

## Mentoring White Paper



from **Mentoring Solutions**  
developed by  
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## Overview

"The great use of life is to spend it on something that will outlast it." James Adams

**W**hy **significance** when **success** is already in hand?

In Part 1, the reasons for asking this question are described then, out of this arose other questions such as: How to gain **success**? What is the connection to **significance**, the pinnacle of all efforts?

Now, in Part 2, the focus is on the subject of success itself.

If the reader has not read Part 1 that contains descriptions of the foundational studies referred to throughout Part 2, she or he should do so before moving forward.

### TOPICS

#### Part 1: Overview

##### Perspectives on the significance of mentoring

Surveys of significance

Competency-based mentoring programs

Case in point

#### Part 2: Success: What it takes

The strategic framework

The counter-intuitive element

#### Translating significance

##### The legacy factor

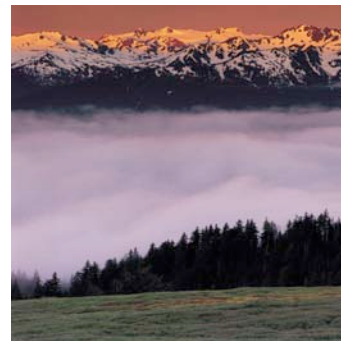
##### Leadership, engagement & mentoring

Case in point

##### Looking ahead

#### Appendix A: Mentoring Maturity Model

#### Sources consulted



## Success: what it takes

*"The mind has exactly the same power as the hands; not merely to grasp the world, but to change it." ~ Colin Wilson*

### The strategic framework

The three foregoing studies of what constitutes **success** point to the requirement for broad-scoped strategizing on behalf of the organization. Seen in this light, the **mentoring program** becomes not merely a whim of one department, the latest brand of corporate fix touted by a "name consultant", or me-too benchmarking but a well-considered mechanism to truly engage all involved in the corporate effort. . It is, after all, possible to benchmark to mediocrity and success can be due to sheer good luck.

Research on roles in organizations suggests that the nature of the work of those at the highest levels of the organization is essentially the same and falls under three broad headings or domains -- production, organization, and strategic systems.

Each succeeding domain, from lower to higher, is marked by:

- different essential leader functions or critical tasks,
- longer time spans for decision making and feedback, and
- greater required cognitive capacities.



Each, translated into mentoring program terms, must be treated as unique – the goals will be different, the length of time required for knowledge transfer, the intensity of the process, the expectations for the outcomes, the tools required. The word "**significant**" or "**significance**" implies intentionality.

Quite commonly, corporations and those task forces or steering committees championing **mentoring programs**, focus at the outset on tactics and miss the larger picture that would give them not only success but also **significance**. While tactics are essential and must be chosen carefully to ensure success, singular attention to them at the expense of strategy means that often there is little or no top level support, the program is a stand alone, and/or there is an element of "me too".

## The counter-intuitive element

**A**s would be expected, the subject of leadership, succession planning and **mentoring** arises for consideration. The higher the leaders move up the organizational strata, the more complex their context becomes. The more complex their environment, the more cognitively complex they must be to **successfully** operate in it.

There are several concepts to explore both of which involve counter-intuitive elements.

One of the most influential current books on organizational leadership and the elements of **success** would have to be that of *Good to Great*.

Jim Collins and his team of 20 researchers spent five years pouring over 5979 articles on **successful** businesses looking for what made them stay great even in the bad times. For instance, Collins suggests a series of principles operate, one of which is tiered leadership with Level 5 representing the top.

Collins sums up what he says the mass of research pointed to: top leadership is not so much a person as it is a way of perceiving the world. Level 5 Leadership balances professional will to get things done with personal humility. This person “acts with quiet, calm determination; relies principally on inspired standards, *not inspiring charisma*, to motivate.” (Emphasis added). How does this relate to successful mentoring programs? All too often mentoring program participants fall into an expectation trap -- that time spent with a “charismatic mentor” is more to be valued than someone not viewed as charismatic. Given what the Collins research underscores for **success**, leadership-mentoring programs avoid the pattern of recruiting the charismatic at the expense of the non-charismatic. **Success in mentoring**, as has been pointed out by Gray (1989) is less about “getting a mentor” than it is about “getting the mentoring needed.”

Collins notes: “*My hypothesis is that there are two categories of people: those who do not have the seed of Level 5 and those who do. The first category consists of people who could never in a million years bring themselves to subjugate their egotistic needs to the greater ambition of building something larger and more lasting than themselves... The second category... consists of those who have the potential to evolve to level 5: the capability resides within them... and under the right circumstances -- self-reflection, conscious personal development, a mentor, a great teacher, loving parents, a significant life experience, a Level 5 boss... they begin to develop.*”

Level 5 leaders are diligent, attribute **success** to other than themselves and are ambitious not for themselves but for a greater good. As such, they set up their successors -- for instance, their proteges -- for even greater **success** in the next generation. These are attributes of good **mentoring**.

One of the “basic practices” extracted from the research done for *Good to Great* is one that will stand **mentors** (and would-be mentors) in good stead. Like all deceptively simple principles, it’s harder to follow than to say: “*Lead with questions, not answers*”. Over the years, as more and more managers have been asked to become mentors in programs, it’s become evident that some have difficulty separating the role of the manager from that of the mentor. The big picture perspective on mentoring is missing. Collins and his colleagues, in pinpointing the need to ask questions rather than “tell” is saying the same thing about leaders.

Adopting mentor-like roles, true leaders ask questions until there is a clear picture of reality and its implications. Leaders of good-to-great companies operate in Socratic fashion, using questions for one key reason: to gain understanding rather than as a form of manipulation, blaming, or put-down. This difference and understanding the difference is vital to ultimate success in **mentoring** relationships as well as in running organizations.

Out of hundreds of Fortune 500 companies, Collins and his team selected 28 to qualify for the From-Good-to-Great category. Following a six-step process, data was coded chronologically in 12 categories, one of which is labeled Social Factors. It is this category that most closely parallels the unwritten rules topic often discussed by mentors and their proteges. Collins allocates Social Factors to the side of organizational life, which includes cultural practices, people policies and practices, norms, rituals, mythology and stories, group dynamics, management style, and values.

Collins and his team conclude: “*The point is not that we should add to what we are already doing and make ourselves even more overworked. No, the point is to realize that much of what we’re doing is at best a waste of energy,*”

His advice? Either stop paying lip service to ideals and values or live with the reality that achievement will never reach the desired level.



## Translating significance

" Tomorrow's destiny is nothing more than the outcome of today's actions." ~ Brandon Weekes

**F**or years, data collected by CMSI has shown that some program participants are very good at starting out to meet a mentoring goal but they don't follow through to completion. We call this "the act of meaning well" or "having good intentions". This value set is not confined just to individuals. Entire programs are based on this mindset.

Collins has a counterpart and uses a sports marathon metaphor to illustrate it's actually not even necessary to "beat" anyone in order to successfully attain the goal. Collins notes that successful mentors and proteges spend time understanding what not to waste time, money and energy on. In this instance, rah-rah motivation, and "fun" frothy stuff to keep interest in the goal is a waste of time. The **successful** program is built around the concept that just doing it is fun, improving is fun, winning is fun. "*If you're not passionate about what we do here, then go find something else to do.*" Interestingly enough, the statistics tell the tale -- not only are they champions but also the participation rate has soared impressively.

Here's the **success** procedure step-by-step:

- (1) Make no explicit attempt to motivate.
- (2) Give participants weekly opportunities to see for themselves what they are capable of.

This is planting the seed. Typically, adults should be able to do this for themselves. "*This created the strongest culture of discipline possible... [They] felt personally responsible ... a commitment made not to the coaches, but to each other.*" Mentoring programs can and should build on the camaraderie inherent in the activity.

What's the **mentoring** equivalent? Mentor and protege must feel mutually responsible for reaching the goal independent of bosses, supervisors and others. Both mentor and protege know what must be done (by Action Planning), who contributes what in terms of skills, life experience and expertise. Action planning is a form of commitment to reaching a goal.

At the end of the marathon story, Collins cycles back to his notion that it's no more difficult or painful to build for greatness than to aim for lesser "good" -- as in the title of the book. Possibly because he is aware of the tendency to settle for easy, fun and second best, he underscores: it is not easy and, by definition, not everyone will make it but along the way what is built is better.

## The legacy factor

*"To live in the presence of great truths and eternal laws, to be led by permanent ideals - that is what keeps a man patient when the world ignores him, and calm and unspoiled when the world praises him." ~ de Balzac*

**A**t CMSI, we operate on the Mentoring Principle that programs, to be **significant**, must leave a legacy. How is this to be carried through to a successful outcome? At its most basic, the "checklist" of ideal qualities should include, at a minimum, the following:

- ✓ longevity (last more than one cycle)
- ✓ inclusive (designed for more than just high flyers)
- ✓ broad-based (not championed by a single person or group)

But significance is more than checklists. Add to this the concern that this will take too much energy. If it is correct that the energy required for going from good to great adds rather than subtracts energy, then the same will be true of aiming for **significance**. People must want to make a positive difference, care about the activity and want others (as Collins and his co-researchers put it) *"to have the experience of being part of something absolutely first class."*

To expand on this latter idea, it must be noted there are challenges to be met in terms of a mentoring program whether it be to develop Social Capital, or Intellectual Capital:

- not all in the organization will want to be "good" let alone great or successful
- some will subconsciously self-sabotage the initiative
- some will not "get" this concept
- some will not believe it can work.



Collins raises the question, *"Why greatness?"* He accepts that some, like those listed above, will view this concept as nonsense. It can be conjectured that Collins and his team during their extended research became very familiar with those who are passionately **engaged** in life and care. These people need no answer to the question. They understand already. For them, the question is not "Why?" but "How?"

What is it that will compel people to aim for greatness? This is the question that each person in the organization should ask and then answer, if not in work then in the community, at a place of worship, in a non-profit. *"When you do this, you will start to grow, inevitably toward becoming a... leader."*

## Leadership, Engagement and Mentoring

"All of us, at certain moments of our lives, need to take advice and to receive help from other people." ~ Alexis Carrel

Throughout this paper, the thread of **engagement** has wound its way. And for good reason. The **great** leaders of **great** organizations know that rationality drives the enterprise only so far. The further piece needed for greatness is **engagement** -- an emotional element.

As a for instance, Churchill in June 1941 during the Second World War pronounced:

*"The destiny of mankind is not decided by material computation. When great causes are on the move in the world... we learn that we are spirits... and that something is going on beyond space and time, which, whether we like it or not, spells duty."*

Closer in time, those seeing the connection between the enterprise (whatever that may be) and emotions developed tools such as the Engagement Ratio-Index/Mirror to distinguish between the engaged, the not-engaged and the actively disengaged. The Gallup Organization calculates within the total United States workforce for three categories of employees:

27% are *engaged*, or loyal, productive, and psychologically committed to their work;  
56% are *not engaged* employees who aren't psychologically committed to their roles; and  
17% are *actively disengaged*, or disenchanted with their work places.

As a further refinement, it is suggested there are four types of **engagement**:

- \* Physical - energy to engage the body
- \* Emotional - energy to engage the heart
- \* Mental - energy to engage the intellect
- \* Spiritual - energy to engage the spirit.



When worker values and beliefs align with those of the organization, s/he becomes **engaged** to focus energy on mission-critical activity.

Yet it is not uncommon for those in the top echelons to express unease when "soft" positive emotions are mentioned as a key outcome of formal **mentoring programs**. Yet, research on benefits shows that the emotional element is statistically **significant**, in fact rated as "substantial". Note the use of language such as: "happy", "felt", "friendship", "pride". This is the language found in studies of **engagement**.

- ✓ Happy to see my protégé become more independent
- ✓ Established a trusted friendship
- ✓ Felt good to see my protégé avail him/herself of new opportunities
- ✓ Fostered a sense of pride in help another get started in the profession
- ✓ Felt it could help my organization in the longer term.

It is clear, in reviewing this particular research, that these are **engaged** people. Each wants to and will leave a legacy. In turn, this program will move from the realm of being “good” to “great” and, quite probably, to **significance**.

How then to convince conventional leaders that **engagement** (and the attached emotions) is useful, has concrete outcomes, and is worthy of investment? Recall that in the Hewitt study, the more committed the CEO, providing necessary resources of release time and program funding, the more effective a company is in developing leaders. If the aim is to develop leadership and if this is what it takes, why is there a failure to follow through?



It is claimed that no matter what the occupation or what the role, top performers always define work in terms of how much can be accomplished and how well it can be done. This is part of what has been termed “their [performers] intentionality”. Further, top performers hone natural talents and use them to perform to their utmost.

Research on **engagement** suggests several things:

- employees who use their natural talents in their jobs produce significantly more than average workers;
- emotionally committed employees form teams that deliver exceptional outcomes;
- customers recognize the passion and commitment employees feel toward them and cannot help but respond in an emotional way; this emotionally driven reaction forges bonds between employees and clients;
- this engagement then becomes the key factor driving sustainable growth, quality customer services, greater professionalism and top performance.

How can a **mentoring** program fit this context to make a difference? Let us start where many organizations intuitively start, with high potentials. There is, however, a counterintuitive element to be kept in mind.

## Case in Point

**W**hile **mentoring** programs should not be the exclusive domain of the high flyer, for organizations there is perpetually a need to focus on leadership development. In the noise and confusion of competing values and concepts surrounding leadership, it is possible to lose sight of what we can do about mentoring, knowledge sharing, and social capital.

Author Adrian Savage is typical in describing some of the challenges at the top, in particular the invisible barrier in organizations affecting men as much as women. With the start of a career, achievement and performance are valued. Movement upward, should it be desired, through the lower levels of management normally is based on merit. For high flyers, somewhere between upper middle management and executive level, the shift from valuing merit to some other criterion is invisible and rarely, if ever, acknowledged openly. To advance further, new values must be understood and embraced though these are unclear. What follows is often a collision with an invisible set of values unconnected to discrimination or merit.

*“In an organization where people rise by merit, the differences between them continually shrink. First the downright poor performers are removed. Then the marginal and unsatisfactory ones ... average performers, then above average [finally] ...the truly outstanding people.”*

*Since resource allocation is the primary role of top executives, they need to know which are the best ...[and] find an additional way of discriminating... If one set of values no longer serves to discriminate, others surface... The value set shifts dramatically and uniformly with few exceptions to [a power culture]: ‘It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.’ ”*



*Power cultures work through values based on influence and importance. The reality is that dealing with politics is the job at this level. Most everything else can be delegated, but the politics — the exercise of power and influence in decisions on strategy and resource allocation — is what top executives do.*



*Because the change of culture is not overt or acknowledged, it's impossible to talk about it or prepare people for what they will encounter. Some people seem to grasp the change intuitively... Some come to love it. Others feel constantly lost, bruised and devalued by all the political maneuvering and the patient building of networks of influence. For those rendered ineffective at this stage, this is a significant loss to the organization in many ways... Talent is not such a common commodity that organizations can go on wasting it in this way. Growing potential is always an expensive and time-consuming proposition.*



Note the claim that it is "impossible to talk about it or prepare people." In a **mentoring program**, however this is framed in a discussion with seasoned veterans about the "unwritten rules" and the "informal org chart".

More to the point should be concern over the common tendency for **mentoring** programs to be initially or solely for the "high flyers", "bright lights" and "high potentials". All too often, organizations overlook the talent outside the spotlight possibly because at the outset decision-makers are looking for people – potential mentors and proteges -- like themselves. The greatest legacy, and therefore a **significant** one, is that mentoring pools be made less exclusive and more open to talent cultivation at all levels. How better to **engage** people than to give them the message that they are valued and have something to give or share? The Mentoring Process is highly engaging. By giving, people are engaged, not by fiat but by interest in the well-being of others and the organization.

However, it is not only the mentor who will give. The proteges are in the best position of all to observe the how, when and why of the Mentoring Process. They too practise the Principle of Sharing in reciprocal and cascade mentoring programs. They, after all, will be the next generation of mentors.

## Looking ahead

" *Whatever you choose to do in life, always remember to give back, because in failing to give back, then you fail to become.*" ~ Marcia Dawes

In this first of a series of Mentoring "Gray" papers, the intention has been to avoid a series of prescriptions, or descriptions of "programs out there" and to point readers in the direction of the mature mind set. It is hoped that the different perspectives in the preceding pages have provided a fresh slant on what has been termed: "*the most complex of all human relationships and interactions.*"

Your feedback is welcomed.

## Appendix A: Mentoring Maturity Model

Based on CMSI’s extensive knowledge of the typical paths taken by organizations in pursuit of mentoring, it seemed helpful to show how this progresses. As a result, elements of the Thing study on organizational progression have been extracted and highlighted then linked to mentoring and mentoring programs. As with the original Model, the elements of each more basic Stage must be in place for proper development of later Stages. The further along in terms of progression, the more likely the mentoring will be **successful** and **significant**.

Stage	Mentoring Program Characteristics	Outcomes
<b>1 – Ad Hoc</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ charismatic decision-makers &amp; mentors</li> <li>▪ little organizational support</li> <li>▪ efforts informal, small &amp; typically manual (e.g., matching)</li> <li>▪ limited in scope &amp; scalability</li> <li>▪ operate at departmental level (rather than organization-wide)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ inconsistent &amp; autonomous approaches lead to unpredictability</li> <li>▪ no linkage to other efforts (e.g., LMS; diversity)</li> <li>▪ lack of visibility</li> <li>▪ reliance on COTS*</li> <li>▪ assigned a low level of priority</li> </ul>
<b>2 – Managed Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ cooperative buy-in from key stakeholders</li> <li>▪ proactive planning of program</li> <li>▪ proteges can monitor own progress against learning plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ program visibility &amp; efficiency</li> <li>▪ repository of data for process start to finish</li> <li>▪ results of evaluation used for planning</li> <li>▪ common repeatable processes</li> </ul>
<b>3 – Competency-driven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ time made available for program participation</li> <li>▪ senior management support</li> <li>▪ consistent online mentoring management system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ competency-based learning in program aligned with organizational needs</li> <li>▪ self-paced</li> <li>▪ knowledge sharing reinforced</li> </ul>
<b>4 – Integrated Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ active senior level support</li> <li>▪ organizational strategy for mentoring well-defined &amp; visible at all levels</li> <li>▪ participants integrate LMS learning with mentoring</li> <li>▪ action plans oriented towards improving the organization &amp; self</li> <li>▪ Mentoring Pools of a wide variety promote life long learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ new goals &amp; priorities easily integrated into program structure</li> <li>▪ ROI tracked; organization-wide access to mentoring program</li> <li>▪ a focus on programs to enhance and retain top talent</li> <li>▪ proteges encouraged to give back/self-develop by becoming next generation of mentors</li> </ul>
<b>5 – Optimized Workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ leaders are teachers/stewards of change (charisma devalued)</li> <li>▪ mentoring process essential key to just in time blended learning</li> <li>▪ organization wide understanding of how, when &amp; why mentoring &amp; coaching work best</li> <li>▪ organization-wide mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ mentoring ethos actively permeates organization beyond program structure</li> <li>▪ shared understanding of factors and influences affecting organization</li> </ul>

\* KEY

COTS = commercial off the shelf    LMS = Learning Management System    ROI = return on investment

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## **The origins of this paper:**

**CMSI Mentoring Solutions®** has become a leader in the broad fields of mentoring, knowledge sharing, and people-to-people collaboration providing both Professional Services and proprietary ASP, Colaboro®. Developed in 1998 by CMSI – Colaboro is the world's premiere scalable Online Mentoring Management System®. For details, go to [www.mentoring-solutions.com](http://www.mentoring-solutions.com).



**Marilynne Miles Gray** is Vice President of Mentoring Solutions. She is Editor of *MentorInk Newsletter* (available at: [www.mentoring-solutions.com](http://www.mentoring-solutions.com)). She has a background in curriculum design, administration, writing and analysis. *"The rewarding part is observing and being part of many mentoring programs, both successful and significant. It's one of my missions to help others experience this as well."*