
Mentoring Relationships

An innovative series of three short plays brings to life the problems and benefits of creating and implementing mentoring relationships.

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Mentoring relationships are important in the workplace and can create better and more stable work environments. These relationships can be used to develop technical and managerial skills, to build self-esteem and self-confidence, and to help advance careers. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) published a mentoring guide for employers, mentors, and protégés (http://www.asce.org/files/pdf/Mentoring_04broch-split.pdf) that outlines roles and responsibilities for each party and provides general guidance on mentoring relationships and implementation steps. The rewards and experiences gained from successful mentoring relationships often continue throughout one's career.

Mentoring relationships, however, cannot be forced nor should they be trivialized due to lack of understanding. To facilitate this

idea, the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES) Engineering Management group co-sponsored a progressive dinner program with the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS-Boston) Program Committee in March 2003 that involved a series of three one-act plays aimed at raising awareness on some issues associated with different types of mentor-mentee relationships. These plays were modeled on courtroom cases wherein a character, Judge Jean, presided over each case. The individual skits were staged before each of three dinner courses (salad, entrée and dessert) and then assigned facilitators led roundtable discussions on some of the issues that were raised during each performance. After each food course and roundtable discussion, participants moved to a different assigned table in preparation for the next performance and follow-up roundtable discussion. Over the course of the evening, participants were seated with twenty-nine other professionals and were actively engaged in lively discussions on mentoring relationships.

What follows (on page 55) is the first play set in Judge Jean's mentoring courtroom, entitled, "The Grumpy Old Manager." In the second play, the judge heard from Paxton, who was enthusiastically providing unsolicited mentoring advice to the bright but unrefined and underachieving Pammy. In

addition to ruling that Pammy should return Paxton's scale, the judge suggested to Pammy that she could certainly benefit from a mentor. But the judge also instructed Paxton not to force a mentoring relationship on a colleague because successful ones form mutually and naturally. In the final case, Flannagan and his mentor, Wanda, argued their positions before the judge. Both of them have had a healthy mentoring relationship that has lasted fifteen years and several personal and professional transitions. In between sorting out a frivolous disagreement about a foosball game lunch bet, Wanda and Flannagan described the sup-

port and advice that and flow from mentor and mentee and how equally rewarding the relationship has been for the mentor as well.



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