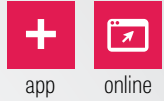


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# Lois Zachary

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Lois Zachary is a world-renowned expert on mentoring and leadership. She is president of Leadership Development Services, a consulting firm that provides leadership development, mentoring, coaching, education, and training for both corporate and nonprofit organizations.

Leadership Excellence has named her as one of the “100 Best Minds” in the United States in the area of organizational development. Zachary has written hundreds of articles, columns, and books about mentoring, leadership, and adult development and learning.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE FUTURE OF MENTORING?

We really need to elevate the practice of all mentoring—formal and informal.

One of today’s more popular practices—and one that we’re going to see more of—is group mentoring. That’s because we don’t always have all the mentors that we need to be able to do it one-on-one. Since the need for mentoring is accelerating and the demand is growing, group mentoring has become a viable option.

But I don’t think it’s a case of either/or when it comes to mentoring. The operative word is *and*. We can exponentially accelerate learning and development when group mentoring is combined with face-to-face mentoring, when formal mentoring is complemented with informal mentoring.

I think we’re going to see even more variation in the types of mentoring people will be engaging in. We have an ever-increasing amount of business-to-business mentoring. And then there is mosaic mentoring, the idea that we have multiple mentors, often simultaneously, throughout our lives. Anybody who is in a leadership position will tell you that they’ve had multiple mentors—informal, formal, group, reverse.

A word about reverse mentoring: We have a whole generation—the Millennials—which has a wealth of technical knowledge and a way of looking at the world that needs to be understood and harnessed in the workplace today. Reverse mentoring by Millennials is a proven strategy for educating the older segment of our workforce.

## WHAT TIPS CAN YOU OFFER TO MORE SEASONED EMPLOYEES WITH RESPECT TO BEING MENTORED BY THEIR JUNIORS?

If we focus on learning, and what people need to learn in the workplace, I don’t think it matters who



we learn it from. The focus should be on growth and development: What are the gaps? Who has the experience, wisdom, or expertise? Who can help us learn what we need to know?

If you're going to be mentored by your juniors, you will become more connected to what is happening in the workplace as you create and build those relationships. Mentoring conversations offer a really great opportunity for aligning people, process, and knowledge. So it should be welcoming to receive mentoring from your juniors because it's going to expand your perspectives, help you stay more connected, and build alignment.

And I would say a first step is to identify just what it is that you need to learn. The more specific you can be the better.

## WHAT CAN EXECUTIVES DO TO ENCOURAGE A MENTORING CULTURE IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS?

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Executives need to be role models of mentoring excellence. They need to reward, recognize, celebrate, and appreciate mentoring in the workplace.

Executives also need to make sure that the financial resources are in place so all organizational mentoring efforts are sustainable. Mentoring should not be just a line item, but aligned with the strategic business objectives of the organization. You must ensure you have the right knowledge resources and the right human resources in place. And, in this day of digital mentoring, you also have to have the right technology available to help facilitate the process.

So leaders have to create value and visibility. They have to keep up-to-date on what is happening in their organizations when it comes to mentoring, and be able to consistently and effectively articulate its strategic business advantage.

## WHO IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE MENTORS?

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One of my favorite mentors was my doctoral dissertation adviser. She wasn't called a mentor, but that's what she was. She supported me. She challenged me. She offered me a vision of what was possible.

I came to her with a research question and a methodology. I left with a whole new way of thinking, tons of procedural knowledge, and increased confidence. What stands out for me 30 years later is the way that she asked questions that broadened and deepened my thinking and challenged my ideas.

She invited me to try new approaches, to pursue different lines of thinking, and ultimately become a more accomplished professional.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

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I like to spend time with my grandchildren. I like to take long walks. I like to hang out with friends. I like to write. And of course, reading and monthly book club meetings.

Most of all, I would say I love to mentor. Mentoring is so much a part of what I do. I am passionate about helping people turn on to the power of their own potential. I am committed to practicing what I preach.

Lois Zachary was interviewed by Patty Gaul, senior writer/editor for ASTD.

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