'A GUIDE TO MENTORING STAFF',

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A Guide to Mentoring Staff

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Abstract

Most successful people have benefitted from 'mentoring', and the benefits (to an individual or a business) of mentoring are widely recognised.

The word 'mentoring' comes from a Greek word meaning 'enduring', and has its origins in Homer's poem, the Odyssey. Odysseus (Ulysses) entrusted Mentor (Athena, goddess of war and wisdom) with the care and education of his son, Telemachus. Thus, traditional mentoring emerged as a relationship with an older, wiser, and/or more experienced person. This person functions as a wise teacher and confidante, coaching, inspiring, protecting, and helping the mentee.

Last century, mentoring was usually carried out in business within a management chain, when someone in the chain acted as a mentor. Today, this 'chain' often does not exist, and true mentoring has slowly disappeared in many organisations.

Mentoring in the 21st century means giving 'wise counsel', and involves knowledge guidance and advice, based on experience. It can be used to develop, nurture and grow staff. It is as essential today as it was in the past, particularly in helping staff develop competencies, but many companies do not actively promote it, and many 'older, wiser' staff do not have the time to mentor. This is unfortunate… mentoring may be the best staff development tool we have.

This paper is a guide to mentoring. It explains the meaning of 'mentoring, 'mentor' and 'mentee', and shows that mentoring involves transferring knowledge. Mentoring relies on a mentor using his/her 'wisdom' to direct a mentee, and is focussed on the individual, not the task.

The paper ends by outlining a mentoring process for use in organisations.

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1.   Introduction

Businesses need competent people. Competence is a mix of skills, knowledge and experience; therefore, we make people competent, and maintain competence, by the transfer of skills and knowledge, combined with relevant experience.

We can transfer this knowledge through conventional methods such as training and on-the-job experience, but is there any need to change existing approaches, and how can it be changed?

A change is needed in many industries, where many older staff are retiring, and there is a need to rapidly transfer knowledge to new staff. The oil and gas industry is a good example: it has major challenges in the future with most centred on staffing numbers and competencies. Consider these facts [1]:

- 50% of the workforce is retiring in the next 5 to 7 years;
- for every two retirees, one new employee enters the workforce;
- 90% of oil and gas executives know that talent shortage is an issue.

These challenges particularly affect the oil-rich countries in the Middle East who, additionally have programs of 'workforce nationalization' due to the need to employ local people, increasing population, decreasing oil revenues, and the cost of expatriate workers. But demographics show these countries will have problems with workforce nationalisation. Consider Saudi Arabia [2]:

- the Kingdom has a population of 32 million, but 12 million are non-Saudis;
- 50% of the Saudis are <20 years of age.
- 75% of the Saudis are <40 years of age.

This means that developing a competent workforce of nationals will require intense staff development and training, and involve huge numbers of young nationals. This means rapid transfer of knowledge, on a huge scale.

How can we facilitate this knowledge transfer? Obviously, intense training courses and learning programs will be needed, but an additional and complimentary method is by 'mentoring'. Mentoring has always been focussed on transferring knowledge, but in recent years its potency has been forgotten. This is surprising, as we constantly hear about the importance of mentoring, and how successful people have benefitted from having 'mentors':

"*What do Larry Page [founder of Google], Steve Jobs [founder of Apple] and yours truly have in common? We've all received guidance from mentors. Yes – even the famously individually-minded Apple Founder got by with a little help, advice and support from time to time. No matter whom you are, where you've come from, or what you have achieved, a good mentor is an invaluable asset in business.*" Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Group, 1950 to present.

But… what is 'mentoring'?

1.1   Mentoring in the Past

The word 'mentoring' comes from a Greek word meaning 'enduring'. The traditional definition of mentorship comes from Homer's poem, the Odyssey. Odysseus (Ulysses) travelled the world for years at a time. He entrusted Mentor (Athena, goddess of war and wisdom, disguised as a man) with the care and education of his son, Telemachus.

Thus, traditional mentoring emerged as a relationship with an older, wiser and/or more experienced person. This person functions as a wise teacher and confidante, coaching, inspiring, protecting, and, helping the mentee to realise their aspirations and develop positive qualities.

Historically, mentoring in business has its roots in the craftsman-apprenticeship relationship. The artisans learnt everything through mentoring.

1.2   Mentoring Today

Last century, mentoring was usually carried out in business within a management chain: you had a 'father' as a line manager… and a 'grandfather' as your manager's manager. This male bias is a little non-pc, but that is how it was described. The grandfather was not directly involved with your line management. This meant that he/she could be a mentor. Today… this 'chain' often does not exist.

Mentoring has become a big issue in business this century [3], probably because it has been forgotten/stopped, but… mentoring is a tradition – it is not a new business tool! Before books, computers, etc., it was the only way to transfer knowledge….

This paper presents a simple guide on mentoring. Further guidance in given in Reference 4. It looks at the key elements of mentoring, how to mentor, and how to be both a good mentor and mentee.

2.   Mentors and Mentoring

A mentor can be viewed as a critical friend who oversees the development of a less experienced/knowledgeable person. This friendship is a very personal, trusting and caring relationship, outside a normal manager/subordinate relationship. The focus of the friendship is the mentee, not his/her job, or its tasks.

A mentor is usually someone who has already faced similar challenges to those awaiting the mentee. He/she may be working at a more senior role to the mentee, in the same profession, but this is not essential. The mentor should preferably be outside any current line management relationship.

The best mentor is a listener: mentees should always be encouraged to make their own decisions in life. The mentor lists and reflects, challenges, and helps with the decision, rather than constantly giving advice and direction.

Mentoring is usually a structured process, but does not need to be formal, as a key outcome of mentoring is helping individuals make important decisions.

Mentoring today is giving 'wise counsel', and involves knowledge guidance and advice, based on experience. It can be used to develop, nurture and grow staff. It is as essential today as it was in the past, particularly in helping staff develop competencies, but many companies do not actively promote it, and many 'older, wiser' staff do not have the time to mentor. This is unfortunate… it may be the best staff development tool we have [4].

2.1.   Mentoring is Support

Mentoring is a type of support – individuals in the workplace receive a variety of support, ranging from colleagues (peer support) to management (corporate support). Mentoring is probably the most complex of these support structures, and it can be a complex topic:

- Variation: it varies from one situation to another, and from one relationship to another; therefore, it is important to be clear about the purposes and goals of any specific mentoring. The goal is generally helping someone reach a target or aspiration that – on their own – they could not achieve in a reasonable time.
- Temporal: mentoring changes with time, as early mentoring will see a mentee being very dependent on the mentor, but time will gradually reduce this dependence. Mentoring has been considered to progress in phases [5]: initiation phase (learning to work together); cultivation phase (learning from the mentor); separation phase (gradually disconnection from the mentor); and, redefinition phase (a termination or a peer-like friendship characterized by mutual support and informal contact).
- Formality: some organisations have formal, structured mentoring programs, whereas others prefer a more informal approach.

- Voluntary: formal, structured mentoring implies an involuntary approach, whereas a voluntary approach allows a more relaxed relationship.
- Conflict: some mentoring systems have presumed that corporate interests must be considered in advising employees, but this can lead to conflict (e.g., if the mentee wants to leave the company), and can lead to mentors creating corporate clones.
- Set-up: mentoring is usually one-to-one support, but it can be conducted in groups, with multiple mentors and multiple mentees.

2.2.   Mentoring is Voluntary

Mentoring is a voluntary process: one person gives their time to help a mentee.

2.3.   Mentoring involves Knowledge Transfer

Mentoring is simple to visualise, and its purpose easy to understand, if we think of the objective of mentoring. Staff need to acquire information and knowledge to perform their tasks at work, and to develop as an individual. Training involves the transfer of data and information (which needs analytical skills to process), but not knowledge (which needs cognitive skills). Knowledge is '*information in action*': it can only be stored in the human brain (Figure 1) – we will cover this in more detail below. Hence, mentoring is how we transfer knowledge to staff: before books, computers, etc., it was the only way to transfer knowledge. No mentoring – no knowledge.

**Figure 1. Difference between Data, Information, and Knowledge**.
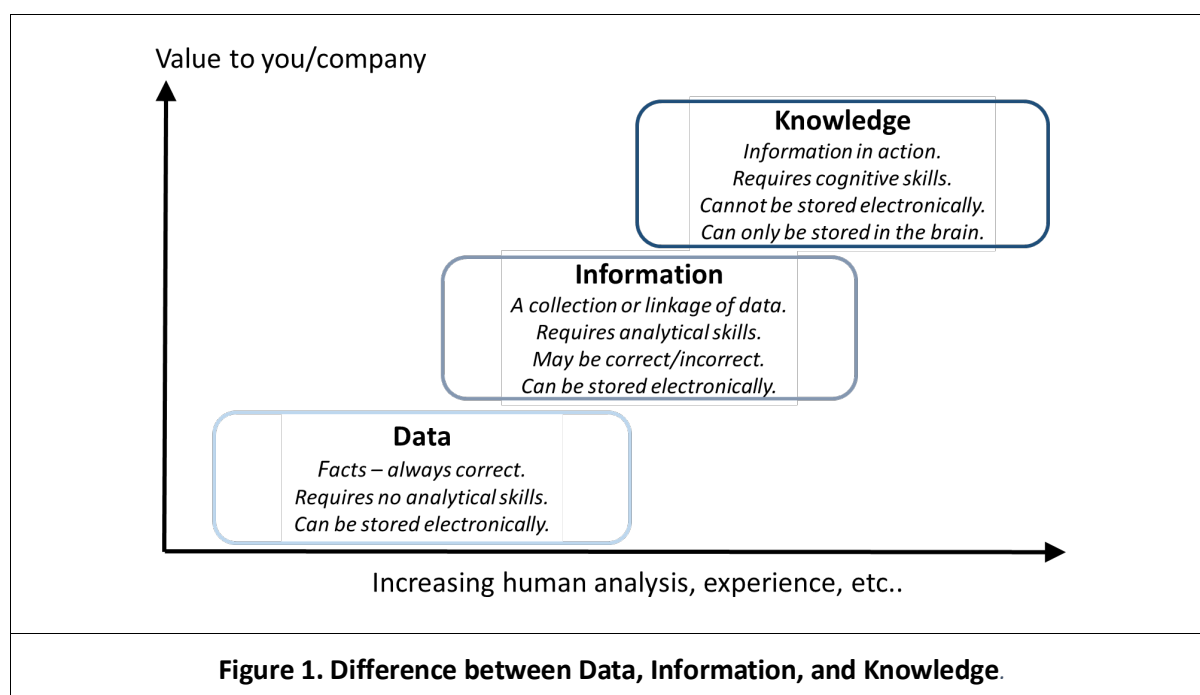
Another way to view knowledge is in terms of experience, Figure 1. Einstein (1879 – 1955) said: '*Information is not knowledge. The only source of knowledge is experience*'. This can be interpreted as saying knowledge is a combination of information and experience.

2.4.   Mentoring and Competence

This transfer of knowledge helps develop the mentee both as a member of staff and a person, but also helps develop his/her competencies. Competence is essential in all professions: it is obtained from gaining skills, acquiring knowledge, and experience [6,7,8]. It also requires personal 'values'. Competence is developed by:

- training (structured learning);
- mentoring (learning from others); and,
- experience.

But… which is the more important of these three elements? How important is mentoring compared to, say, training? Well, mentoring is very important, as it – surprisingly to many people – may contribute even more to competence than training, Figure 2 [9]. Unfortunately, many of our HR/Training/Talent Management departments fail to recognise its importance, probably because it is not understood. They may spend $millions on training their staff, but nothing on their mentoring….

Figure 2. Competency Building Blocks.
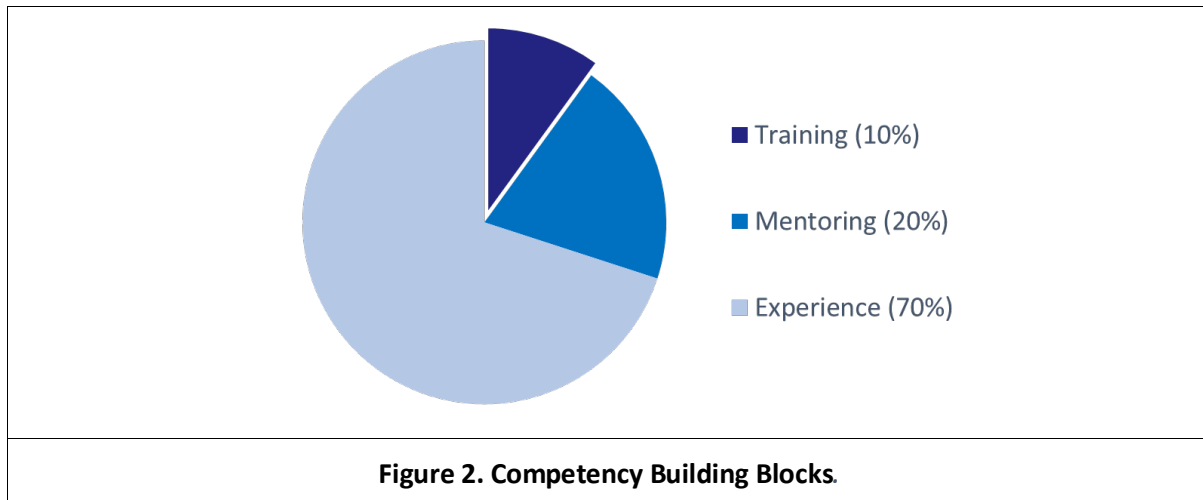
2.5.   Mentoring is not…

It is important to note that mentoring is not:

- parenting... ('*rearing children*')...
- managing... ('*control and command: overseeing the work of others*')...
- coaching... ('*focus on developing agreed skills*' – see later)...
- counselling… '*assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems*'.

Mentoring involves a… '*focus on the individual*'.

Mentoring is not about giving answers: it is about sharing experiences and knowledge. This creates new experiences.

Mentoring is not about the mentor telling everybody how brilliant he/she is. The best mentoring aims at inspiring the mentee, not boring them.

Mentoring is not a replacement for line management, appraisals, performance reviews, or any procedure such as a grievance.

Mentoring is not an event – it is a process [10, 11], starting with the cultivation of a relationship and building rapport, building trust, setting targets, direction, and monitoring progress, then slowly separating, as the relationship is redefined, and finally wind up the mentoring, and move on.

Finally, mentoring is not easy. The U.S. Department of Labor noted that [12]:

- mentoring is the most complex type of human interaction;
- it is more complex than teaching, counselling, supervising or coaching;
- it is complex, as it has to fulfil many functions within the mentoring relationship;
- few people can mentor, and the mentoring is not easy.

'*Effective mentoring can be learned, but not taught… Most [mentors]… learn to mentor by experimenting and analyzing success and failure*' [13].

3.   Mentoring is Good for Business

Mentoring has long been recognised as good business sense [14]; for example, a review of the effect of mentoring on business concluded [15] that entrepreneurs who received mentoring increased their revenue by an average of 106% whereas entrepreneurs who did not receive mentoring increased their revenue by an average of 14%. Additionally, 96% of executives view mentoring as an important development tool [16].

"I was fortunate enough, early in my career, I had a mentor… [who] saw a lot of potential in me that I did not see in myself… [he] gave me a lot of… advice I needed…". David Abney, CEO, UPS (2016).

"I think mentors are important and I don't think anybody makes it in the world without some form of mentorship. Nobody makes it alone…". Oprah Winfrey.

'An invaluable tool that many businesses should leverage in their path to success, mentoring turns today's talented individuals into tomorrow's pioneers'. Gazprom Energy, UK.

A word of warning… mentoring takes time, and time costs money. There are few good mentors available, and they are invariably valuable staff, whose time is in demand, so, mentoring is not cheap. Consequently, companies need to focus on selecting staff for a mentoring program who are likely to 'go the distance' (stay in the company for a reasonable time).

4.   Coaching versus Mentoring

Coaching is a one-to-one relationship, involving a series of conversations, just like mentoring. It may be confidential, but its main purpose is to identify opportunities for improved performance and practical ways forward. It is important [9]: '*A coach is someone who intervenes and is...designed to improve the performance of an individual in a specific task.*'

This is different from a mentor [9]: a mentor is a… *'... critical friend, or guide who is responsible for overseeing the career and development of another person outside the normal manager/subordinate relationship.*'

Coaching does transfer knowledge, but it has a fixed agenda, related to a task, with a clear outcome, usually short term, and focused on a competency, Table 1.

Coach	Mentor
Focus on the task	Focus on the individual
Focus on the present	Focus on progress
Usually short term	Usually longer term – sometimes for life
Explicit feedback	Intuitive feedback
Develops skills	Develops capabilities
Driven by coach	Driven by mentee/learner
Shows you where you went wrong	Helps you to work it out yourself
Gives you the right answer	Helps you reach the right answer

Table 1. Coach versus Mentor [9].

Mentoring does not have a fixed agenda, it is related to the development of an individual, without a variable outcome, is long term, and focused on the individual, Figure 3.

Figure 3. Coaching versus Mentoring.
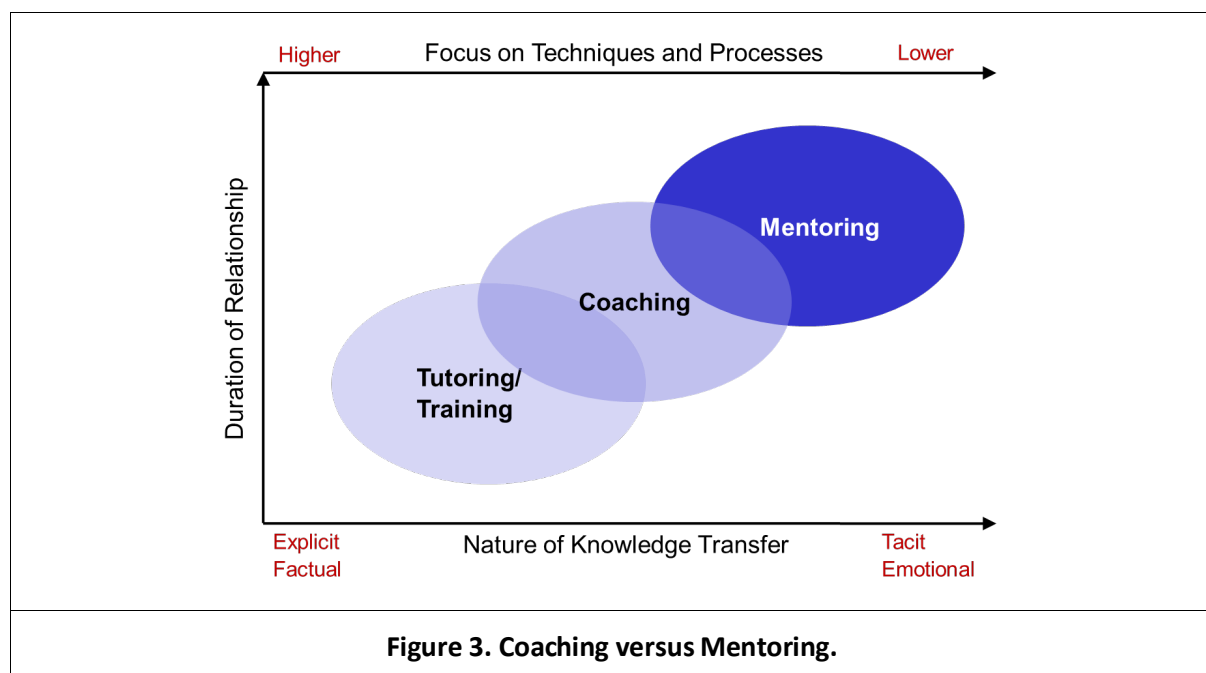
5.   The Mentee

The mentor is often described as a 'trusted counsellor or teacher' [10]. He/she needs to be intelligent, knowledgeable, and wise (more about 'wisdom' later). The mentor may be older or may be younger, but they need to have a certain expertise that develops the mentee, and have a greater wisdom.

The 'mentee' (the one who is being mentored) is sometimes called a 'protégé'. The word 'protégé' is from the French verb 'protogere', meaning 'to protect'.

There are many examples of mentors and mentees [10]:

- Socrates (philosopher, 470-399 BC), and Plato (philosopher and mathematician, 428-388 BC);
- Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and Van Gogh (1853-1890);
- Jay-Z (1969-) and Rhianna (1988-).

5.1.   What is the Mentee Looking for?

The mentee is looking for a mentor who:

- is honest (but honesty can hurt…);
- can be trusted;
- is confidential (allowing the mentee to show vulnerabilities);
- is accessible;
- is admired/respected;
- has the right expertise.

The mentor helps the mentee gain some of his/her knowledge; therefore, it involves a transfer of knowledge. Knowledge is transferred from the mentor (the 'provider') to the mentee (the 'seeker'). The provider must want to give, and the seeker must want to receive.

5.2.   The Benefit of One-2-One

Traditional mentoring involves two people, usually a senior member of staff and a junior member of staff, but there are other mentoring formats; for example:

- peer-to-peer (useful for new joiners; e.g. buddy systems where a newcomer is not too far behind the mentor); and,
- group (formally trained mentor, or a group of mentors, deal with groups).

One-2-one mentoring would be expected to yield the best results, but it is also the most expensive in terms of time and commitment. This expectation is supported by educationalists who have known for many years that this type of 'guided learning' is highly beneficial, and explains how successful people have benefitted from mentoring. Research shows that even average students can reach the top 2% of a class if they have a personal tutor that can adapt their teaching methods to the student's style of thinking and learning [17]. This benefit of one-2-one tutoring can be realised in mentoring, but the mentor has to analyse a mentee's learning abilities and preferences.

5.3. The Mentee needs Talents

To be a mentee you need to be:

- a listener;
- confidential;
- challenging (commitment not lip service);
- open;
- responsible and respectful;
- wants the company to do well;
- able to build trust and respect;
- learn quickly;
- knows it is your job, not the mentor's;
- aware you need to learn, and you are not 'there' yet;
- remain 'your own person'; and,
- conduct constant self-examination.

5.4. The Mentee is the Driver

The mentor does not drive the relationship – this is the mentee's responsibility. It is impossible for a mentor to know when advice and direction is needed. Mentoring does not have to be formal (e.g., a meeting every month), but it needs to be structured (objectives, timelines, etc.).

Mentoring can fail; for example, by:

- lack of participation by mentor or mentee;
- a 'forced' mentoring relationship;
- poor mentor/mentee;
- mismatch between mentor/mentee;
- underutilised staff recruited for mentoring duties;
- vague objectives;
- no leadership from the mentor;
- unrealistic expectations from the mentee;
- lack of drive from the mentee;
- over/under-management;
- not enough time allowed by organisation;
- staff who think they are 'wise' are often the least wise;
- mentee is over-confident about his/her abilities;
- mentor is patronising and/or out-of date;
- etc..

Mentoring is reserved only for those prepared to 'go the full distance': any mentee who is not willing to work with the mentor, and drive the relationship should not embark on a mentoring program.

5.5.   Part-time Helper not Full-time Counsellor

Mentors help individuals make important decisions; however, there are boundaries. Mentees should not become dependent on their mentor, and they need to make their own career decisions, and 'life' decisions – the mentor cannot be a full-time counsellor. The mentor does not act on behalf of the mentee: taking actions is the responsibility of the mentee.

Finally, a mentee should view a mentor as a 'learning facilitator', rather than the person with all the answers. Nobody has all the answers….

6.   Intelligence

What are we looking for in a mentor or a mentee? Many people would start by saying 'intelligence', and they would be correct, but…

Most people think they have above average intelligence. In the UK, only 2% of the population when asked: '*In general would you say that you are more intelligent, less intelligent or about the same intelligence as the average British person?*', thought they were less intelligent than the average [17].

'IQ' is only one measure of a person. And... intelligence is both 'impersonal and non-social' [18, 19]. There are other measures of intelligence [20]:

- EQ (Emotional Intelligence): being aware of your own feelings and those of others;
- BQ (Body Intelligence): what you know about your body, how you feel about it, and take care of it;
- MQ (Moral Intelligence): your integrity, responsibility, sympathy, and forgiveness.

Measuring a person's intelligence through a single measure (IQ) is clearly madness.

So, we must not simply look to intelligent people for knowledge. Similarly, we must not simply assume intelligent people will be the best mentors. Intelligent people can make stupid mistakes, because they are being measured on a very limited scale – intelligence. The people we are looking for are 'wise' people. These people have high quotients in intelligence, emotions, morality, etc..

7.   Wisdom

Wisdom has been studied for thousands of years [21]. It is traditionally associated with religion and philosophy, and is difficult to define. It is certainly an integration of knowledge, experience, and understanding that extends to tolerance, insight, virtue, compassion, etc. [22]. A good way to visualise how wisdom fits into data, information, and knowledge, is the 'data, information, knowledge. Pyramid' (DIKM), Figure 4 (cf. with Figure 2).

Figure 4. The 'DIKW' Pyramid.
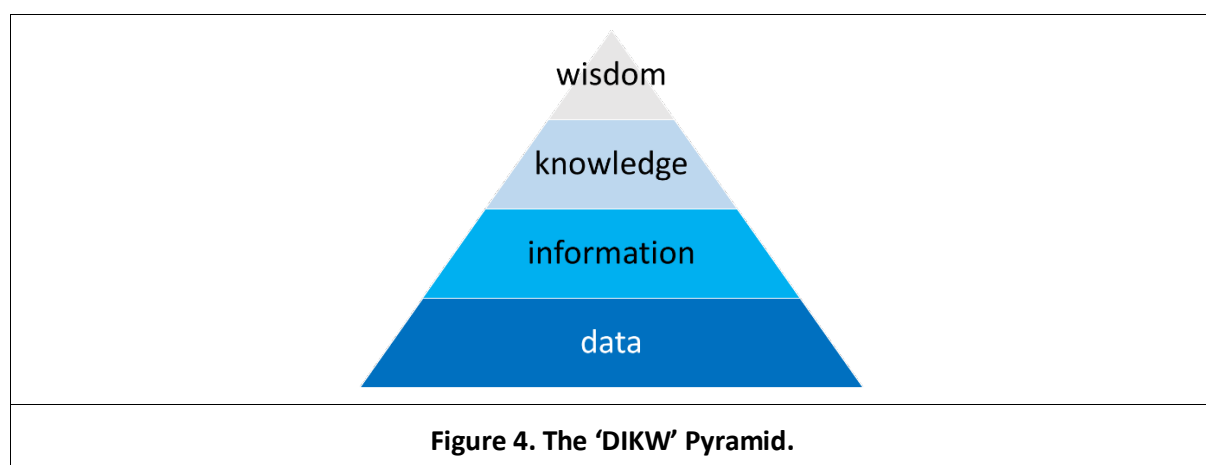
The mentor uses his/her 'wisdom' powers to facilitate a knowledge transfer from him/her to the mentee. Wisdom is using your knowledge in a correct and intelligent manner; for example, we all have the knowledge to manage money, but many of us can become bankrupt by making 'unwise' decisions. Wisdom captures values: the mentor bases his/her knowledge transfer on values. There is little to be gained by being mentored by someone with the wrong values: a young IT specialist could be mentored by an IT specialist, or by a hacker.

Hence, wisdom requires more than experience. It also needs values. Knowledge with values is wisdom. So... a mentor needs to be knowledgeable... and wise.

8.   Focus on the Mentor

Good mentors discover their own objectives, methods, and styles by mentoring. The process of developing effective methods of mentoring takes years, but this will allow a mentor to be many things [23]:

- career guide (development);
- information source (to meet expectations);
- friend (social interaction);
- intellectual guide (feedback, criticism).

8.1.   Focus

A mentor should focus on 'high level' knowledge transfer, for example:

- 'wisdom' (insights gained from his/her life and work experiences, including good and bad lessons learned);
- concepts (fundamentals and 'how things work'... 'tricks of the trade');
- best practices (how they were achieved, (resistance, how overcome, etc.); and.
- good contacts within the organization (e.g., decision-makers).

8.2.   Mentor Characteristics (Good and Bad)

A mentor can transfer many things to a mentee; for example:

- his/her expertise and life experiences;
- specific skills;
- advice on relationships, professional development, conflicts, etc.;
- advice on a company's values, ethics, etc.;
- a network of other mentors/contacts;
- different ideas, different people;
- share successes and failures;
- a unique, independent, and honest view on a mentee's career and development.

But this transfer can only occur in an environment of trust and confidentiality. The mentor must have characteristics that the mentee is looking for, otherwise all the above knowledge and wisdom cannot be transferred, Table 2.

Good	Bad
Wide and deep knowledge, and relevant experience	Limited knowledge and limited experience
Trustworthy and confidential and non-judgemental	Judgemental and a gossip
Empower mentee	Suppresses mentee
Mutual respect	Authoritative
Regular presence in the mentee's life	Does not meet mentee regularly
Good listening and teacher	Dominating exchanges
Focus on mentee's own needs rather than the wants/needs/values of the mentor	Tries to change mentee's behavior to match own values, etc..
Create a better mentee	Create a 'mini me'
Willing to invest time, and accessible	Always 'too busy', and rarely available
Get to know the mentee as a person (professional and personal focus)	Only interested in work elements (task focus)
Patient	Impatient
Can also coach	Can only coach

Table 2. Good and Bad Characteristics to look for in a Mentor.

8.3.   Finding a Mentor

Table 2 lists the characteristics needed in a mentor. This lists means there will be very few good mentors. Also, by definition, mentors are experienced, valued staff, so their time will be in great demand. This means very few staff will be able to be mentored.

Management, and the mentee, may have to convince a mentor to participate, which is not ideal, and the mentor may need to be incentivised, or hired specifically for that role.

9.   Mentoring in a Corporate Environment

How can we ensure mentoring is part of our company's culture? How can we introduce mentoring programs? First, we need to decide on a formal or informal programme.

Mentoring is usually a relationship between two people: this relationship can be formal or informal:

- A formal, structured programme, specifies the seeker (mentee), provider (mentor), and the knowledge (tasks) to be transferred. The seeker/provider relationship is not a personal one, as the transfer is bespoke and controlled. This relationship can be short term (say, one year) and ends when stated goals are met.

- Informal mentoring is more objective-driven ('career development'), than task-driven ('increase sales'). The relationship is long term, with outcomes that may be unknown, with only indirect organisational benefits. Mentors and mentees self-select, and there is no need for the mentor to be a specialist, but he/she must be admired and/or respected.

Short term, strategic knowledge transfer can be formal, as it is easy to define, and measure progress. This is more like coaching (see above). Longer term mentoring is more informal. Also, you need to match the mentoring to your company's culture. If it is a more formal culture, you will need to go more formal, and vice-versa.

It is better to establish a sequence of programs and organizational changes that support rather than force the mentoring process, rather than introduce a formal mentoring program [10].

But whatever the programme, the roles must be clear, and the benefits clearly identified. Also, it is best to focus on selecting staff for a mentoring programme who are likely to stay in the company for a reasonable time: this is for the benefit of both the mentee and the company.

9.1   Mentoring Objectives/Goals

Companies can initiate a mentoring program, but they need to be clear... why? What are the goals/objectives? For example:

- high retention rates?
- bed-in newcomers?
- increase specific skill levels?
- blend experience, knowledge, and values?
- developing individuals?
- develop minority groups?

Whatever the objectives, companies will need to produce a business case (plan, budget, and execution program). Even informal mentoring programmes will need some guidelines, with clear objectives and values.

9.2   Mentoring Process

The mentoring process in an organization needs structure. It starts with a high level champion/owner committing the process, and allocating a budget. It must have clear roles, objectives/goals, expectations, and benefits.

It is then important to set success factors/metrics, meeting types/schedules, and specify review, but avoid a rigid process and timetable.

When the program is underway, management must constantly commit to mentoring and allow time. Mentoring should not fail due to 'lack of time', as this is usually an excuse for not making mentoring a priority, poor time management. It is a failure of responsibility and accountability.

9.3   Mentoring and Competency Development

Staff will be developing competencies within some form of a 'Learning Program'. This program will involve a mix of educational, training, and work experience. The program will also require mentoring/coaching. Summarising, the learning program is made up of:

- training ('structured learning');
- mentoring ('directed (or 'guided') learning from others'); and,
- experience (practice).

There will be overlap in these three elements. The experience is achieved by a member of staff working in the competency area, under a competent line manager, who ensures suitable resources

to meet the competency needs, allowing the member of staff to work without any special supervision.

The mentoring (guidance on personal development) and coaching (guidance on technical development) is achieved by a member of staff working in the competency areas, receiving clear direction to develop the competencies. The mentor/coach must be demonstrably competent in the competency area. He/she sets learning goals and needs, and works with the line manager to ensure resources are available, and provides specific supervision.

A mentor sets the goals of the learning program, and will periodically check the implementation and progress of this program, and advise the member of staff and line management of any special coaching required for the member of staff to pass this program. The mentor either gives, or arranges, directed learning (coaching) in competence areas, where necessary, and validates all training, mentoring, and experience, and advises if the competency outcomes have been met, prior to any submission for a qualification in the competency.

10.   Summary

Mentoring is usually a structured (but can be informal) one-to-one relationship in which a mentor passes on skills, knowledge and advice to a mentee through example and dialogue. It relies on trust and mutual respect, and is reserved only for those prepared to 'go the full distance'.

We can simplify the stages of mentoring:

- Introduction:
    - o agreeing the 'chemistry' is right;
    - o setting targets and direction.
- Working together:
    - o establish 'style' or 'type' of mentoring;
    - o constant review.
- Closure.

Mentoring is not training or coaching. These are important tasks, with overlap with mentoring (Figure 3), but they are different. Mentoring is more personal, and aimed at exposing the mentee to wisdom, and allowing the mentee to be guided by this wisdom. This view of mentoring is shared by Maya Angelou, poet (1928 – 2012):

"*In order to be a mentor, and an effective one, one must care. You must care. You don't have to know how many square miles are in Idaho, you don't need to know what is the chemical makeup of chemistry, or of blood or water. Know what you know and care about the person, care about what you know and care about the person you're sharing with*."

Mentoring makes good business sense, but a mentoring program in an organisation will incur cost and planning [23]: '... *successful mentoring programs do not just happen*'.

Mentoring supports and encourages people to manage their own learning to [24]:

- improve their performance;
- maximise their potential; and,
- develop their skills.

Mentoring also helps on a corporate level by:

- helping new staff settle into a new company;
- facilitating better communications between different business units or management tiers; and,
- promoting/supporting/changing culture.

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The authors of this paper have had the pleasure of mentoring many staff, and have benefited from mentors. A key conclusion from these relationships is that a major benefit from mentoring, for the mentee, is that they have someone they can go to, who will give them honest answers to their questions, even when the answers are not what they want, or expect. Mentees have clear benefits from mentoring, but the benefits for mentors are not as clear or abundant. Consequently, mentors tend to pick people they like, and people who want to learn and progress: this is why the 'chemistry' between the mentor and mentee is so important, and why there are so few mentors.

11.   References

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