up from your body language by the mentee's social radar.

In modern English "pathos" means to demonstrate feeling and sympathy for suffering. In the context of a mentoring relationship this extends not only to passion for the knowledge domain but also to displaying empathy for the mentee, viewing her as a human being with emotions, hopes, fears and ambitions. A mentor exhibits pathos when he inquires how his mentee feels about a challenging experience.

Properly displayed, pathos recognizes two beliefs that are strongly held by all of humanity:

1. I am important and should be treated with respect.
2. I have a point of view that should be considered.

Once you have negotiated these critical first steps of "belief" your mentee will become much more receptive to your logical argument.

> *The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.*
>
> Dale Carnegie

Logos is the reasoning you use to build an objective, logical, rational, persuasive, unambiguous, complete and defensible argument. If pathos is the work of the heart, logos is the work of the head, it is the language used to express the goals, techniques, facts and outcomes of the mentoring relationship. Our society reveres logic. People are influenced by logical arguments based on objectivity and the facts.

Conclusion

The essence of Aristotle's argument is that ethos, pathos and logos must all be present to establish influence. For example, without first establishing ethos and pathos the most logical of arguments can be rejected. Feelings compel you to take action; logic is often applied after the fact to justify your actions.

Exposed to all three elements of influence a mentee's thought processes might flow like this:

1. He (the mentor) respects my point of view (pathos).
2. He seems to know what he's talking about (ethos).
3. He understands my problem (pathos).
4. He had a problem just like mine (pathos).
5. His solution sounds logical (logos).
6. Maybe I should take his advice!

In this way the "logical solution" (logos) has been wrapped around emotions (ethos and pathos) to create a powerful personal belief that motivates action.

Framing a Logical Argument

1. Why is the current state undesirable?
2. Why is the new state highly desirable?
3. What is the best means to get from current state to new state?

Pitching a Logical Argument

The hook: provide a story or statement which arouses audience interest.

The problem or question: pose a problem or question that has to be solved or answered.

The solution or answer: present your solution.

Benefits: state specific benefits to each member of the audience of adopting the proposed course of action.

Call to action: propose the concrete actions which should follow your presentation.