

A perspective on mentoring

Reem A. Al Ghanim

I am very honored to be standing here today to share with you a “perspective” on Mentoring.

When I was first approached to speak about the subject, my first thought was, what can I bring to a room full of people that are familiar and practice mentoring on a daily basis. I think each of us is not only familiar with the concept of mentoring, but have played both mentor and mentee roles continuously.

Mentoring isn't new!

The first use of mentoring was in Greek mythology. Homer who wrote the Odyssey, described the delicate mentoring balance of ATHENA. ATHENA, the daughter of ZEUS, **disguised** herself as MENTOR and helped ODDYSEUSS and his son. In the story, the mentoring intervention was essential, and she allowed ODDYSEUS and his son to earn their destiny, by offering encouragement, then recedes into the background.

In my opinion, that is one thing that truly distinguishes a good mentor.. The ability to recede and allow the mentee to earn his/her destiny.

So much like the practice of mentoring itself, for the next 15-20 minutes, I would like to offer you my **“perspective”** on mentoring. Then, like ATHENA recede and allow you to continue on your **mentoring journey...**

So, thank you! I appreciate you giving me my 15 minutes of fame..

What is mentoring

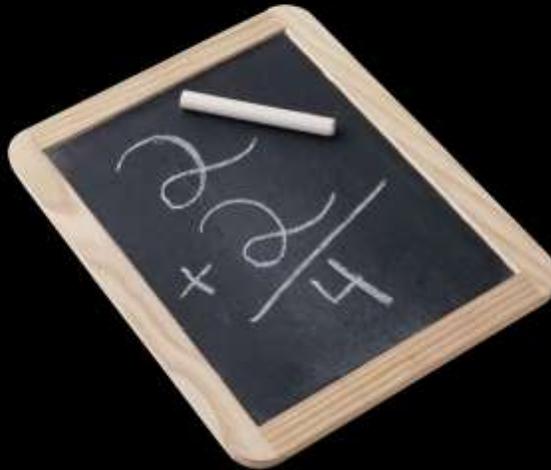
When an experienced and knowledgeable person, teaches, guides and develops another.

So we agree.. Mentoring isn't new, and in simple terms, mentoring is a strategy that is used by many organizations (like Aramco) to achieve a number of Talent Management Goals. So when an experienced and knowledgeable person, is able to impart wisdom and guidance, it benefits the organization in:

1. On Boarding
2. Knowledge Transfer
3. Leadership & Succession Pipeline Development
4. Diversity Enhancement
5. As a Supplement/enhancement to formal training and eLearning

In a recent survey conducted in 2012 .. The most important use of mentoring is in 2 points that I mentioned, which are leadership and succession planning and development.

Mentoring.. old school



Here.. I'd like to differentiate between mentoring and leading:

I had an instance where someone I reported to early in my career said to me "I AM YOUR MENTOR, SO YOU NEED TO LEARN HOW TO DO THINGS MY WAY!" --- As a student of Human behavior, this alarmed me!

I thought... if this is mentoring... Then mentoring is the dumbest idea ever!

1. Am I going to be stuck with this self-proclaimed "mentor" all of my career?
NOT WHAT I WANTED!
1. I didn't want to be him.. He certainly had some good qualities (those were the ones I wanted to learn from, under my terms)

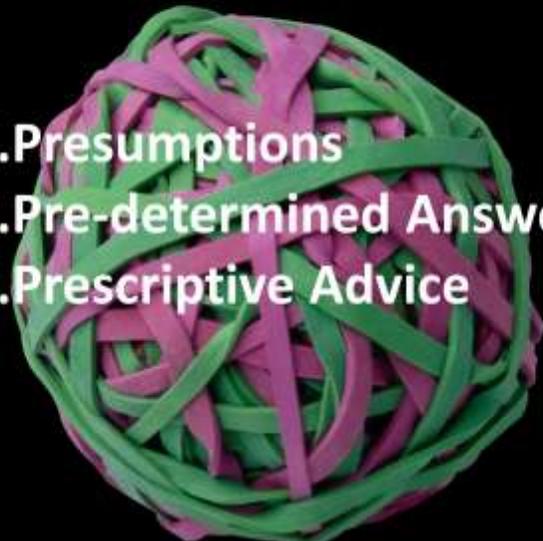
Instead.. I wanted my mentoring experience to be an amalgamation of all of the behaviors that I wanted to focus on and that built on my strengths.

I wanted a library of mentors to explore from; where I can learn strategic thinking from one person, effective communication from another. Where I can learn how to be an effective female leader from one person, and how to best chart my career from someone else.

After I grew up.. I had another mentoring experience where I reached out to my direct boss, and his question back to me was: Do you want me to respond as your leader, or as a mentor? I asked for both (I can be very greedy) and as much as I appreciated his direction as a leader, his advice as a mentor was what resonated.

This takes me to the 3 Perils of Mentoring:

The Perils of the Three Ps

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1. Presumptions
 2. Pre-determined Answers
 3. Prescriptive Advice

The 3 Ps of mentoring – Adapted from the work of Ann Rolfe, who is internationally recognized specialist in mentoring and has published the series “Mentoring Works”. The three Ps in mentoring are:

Presumptions What we “know” may turn out to be an assumption, especially when we don’t have the full picture. So you may jump to a conclusion, and stop thinking about possibilities. Instead, the mentoring conversation aims at developing clarity and insight upon which the mentee can make informed decisions.

Predetermined Answers If you come into the conversation with the answer in your hands, you are blocking further learning and constraining creativity. Leave the solution out. The synergy of bouncing ideas off one another may produce a solution that neither would have come up with alone. This space is referred to as collaborative exploration.

Prescriptive Advice Lets be honest... nobody likes being told what to do. And, like the example I shared, it creates an imbalance in the relationship. Direction can be disempowering and can cause resistance – even if the mentee agrees!

Instead, use constructive input:

1. offering information rather than instruction;
2. developing options and choices and
3. facilitating decisions made by the mentee, themselves.

As a mentor... When you begin a mentoring conversation, you shouldn’t know where you are going. Trust the exploration process, and you will also discover more about yourself!

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction”

John C. Crosby

This leads me to my most profound mentoring experience.

It is in the relationships that were built through my work with the young men and women in the Saudi Aramco sponsored student programs.

Being in the midst of such energy and intelligence was an amazing privilege, that I strived to counter with every ounce of energy I had.

What I didn't expect was the fact that, like them, I was also transformed by the experience.

Reverse mentoring wasn't my goal, but it was certainly part of my destination!

It is a proud moment when I run into my former students. I still proudly continue in this mentor role, both formally (through the PDP program) and informally.

Through this experience, I learned that I had to rely on different methods of mentoring: Whether it was leveraging social media and technology, making myself available at all hours of the day and night (by the way.. college students keep the oddest hours!), enabling them to make mistakes without judgment, walking with them on their journey of discovery.



Through the experience I learned that an effective mentee needs to be:

1. Open to receiving feedback and advice from the mentor
2. Takes full responsibility for their development
3. Seeks challenges and new responsibilities
4. And, renegotiate the mentoring relationship when personal or professional needs change

One of my mentoring relationships is with a person that I have never met! We were introduced via email, by a mutual friend and colleague, and we have been following each others careers for the past 7 years.

1. Pushing each other,
2. offering a different perspective to each other, and
3. connecting one another through our professional network.

Today, technology enables us to find mentor/mentee matches, whether through the excellent "Mentors without Borders ~ Mentor Matching" program the EC&OS have adapted, or through larger professional networks like LinkedIn (for example).



Mentors come in all shapes and sizes...

And whether it is done face-to-face or virtually,
in groups or individually,
from the same org. or even globally:

Effective mentors work very hard to:

1. Encourage the exploration of ideas
2. Provide appropriate and timely advice
3. Maintain confidentiality
4. Help mentee to shift his/her mental context
5. Suggest appropriate Competency Development
6. Serve as a source of information and resource
7. Most of all... Allow the mentee to chart their destiny..

Managing diversity



As we expand into new areas, and as we begin to play in the global arena, a need for initiatives such as cross-cultural mentoring programs is expected.

Multi-generational employees that are currently in the workforce have different mentoring styles and expectations, as do women, who are playing a stronger role in executive management.

Much like Saudi Aramco, the best companies are responding to the workforce evolution that is happening today, by including and supporting both

1. formal mentoring programs (Talent Management, IDP, and On Boarding),
2. informal mentoring

I am part of a group of young women in the company who meet every month or so, and share some of our experiences and knowledge with each other.



So.. When we look back at our lives and reflect on everything, I hope we will not just judge ourselves by our professional accomplishments alone. Instead, I hope we will all look back at how much each and every one of us have enabled people to reach their destiny.

I leave you with the wise words of a global mentor, Mahatma Gandhi:

Carefully watch your thoughts, for they become your words. Manage and watch your words, for they will become your actions. Consider and judge your actions, for they have become your habits. Acknowledge and watch your habits, for they shall become your values. Understand and embrace your values, for they become your destiny.