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ILA Members publish on the topic of leadership from a variety of perspectives. We are pleased to feature a selection of these publications in this newsletter and our Web site.

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Thanks to ILA member Lois Zachary for contributing to this issue. **Visit the member area of the ILA Web site to download the Introduction to part one, "Taking Stock, Mentoring's Foundation" & Chapter 1, "Mentoring, Embedded in the Culture," of *Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization's Guide*.**

If you have a recent publication and are interested in being featured in this column, please contact ILA membership services, at ila@ila-net.org or 301.405.5218 for consideration.

Featured Publication

by Lois Zachary

Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization's Guide



Lois Zachary, Ed.D. is president of Leadership Development Services, LLC and a nationally recognized expert in mentoring, particularly for her innovative approaches and expertise in coaching leaders and their organizations in designing, implementing

*and evaluating learner-centered mentoring programs. Zachary consults with multinational, Fortune 500 companies, and national associations to improve organizational leadership practices for corporate, nonprofit, and government clients. Her approach of integrating sound principles of adult learning and development has been proven to enhance organizational effectiveness and improve business results. Zachary is author of *The Mentor's Guide* (Jossey-Bass, 2000), a best-selling book that has become the primary resource for organizations interested in promoting mentoring for leadership and learning. Her newest book, *Creating a Mentoring Culture:**

The Organization's Guide, provides a comprehensive resource for organizational mentoring sustainability. Zachary received her doctorate in Adult and Continuing Education from Columbia University. She holds a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University and a Master of Science degree in Education from Southern Illinois University.

Maggie Fromm, ILA Staff: Why is mentoring so important to any type of organization?

We live in a competitive business climate where 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 learning with the compelling human need for connection, it provides much needed support for individuals to grow. When the individuals within an organization grow, their growth positively impacts organizational vitality.

Today more organizations are embracing mentoring than ever before because of the value it adds for organizations, individuals within the organization, and others with whom they interact.

Organizations that continuously create value for mentoring achieve amazing results. They report increased retention rates, 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.

What is the difference between a mentoring culture and a mentoring program, and why is this difference crucial to our understanding of successful mentoring in organizations?

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In a mentoring culture, efforts focus on supporting mentoring throughout the organization, not just on a mentoring program. Launching a mentoring program without simultaneously creating a mentoring culture reduces long-term impact and sustainability and decreases the likelihood that a program or programs will grow and thrive over time. Mentoring programs in the absence of a mentoring culture often enjoy short-term success but then disappear. Some view their mentoring program as the cure-all for everything that has previously gone wrong and yet commit no funds to support mentoring. These programs then become the sacrificial lambs for other initiatives and problems. They compete for dollars. They compete for attention. They compete for participants. They fade in and out. They become too easily expendable. A mentoring culture says “we are serious about mentoring and we are committed for the long haul.” It supports all the mentoring that goes on within it and helps it become fully integrated into the organization. There is a continuum of expectation about mentoring and a standard of excellence for mentoring practice.

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Why did you create a book that is both a research text on your experience with organizational mentoring and a handbook for those interested in creating a mentoring culture in their organization?

I actually have been thinking about mentoring cultures for a long time. The difference between an organization that succeeds in sustaining organizational mentoring and one that does not is whether or not it is able to raise the bar on how it practices and supports

mentoring. Far too often, organizations expend valuable time, energy and resources in building a mentoring program and ultimately end up feeling disappointed, frustrated, and dissatisfied because of their inability to sustain either the program or its results.

They start out with enthusiasm and success but miss the mark when it comes to sustainability. In some organizations, mentoring fails to take root because of inadequate support from an already overextended organizational leadership. In others, there has been a blatant cultural mismatch between the mentoring program that is being put in place and the organization, either because the program was too structured and formal or too informal for the organizational culture.

The challenge of creating a mentoring culture can be somewhat intimidating. My goal was to provide a concrete manageable roadmap for creating a mentoring culture without overwhelming readers. I wanted to extend the sense of what is possible by encouraging my readers to think at a deeper, more serious and systemic level about organizational mentoring practices. I wanted the book to be a practical tool that would stimulate high level conversation for leaders and those who work with mentoring programs to more fully understand the scope and commitment required for mentoring to thrive. The questions and exercises I pose throughout the book are designed to stimulate a higher level of consciousness about the practice of mentoring in organizations.

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Once the goal of creating a mentoring culture is established, how does an organization decide what type of mentoring program will best align with its values and mission? Is it simply a process of trial and error?

Those who engage in planning the implementation of mentoring must focus their attention on the cultural context in which mentoring will take place. The dynamics of culture affect how implementation work goes forward, regardless of the scope of the mentoring effort. This is the groundwork for alignment.

The type of mentoring program an organization mounts should be strategically driven and culturally congruent. Without

cultural congruence, any mentoring effort will continuously face challenges that impact its viability and sustainability. This is an intentional discovery process that focuses understanding the dynamics of an organization’s culture from multiple perspectives and determining its cultural readiness for mentoring. “Discovery” includes raising cultural consciousness, mapping the culture, understanding cultural ecology, and identifying cultural and learning anchors, in order

to test for cultural congruence before deciding to move forward. Some organizations begin the process of creating a mentoring culture within the framework of a an established learning culture intact. Some have minimal awareness and lack understanding of the dynamics of their cul-

ture. Discovery work is necessary to establish ownership, promote shared responsibility, maximize resources, maintain integrity of the program, facilitate knowledge utilization, support integration of mentoring into the organization, and create openness and readiness for mentoring.

As far as your question about trial and error, I believe it misses the mark. When I say “strategically driven” I mean that a mentoring program must be linked to sound business reasons for engaging in the mentoring program. What are the desired outcomes of the program? Do they align with the organization’s values and mission or is there a mismatch? When mentoring is aligned, the business reasons to engage in mentoring are evident and tied directly to results. As the organization’s mentoring efforts become increasingly aligned, a ripple effect positively impacts related systems and processes within the organization. If there is a mismatch, there is more work to be done to create organizational readiness. Even when they are aligned, you must be continuously vigilant and make sure the implementation aligns with the values and mission.

You offer a very detailed worksheet to help a mentee list certain qualities to aide in the mentor selection process. Have you thought about creating a similar tool for the mentor in order to ensure reciprocity in the relationship? What issues would it address?

Actually, my previous book, *The Mentor’s Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships* (Jossey-Bass, 2000) explores the critical process of mentoring from the mentor’s perspective. It details how to navigate the mentoring experience from beginning to end. It also contains tools and hands-on worksheets and

exercises and emphasizes the reciprocity of the relationship and the mentor’s role in facilitating a meaningful learning experience. In addition it helps mentors assess their readiness to become a mentor, gives guidelines for establishing the relationship, suggests strategies for establishing SMART goals, monitoring progress and achievement and bringing the relationship to closure. Throughout the book I stress the reciprocity of the relationship, beginning with the definition of mentoring: “Mentoring as a reciprocal learning relationship in which Mentor and Mentee agree to a partnership, where they will work collaboratively toward achievement of mutually defined goals that will develop a Mentee’s skills, abilities, knowledge and/or thinking.”

You write about the resources needed for a thriving mentoring culture, including time, money, and individual commitment by people in the organization. How does an organization create and sustain a mentoring culture without overburdening its employees with the demands of successful mentoring? Can mentor and mentee needs be filled by a small office with limited resources?

You’ve asked two very important questions here. I will take them one at a time.

First, the same principles hold true for large and small organizations:

- Establish ownership for mentoring in the organization.
- Get your leadership on board to actively support the mentoring effort
- Make sure the scope, magnitude and form that your mentoring culture takes fits your organization.
- Be open to the process and expect to make changes along the way.

- Assume that your efforts will take time to come to fruition.
- Think “systems” and consider how you leverage and maximize both people and process.
- Keep the big picture top of mind, the “what” and the “why.”
- Be prepared to face and deal with the “time-is-money mantra.” It is a reality.
- Seek to combine quality effort with excellence of mentoring practices.
- Keep it simple and manageable. Don’t overcomplicate matters by trying to do everything at once.
- Start where there is the most likelihood of success. Identify those aspects of your plan or a few immediate goals that are doable and get some success (and credibility) under your belt.

Second, yes, mentor and mentee needs can be filled even in a small office with limited human and financial resources. There are many ways to maximize those limited resources. In addition to one on one mentoring there are multiple permutations of group mentoring (peer mentoring and facilitated mentoring), and they are not by any means mutually exclusive. Much of our time these days is helping organizations combine the power of both and sequencing them so that they combine to have maximum impact. And what we know for sure is that you have to keep working at it, keep up the momentum, and know that little things do make a difference.

You discuss four mentorship phases that occur during a mentoring relationship: preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure. Can you give a brief example of each? Which particular phase tends to be most challenging and why?

The preparing phase requires reflective practice and preparation of both oneself and the relationship. During the preparing phase of a mentoring relationship, several processes take place simultaneously. Mentors and mentees explore personal motivation and their readiness to be either a mentor or mentee. Individual assessment of mentoring skills helps identify areas for the mentor's and mentee's learning and development. Clarity about expectation and role helps define parameters for establishing a productive and healthy mentoring relationship. The initial conversation, in which potential mentoring partners explore mutual-ity of interests and learning needs, and determine learning fit, is critical. It prepares the relationship. The outcome of this conversation helps mentors determine how productively they can work with a prospective mentee and to what extent

of this iterative phase should be a partnership workplan consisting of well-defined goals, criteria and measurement for success, delineation of mutual responsibility, accountability mechanisms, and protocols for dealing with stumbling blocks. Answers to the following questions should be crystal clear to the mentoring partners:

- What are the learning goals?
- What are the learning needs?
- Is there a mutual understanding of roles?
- What are the responsibilities of each partner?
- What are the norms of the relationship?
- How often will we meet (whether in person or on-line)?
- Who will initiate contact?
- What are the boundaries and limits of this relationship?
- What is our workplan?

The final phase, coming to closure, presents a dynamic learning opportunity for mentors and mentees to process their learning and move on. Coming to closure involves evaluating the learning, acknowledging progress and celebrating the learning achievement. When closure is seen as an opportunity to evaluate personal learning and take that learning to the next level, mentors and mentees leverage their own learning and growth and become more reflective practitioners.

In chapter 3 you list reasons why organizations fail to implement a mentoring initiative. Which of these do you see most often, and how can that pitfall be avoided? Why do you think that particular stumbling block is so prevalent?

My top four would be lack of time (perceived or real), fuzzy program goals, untested assumptions, and inadequate training (and support).

Most of the work of the relationship is accomplished in the third, and typically longest, phase: enabling. This phase offers the greatest opportunity for learning and development, yet mentoring partners often face challenges during this time that make them vulnerable to relationship derailment. It is for this reason that I believe it is the most challenging. The mentor's role during this phase is to nurture mentee growth by maintaining an open and affirming learning climate; by asking the right

questions at the right time; and by providing thoughtful, timely, candid and constructive feedback. During the enabling phase, the learning progress and the learning process are continuously monitored to assure that the mentee's learning goals are being met.

Time. Mentoring takes time, not only for those engaged in the mentoring relationship but also for the organization and those professionals responsible for developing, implementing, supporting, and evaluating the initiative. The time-is-money mantra is a real concern, especially in already-overburdened associations. For real success, mentoring time must be allocated and not begrudged or resented.

Fuzzy program goals. The goals of mentoring programs must be SMART. That is, they must be Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Timely as well as congruent with the organization's mission and vision. Only after the goals are clearly articulated should they be communicated to others in your organization. Since individuals tend to have their own agenda or desires regarding mentoring, goals must be consistently and continuously communicated in order to manage expectations --- with em-

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they believe they can honestly further this person's learning. It helps mentees determine if they feel comfortable working with a prospective mentor and gauge whether they can productively learn from this person.

People hold many assumptions about mentoring, mentoring relationships, and the roles of mentors and mentees and even confidentiality. Agreeing on an operational definitions manages expectations up front and offers an opportunity for shared understanding.

During the second phase, negotiating, depth, specificity, and scaffolding are added to the general goals identified during the preparing phase. This is when details of the relationship get hammered out: when and how to meet, mutual responsibilities, ground rules, criteria for success, accountability, and how and when to bring the relationship to closure. The outcome

phasis on the consistently and continuously.

Untested assumptions. People hold many assumptions about mentoring, mentoring relationships, and the roles of mentors and mentees and even confidentiality. Agreeing on an operational definitions manages expectations up front and offers an opportunity for shared understanding. Failure to define the parameters of mentoring roles leads to unrealistic expectations. When confidentiality is breached, the trust between mentoring partners quickly erodes.

Inadequate training. Few association professionals receive adequate training or guidance about how to be a good mentor or mentee (see sidebar). Still, they are expected to design, implement, and manage mentoring programs. Some organizations offer initial mentoring training and perhaps some networking sessions for mentoring participants. Frequently, training is not offered at point of need but at a point of convenience on the organizational calendar. Mentoring training, to be effective, needs to be available in many venues and formats, and for multiple points of need.

Is creating a mentoring culture a top-down only process? What can employees in non-management positions do to facilitate a mentoring culture if the higher-ups in an organization do not make it a priority?

Leadership is indispensable to success. Leaders must be involved from the very beginning of the effort and stay involved throughout. Far too often, leaders “deputize” others to carry the mentoring banner for them. While this may ease their schedules and may seem necessary, it is insufficient to generate significant traction to get the mentoring effort moving. Leaders must be visible and supportive to

continuously create value for mentoring. Mentoring leadership succession needs to be addressed proactively; if it is not, an organization is likely to find itself spending the same time, money and effort over and over again without significant movement. When leadership is not present and accounted for in the mentoring effort, people take notice. More and more resistance to mentoring builds each time and any future idea of mentoring has little chance of success because of all the negativity sparked.

Having said that, creating a mentoring culture should involve individuals throughout the organization, their input and feedback is a critical part of the process. All stakeholders need to be brought into the fold throughout the process, although not all at the same time in the same way.

All individuals can strive for and practice mentoring excellence whether they are engaged in formal or informal opportunities. They can seek out mentors for themselves, inside as well as outside the organization. They can raise the bar on their own practices and participate in multiple mentoring opportunities.

What is the most important thing that ILA members can take from your book and apply to their own lives, even if they are not working in a typical organization setting?

Taking Kouzes and Posner’s model as a framework, I would suggest

Model the way

- Be a mentor and a mentee
- Practice mentoring excellence

Enable others to act

- Get the right infrastructure in place
- Ensure a meaningful budget
- Support those who support mentoring

- Be a mentoring champion
- Show interest without interfering in the relationship
- Honor mentoring time

Challenge the Process

- Provide opportunities to integrate new learning from mentoring
- Invent new modalities for mentoring
- Encourage those you mentor to take risks
- Share you successes and your failures
- Go first: step up and participate

Inspire a Shared Vision

- Be inclusive in your planning
- Link outcomes with values and mission

Encourage the Heart

- Tell your story
- Celebrate success



Lois Zachary leads a Preconference at the 2006 ILA Global Conference in Chicago, IL, November 1-4.