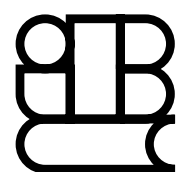# Creating a Mentoring Culture

The Organization's
Guide

Lois J. Zachary
Foreword by Peter Koestenbaum

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Foreword

LOIS ZACHARY'S *Creating a Mentoring Culture* is a timely and towering piece of work. It covers the full spectrum of mentoring and furnishes a complete recipe for establishing and sustaining a comprehensive mentoring culture in organizations. As a philosopher in business, I insist emphatically on both *practicality* and *insight.* This book does both, does them well, and is likely to get impressive results. These are far from easy tasks to accomplish.

Mentoring makes the full human available to the most basic strategic needs of an organization. But mentoring is more. It requires that we be sensitive to the highest ethical considerations of which human beings are capable—something desperately needed in today's organizations. This is far from being soft. Quite the contrary; this sensitivity helps organizations face confrontation and tough choices. It is today's task of the leadership consultant to support people who are under uncanny stress and to empower them in the face of demotivating defeat. Today's is not an easy economy. Neither being employed nor being an employer is straightforward. There is no simple way to succeed in a tumultuous global political climate. *Creating a Mentoring Culture* addresses itself meaningfully to precisely these central themes in today's organizations.

This book meets the core criteria of organizations that truly understand what it means to concentrate on authentic character values. These criteria can be clearly identified: focus on the person, on dialogue, on accountability, on the art of co-creation, on taking individual responsibility for the welfare of the whole, and on the image that life is a journey more than a destination. Last, but not least, the book offers practical steps for implementation. Indeed, it accomplishes all of this with an array of extraordinary exercises and activities.

What strikes me as memorable about this book, and what sets it apart from most others, is that it recognizes the meaning of *depth*—helping an organization dig several layers below the surface—in creating effective intervention programs. This sensitivity to depth is the critical success factor, for depth means results, whereas superficiality alone means frosting and no substance. Zachary offers substance and the opportunity for substance. To me this is true professionalism, genuine value for intervention.

Professionals understand that, after all is said and done, leadership is about character even more than skill, about emotional maturity even more than competence, and about the capacity to stand up to defeat even more than best practices. Zachary goes beyond techniques and best practices to the very core of human character. Her imaginative and tested exercises tighten the essential connection between thought and action, concept and results.

Executives, managers, and human resource practitioners will be exceptionally well served as they follow Zachary's guidelines and her treasure chest of activities to develop an organization's strategic intent for establishing a powerful mentoring culture. Zachary shows how to do it, step by step, in chapters that make splendid reading, especially for a reader concerned with greatly improving the quality of life within a company, and in such a way that we are not talking about charity but about strict business effectiveness. The focus is on the person; the emphasis is on interaction and dialogue. What matters is that people take responsibility for themselves and for participating in creating wholeness across the organization.

Zachary is aware of the enormous gap between thought and action, theory and practice, strategy and implementation—a chasm that is usually bridged with one more theory and nothing approximating authentic commitment and engagement. She achieves this transition by detailing how mentoring programs can be introduced into an organization, nurtured, protected, adapted, and made to be ongoing. Yet this is not just one more book on technique. Techniques alone are not enough. Zachary knows that the difference between an organization that does succeed in sustaining organizational mentoring and one that does not is whether or not a flexible and alive approach to mentoring is created. It is this ability to create transformational experiences—for individuals and their organization—that supports a mentoring culture. It is these experiences that engage people's heart and soul in the work and enterprise of mentoring. This book, written with the sure hand of an experienced and accomplished practitioner, constitutes the action link between theory and practice that is often missing. It even uses poetry to help people connect and engage with the hallmarks of a mentoring culture. It

raises the level of thinking and practice by providing practical tools that engage people and their organizations, tools that are sustainable but supportive of flexibility. Reading—and above all using—Zachary's book is easy, effective, and a pleasure. *Creating a Mentoring Culture* truly deals with the many facets of establishing a mentoring culture.

I believe you will be convinced that the idea of a mentoring culture is a perfect solution to some of the most pressing leadership problems facing modern corporations, institutions, and organizations. There may be no better solution to the need to focus on the person than to establish a mentoring organization and do so in the detailed fashion Zachary recommends and facilitates. If you are a professional interested in mentoring, then this book is for you. It tells you all you need to know to move your culture from good to great.

Peter Koestenbaum

Peter Koestenbaum is the founder and chairman of Philosophy-in-Business (www.pib.net) and the Koestenbaum Institute, headquartered in Stockholm and Los Angeles. He has consulted on leadership, management, marketing, and strategy implementation in more than forty countries with such Fortune 500 companies as IBM, Ford, and Xerox. He is the author of many business and philosophy books including The Philosophic Consultant: Revolutionizing Organizations with Ideas (Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2002); Leadership: The Inner Side of Greatness (Jossey-Bass, 2002); *The Heart of Business*; and *Freedom and Accountability at Work: Applying Philosophic Insight to the Real World* (Jossey-Bass, 2001).

Preface

MENTORING IS an organizational practice whose time has come. In today's competitive business climate, the need for continuous learning has never been greater. At the same time, the hunger for human connection and relationship has never been more palpable. Because mentoring combines the impact of learning with the compelling human need for connection, it leaves individuals better able to deepen their personal capacity and maintain organizational vitality in the face of continuous challenge and change.

Mentoring is also a smart way to do business. Organizations that continuously create value for mentoring achieve amazing results. They report an increased retention rate, improved morale, increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction, accelerated leadership development, better succession planning, reduced stress, stronger and more cohesive teams, and heightened individual and organizational learning.

My travels have taken me many miles since *The Mentor's Guide* first appeared in 2000. My thinking about coaching leaders and their organizations in designing, implementing, and evaluating learner-centered mentoring has traveled quite a distance as well. Now, more than ever, I am convinced that organizational leaders must learn to think seriously and systemically about mentoring and create a mentoring culture to support and strengthen all the mentoring that goes on within their organization. Applying the richness of adult learning theory to the planning, creating, and delivery process elevates the process.

How This Book Came to Be

As a leadership development consultant and adult learning specialist, I consider myself first and foremost to be a student of culture. Understanding an organization's culture clarifies how and why things get done the way they

do. This is important to me in my work because my clients include an array of for-profit and nonprofit organizations, all with a variety of subcultures within them.

I have been thinking about the importance of creating a mentoring culture for almost a decade and writing about it for nearly as long. I have learned that the difference between an organization that succeeds in sustaining organizational mentoring and one that does not lies in creating a viable and dynamic mentoring culture. All too often, people in an organization that spends valuable time, energy, and resources in building a mentoring program end up feeling disappointed, frustrated, and dissatisfied because of their inability to sustain either the program or its results. I have consulted with many organizations that started out with success initially but missed the mark when it came to sustainability. Some viewed their mentoring program as the cure-all for everything that had previously gone wrong and yet committed no funding to support mentoring. In some, mentoring failed to take root because of inadequate support from an already overextended organizational leadership. In others, there was a blatant cultural mismatch between the mentoring program being put in place and the organization, either because the program was too structured and formal or it was too informal for the organizational culture.

If a mentoring program is not sufficiently embedded in a supportive organizational culture that values learning and development, it rarely flourishes. The program may enjoy short-term success but then disappear. It becomes the whipping boy for other initiatives and problems. It competes for dollars, attention, participants. The program fades in and out. It becomes too easily expendable.

A mentoring culture strengthens the mentoring capacity, competence, and resilience of an organization. There are two categories of best practices that a mentoring culture exhibits: building blocks and mentoring hallmarks. The building blocks—cultural congruence and learning, and infrastructure— are the foundation supporting the process of creating a mentoring culture. The hallmarks are clusters of mentoring practices that relate to alignment, accountability, communication, value and visibility, demand, multiple mentoring opportunities, education and training, and safety nets. It is attention to these building blocks and hallmarks that enables an organization to create and sustain a vibrant and full mentoring culture.

Defining and Practicing Mentoring

There is no one universally accepted definition of mentoring, but many variations on the theme. The current definition has evolved along with enlightened practice. It focuses on facilitating learning and requires growing a partnership. Each mentoring partner is unique. This uniqueness—all

the experience, history, diversity, and individuality that the learner brings to the relationship—must be honored and appreciated. It is the context within which the relationship lives and grows.

The practice of mentoring has evolved to the point where traditional one-to-one mentoring is only one item on a menu of organizational mentoring options. Lateral mentoring groups (that is, peer mentoring, mentoring forums, team mentoring) are becoming more commonplace among work groups and special-interest groups. New business and development needs have given rise to new forms of mentoring, such as reverse mentoring and the mentoring board of directors. There is also great variation in how mentoring is conducted. Face-to-face mentoring has been augmented and often replaced by distance mentoring. Distance mentoring itself has many permutations, among them videoconferencing, electronic expert mentoring, and e-mail; the list continues to expand, along with the technology.

Purpose of the Book

In *The Mentor's Guide,* I wrote about the mentoring journey. This metaphor of a journey is also appropriate for creating a mentoring culture, for it too is a journey and not a destination. Creating a mentoring culture is a journey of organizational learning in which mentoring competency and mastery are enhanced at all levels: participant, leadership, administrative, and institutional. The challenge of creating a mentoring culture is huge and can be somewhat intimidating. My personal challenge has been to provide a concrete, manageable roadmap for creating a mentoring culture without overwhelming you. I urge you to consider the building blocks and hallmarks as signposts to help you establish or reestablish organizational readiness, create appropriate opportunities, and build ongoing support.

The journey requires work. It is not easy; I encourage you to stay with it. Enlarge your thinking and sense of what is possible, and be persistent and steadfast in your effort. The payoff is a more integrated approach to mentoring that enhances the mentoring thinking and practice within your organization. The questions and exercises presented throughout this book are designed to stimulate a higher level of consciousness about the practice of mentoring in an organization. The insights you gain by answering the questions and completing the exercises create value far beyond the scope of mentoring.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is a practical guide to building the framework that supports and sustains organizational mentoring. Whether your organization is thinking about starting a new initiative, implementing an existing one,

jump-starting a stalled one, institutionalizing process improvements, or keeping mentoring fresh, this book is designed to broaden and enlarge your thinking so that you can take mentoring in your organization to the next level. The book helps senior organizational leaders more fully understand the scope and commitment required for mentoring to thrive. It also brings home the potential benefits of mentoring that can redound to the organization as a whole by embracing a thoughtful and systematic approach. *Creating a Mentoring Culture* is of particular interest to organizational leaders charged with strategic mentoring launch and implementation, change agents, mentoring leaders, mentoring program developers and administrators, program managers, and members of a mentoring taskforce. Faculty and staff development specialists as well as people in a corporate human resource department will find tools, templates, and tips that can be used as they are or adapted.

How to Use This Book

This book is a pragmatic guide for assisting organizations and individuals as they implement the work of creating a mentoring culture. It is also a sourcebook for analyzing existing mentoring efforts. The chapters include examples from organizations I have worked with and researched. In some instances, these organizations are identified; in others, the stories are representative and an amalgam drawn from several organizations. The book and its accompanying CD contain information, guidelines, assessment tools, and resource materials consistent with principles of adult learning. A variety of exercises are included to expand your thinking and elevate your mentoring practices. There are many ways to use the exercises; you may want to complete exercises individually or work through the process of completing particular exercises together as a group. There is much here to guide the journey. Choose what works for you and what feels right to you given your organizational context and culture. You will want to begin by taking stock of your organization, particularly if your organization is just getting started or finds itself stalled.

   Creating a Mentoring Culture is a comprehensive guide for thinking about mentoring from a broad and deep strategic perspective, for creating a culture in which mentoring is a well-honed and practiced competency. It is a guide to creating a culture in which mentoring lives because mentoring itself is natural and normative, and in which mentoring excellence is the standard. In addition to the big picture, you will find detailed materials that have helped many organizations in developing and refining transformative mentoring programs. You may also find that these materials serve as a lens to examine and improve other organizational processes. I hope you use this volume to stimulate purposeful reflection and action, raise the level of discourse and dialogue about mentoring, and enhance mentoring practices within your organization.

Overview of the Chapters

The chapters in this book are divided into two main parts and an epilogue. Part One, "Taking Stock: Mentoring's Foundation," defines mentoring and considers how it adds value to the organization. The chapters lay the groundwork for understanding mentoring and its importance to the organization. Chapter One explains the importance of embedding mentoring in the culture. Chapter Two helps you discover where your organization is along the mentoring continuum. Then it moves toward helping you connect your organization's culture and mentoring by digging into the dynamics of the wider culture in which mentoring grows. The chapter includes specifics about raising cultural consciousness, mapping the culture, understanding cultural ecology, identifying cultural anchors, establishing the learning anchor, and testing for cultural congruence and deciding to move forward. Chapter Three focuses on planning implementation, specifically the people and process (a recurring theme throughout the book), and doing the groundwork necessary to develop sound mentoring processes.

Part Two, "Moving Forward: Mentoring at Work," introduces the concept of infrastructure and the eight hallmarks. A mentoring infrastructure is critical to a mentoring culture. The infrastructure and its components are described in Chapter Four, together with examples of mentoring practices. Chapter Five delves into the concept, challenges, characteristics, and process components of alignment and presents a mentoring alignment model. As the chapter explains, mentoring alignment promotes consistency of practice, cultural fit, and coordination. The more aligned mentoring is with an organization, the more it strengthens the learning that takes place within the entire organization. Chapter Six explores the framework for mentoring accountability by first broadly addressing the concept and then focusing on specific accountability processes. Some of the communication challenges that occur in organizational mentoring are presented in Chapter Seven. The chapter also identifies specific criteria for producing effective mentoring communication.

Chapter Eight includes a discussion of how to demonstrate and stimulate value and visibility for organizational mentoring. It focuses on the practices of role modeling, reward, recognition, and celebration. Chapter Nine looks at the impact and indications of demand and identifies levers for success in creating demand. Chapter Ten identifies an array of mentoring opportunities for learning outside of the formal structure of education and training. Formal and informal approaches are described, along with one-to-one, group, distance, and cross-cultural mentoring models. Strategies for supporting the learning that goes on within these types are outlined.

The structural frameworks for mentoring education and training are presented in Chapter Eleven, along with a sampling of training exercises that can be customized to specific situations. Chapter Twelve identifies

some potential stumbling blocks *and* roadblocks that derail mentoring partnerships and jeopardize mentoring efforts within an organization. It also addresses how safety nets can be used to proactively and reactively manage those obstacles and sustain a mentoring culture. All twelve chapters conclude with a section for reflection on practice, designed to stimulate your thinking about next steps for your organization.

The Epilogue, "Moving on: Mentoring and the Future," acknowledges the everyday work, the struggle, and the joy of sustaining the mentoring effort. It offers implementation strategies for successfully moving from the seed of the idea of mentoring to a blossoming mentoring culture that is both nourished and nourishing.

Some themes and topics recur throughout the book, to highlight their importance, interdependence, and integration. The ideas behind mentoring are not intended to be discrete. For example, the topic of language is particularly relevant to both alignment and communication. I have intentionally selected only some aspects of the overarching topics that relate to organizational mentoring.

Two appendices, a wealth of forms on the CD, and an extensive reference list supplement the text. The first appendix sets forth the Mentoring Cultural Audit that you can use to assess where your organization is and what steps you might take at the outset. The second appendix is an annotated reading list, grouped by chapters, that you can use to dig more deeply into the topics.

Moving on as a Metaphor for Growth

The simple phrase "moving on" is a powerful metaphor for describing individual growth and learning. In our personal lives, moving on signifies growth and readiness for change. When we move on, we acknowledge our past and present (what it is we have learned and who we are) and move to a higher level, integrating what has come before with what is to be.

Creating a mentoring culture has much to do with moving on too. In a mentoring culture, transforming learning and leveraging experience are a way of being and a gateway to becoming. The nature of organizational life is often fast-paced, but if the opportunity to discover and make meaning out of daily experience is present and valued, an organization's collective level of performance is raised—with remarkable results.

Mentoring contributes to shaping this reality. Mentors come in and out of our lives and leave us with an insight, a kernel of truth, a piece of wisdom. They plant seeds that germinate for a lifetime. They challenge us to move on and help our organizations grow and embrace new possibilities. Their very presence enriches the workplace within which we work. They remind us of the profound power of learning and the promise of moving on.

Acknowledgments

MY HUSBAND is a baseball nut. He lives and breathes the sport. Finally, after thirty-three years, he convinced me to read a book about the game of baseball while we were on vacation. The one he gave me contains a juicy nugget that has stuck with me ever since. It reads, "it takes a lot of sentences to make a book, and it takes a lot of time to find them and try to get them down on paper" (Benson, 2001, p. 127).

I was in the midst of writing this book, and the quote resonated for me. As I continued to write, I slowly began to add items to my personal "what it takes to make a book" list. It grew to include the people I want to acknowledge here. I know how important it is to cover all the bases, so:

- First base: I acknowledge the love and support of my husband, Ed, and my children, Bruce, Lisa, and David. I couldn't have gotten to first base without them.

- Second base: I acknowledge the understanding and consideration of friends and special colleagues, particularly my dear friend and colleague Lory Fischler, for whom no request was too small and no task too much. There were times when I was halfway home and the game was delayed by rain; her constancy and support kept me in scoring position. I am also grateful to my C2 colleagues who understood my need for space, honored it, and stood by me.

- Third base: I acknowledge the wisdom and feedback of some smart people—Marge Smith, Amy Webb, and Martin Parks among them. When I was out in left field, they pulled me back with candor and thought-provoking advice. Their encouragement pushed me closer to home.

- Home plate: I acknowledge the guidance and assistance I received in completing this book. I thank Larry Daloz, a mentor and friend, for his keen insights and challenging questions. I appreciate Peter Koestenbaum's support and very gracious words in the Foreword. I pay special tribute to David Brightman, my editor, who is indeed a bright and patient soul; I thank him for his confidence. I am grateful to my development editor, Jan Hunter, and my permissions editor, Veronica Oliva, who waved me around to home.

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