

# mentoring

BY TRISH BROCK

## INVESTING IN YOUR DEALER'S CURRENT AND FUTURE SUCCESS

I recently had dinner with a long time friend who has enjoyed a very successful career in sales. She is consistently a top producer, is able to accomplish more in a 40 hour week than most people can do in 80 hours and has the ability to turn a very iffy prospect into a profitable and loyal customer. It's no wonder that her current company has asked her to "mentor" a younger colleague.

Over dinner, she shared the frustrations she was having in her "mentoring" role. She had spent weeks with the younger colleague, carefully telling him how she does everything down to how she organizes her files and her methods for finding new business.

The younger colleague listened and made notes, and then promptly went off and did things his own way. My friend was annoyed, feeling that she was wasting her time and efforts, and that her hard earned successes and valuable information were being ignored.

While the parties above were well intended and intuitively know that mentoring can have enormous benefits, it demonstrates how many companies haven't truly embraced the mentoring process or learned how to implement this valuable concept effectively.

### IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING

As noted in Harvard Business Essentials; Coaching and Mentoring, the benefits of mentoring to an organization are: 1. the development of human assets within the organization, 2. facilitating the transfer of important tacit knowledge from one set of employees to another, and 3. aids in the retention of valued employees.

The people, or human capital within your dealership, are walking around with a lot of accumulated information in their heads, which is often referred to as tacit knowledge.

Often when people leave an organization, so does that information

unless there is a purposeful channel to capture and transfer that information from one person to another.

When information and experiences are identified and shared, several things happen. Not only is the tacit information leveraged, the people who are designated to receive this information are essentially being told that they are valued and accepted by the group. A bond and sense of loyalty is established. Job satisfaction is enhanced which translates directly to employee retention and recruitment.

When done properly, mentoring promotes expanded and diverse perspectives.

### THE BENEFITS OF MENTORING

If the human and emotional discussion isn't evidence enough, then consider these statistical and economic facts regarding the benefits of mentoring:

#### Recruitment

- More than 60% of college and graduate students listed mentoring as a criterion for selecting an employer after graduation.

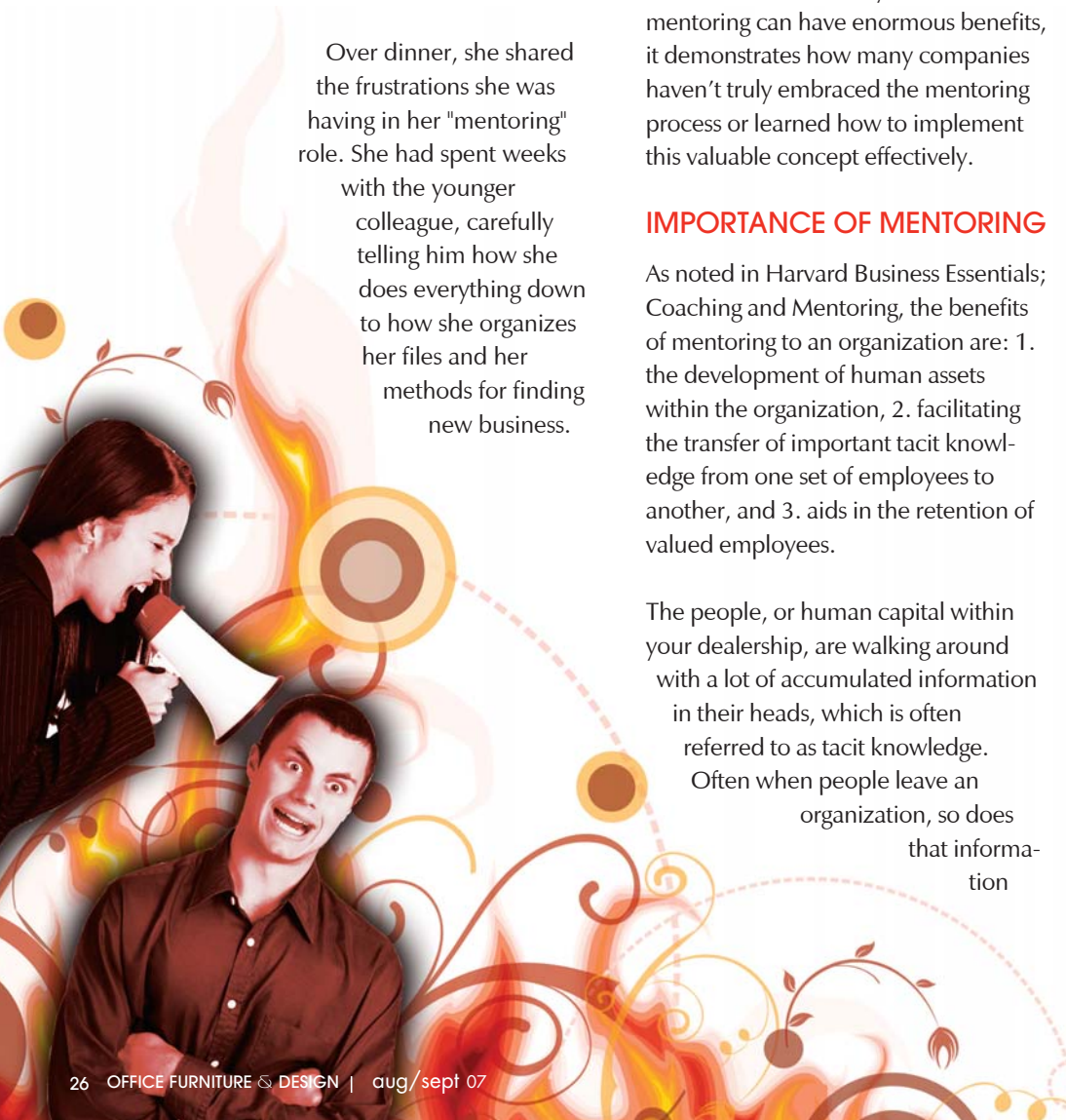
**Source:** study by The Managers' Mentors, Oakland, Calif. Spherion – reported in Barbian, 2002

#### Retention

- 35% of employees who do not receive regular mentoring look for another job within 12 months

**Source:** Emerging Workforce study by Spherion – reported in Barbian, 2002

- Sun Microsystems' research validates the positive impact mentoring has on employee retention. The study involved an



analysis of Sun's mentoring program, examining more than 1000 employees over a five year period. The results showed higher retention rates for both mentees (72%) and mentors (69%), when compared to the retention rates of non-participants (49%).

**Source:** Holincheck, 2006

### Productivity

- Managerial productivity increased by 88% when mentoring was involved, versus only a 24% increase with training alone.

**Source:** study by ASTD – reported in Barbia, 2002

- 95% of mentoring participants said the experience motivated them to do their very best.

**Source:** Michaels, Ed Handfield-Jones, Helen, Axelrod, Beth; 2001.

- Says a talent leader regarding mentoring, "This process is opening communication lines and creating development opportunities for senior mentees as well as young mentors."

**Source:** Kaye, and Jordan-Evans, 2003

### WHAT MENTORING IS NOT

Reflecting on dinner with my friend, it became clear to me that her frustrations were a result of ill-defined efforts and expectations on her part as well as her company's.

Often, people confuse mentoring with teaching or coaching. Because the mentor is usually very successful in their position, they want to teach the mentee how to be successful just like them. After all, if it worked for them, it will surely work for the mentee, right? Wrong.

Mentoring is not cloning. Nor is it about teaching, fixing the mentee's problems or directing their professional activities. It is not about telling, and often it is not about giving appropriate feedback. Mentoring is not even about giving advice.

The mentor is not responsible for the success or failure of the mentee – the mentee is.

### WHAT MENTORING IS

In short, a mentor's role is to help the mentee help themselves. It is to support and guide the personal and professional

growth of the mentee.

Mentoring is directed towards the development of the individual and their career – teaching is directed towards the competency of a job.

A mentor helps the mentee uncover their own unique talents and strengths and doesn't impose or compare them with their own. A mentor acts a bit like a safety net as the mentee learns to take risks.

A mentor can share stories of their successes and failures. Even more importantly, a good mentor will reveal their thinking, perspectives and actions that produced successful outcomes as well as those that failed. They share the experiences of "how" not just "what."


The mentor will share information, but not necessarily how it should be used. That is the choice of the mentee.

A mentor listens. And when the mentee asks for the answers, the mentor resists the temptation to solve the problem. Instead, the mentor will ask questions allowing the mentee to discover their own solutions.

Mentoring also means challenging the mentee, and promotes the exploration of multiple ways of solving problems while guiding a mentee in the process so that actionable steps can be initiated.

The mentor acts as a role model since the mentee will learn as much from how the mentor acts as from what they are told.

The mentor provides encouragement, and helps the mentee define their own values, personal and professional dreams and uncover talents not represented in their resume. The mentor also helps to uncover what really motivates the mentee and how



A mentor will get burned out if they don't have a good action plan to encourage the mentee.


that can be applied to their career growth.

A mentor will often provide introductions and connections, exposing the mentee to potential additional mentors.

A good mentor will ultimately put themselves out of the mentoring business by helping their mentees to fend for themselves.

### SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

Successful mentoring positions dealers for many positive outcomes. Mentees acquire skills, knowledge and business perspectives in an accelerated and relevant process. Tacit information is captured and retained. Mentees are better equipped to solve problems, perpetuate company values, learn winning behaviors as well as achieve greater career goals. They are often grateful for the experience and use this experience to make personal, as well as professional, long term contributions to their company.

Mentees are not the only ones who benefit from this relationship. When dealers are dedicated to the development of the people within the organization, the entire organization reaps the benefits of the investment in human capital. 

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