

Mentoring: An Investment in the Future

When Linda Phillips-Jones was in high school, her English and Speech teacher, Mr. Beatty, encouraged her to participate in school plays and enter speech contests. Mr. Beatty was not just acting as a teacher when he did this—he was acting as her mentor.

“The best thing he did was sit me down and say, ‘Linda you’re going to college,’” Phillips-Jones recalls. “My folks hadn’t been, so this was a life-changing conversation.”

Mr. Beatty, along with the others who mentored Linda Phillips-Jones when she was a teenager and young adult, did change her life. Phillips-Jones now holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of California at Los Angeles, is the author of *The New Mentors and Protégés*, and acts as the Principal Consultant at the Mentoring Group—a California-based organization dedicated to giving back.

“Our organization focuses almost on mentoring, and helping organizations as well as individuals develop expertise in mentoring,” says Phillips-Jones.

But mentoring is not just a business to Phillips-Jones, it’s a personal labor of love. “Since I teach and write for a living, I try to mentor at least two or three individuals at all times,” she says. “These are often aspiring writers or people going into the field of psychology.”

And even with all of her accomplishments, Linda Phillips-Jones still uses the expertise of mentors when she needs help. “I also seek mentoring when I’m trying to develop myself in a new area,” she adds.

This is because Phillips-Jones knows, from personal experience as a mentor and a mentee, the benefits of a mentoring relationship.

“Our research indicates that mentees gain new skills and knowledge, change their attitudes—such as developing self-confidence, find opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise have access to, and become inspired to mentor others later,” says Phillips-Jones.

Linda Phillips-Jones is living proof that this research finding is not just about crunching numbers and standard deviation. She received inspiration from her childhood mentors, and in return she has gone on to mentor others.

“I believe everyone who has succeeded has that responsibility [to mentor others]. Some will be better at it than others. That’s why mentors—and mentees, too—need training to do a good job,” says Phillips-Jones.

The Mentoring Group provides the training mentors need to ensure that they do a good job on behalf of their mentees.

Implementing an Effective Mentoring Program

“Mentoring, when it’s done well, can make a huge positive difference in changing the climate of the workplace,” says Linda Phillips-Jones. To that end, she advises employers on how to implement a mentoring program that will foster success, as well as improve a mentoring program that may not be working.

In “Getting a Mentoring Program off the Ground,” Phillips-Jones writes that there are five key considerations that an employer must think about when implementing a new program.

To ensure that a new mentoring program is successful, an organizer must:

- make sure that there is enough support from top executives and interest from prospective mentees;
- decide that the time is right for your company to create a mentoring program;
- determine if informal mentoring is taking place in the organization and if people are happy with it;
- create specific goals that you want for your mentoring effort to achieve; and
- ensure that your mentors and mentees have enough time to invest in their relationship.

Once an employer determines that a mentoring program can be implemented, Phillips-Jones suggests that a program organizer:

- start small with a target program that is likely to succeed. An example of this is a mentoring program for only new employees;
- create a task force made up of people who are also excited about mentoring; and
- get help and advice from people who have already created successful mentoring programs.

According to Linda Phillips-Jones, the more planning and thought you give to your mentoring program, the better. “Mentoring isn’t rocket science and yet it’s far more than common sense,” Phillips-Jones writes. “It’s better not to organize formalized mentoring unless you can do it right. You and I will kill an incredible concept if we contribute to giving mentoring a bad name.”

More information about mentoring can be found at www.mentoringgroup.com.

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What’s In It for Me: Reasons to Give Back Through Mentoring

Linda Phillips-Jones has been an advocate for mentoring for twenty-three years and has worked with countless mentors and mentees. While she has little difficulty in convincing mentees what they will get out of a mentoring program, it has been a tougher sell when it comes to convincing mentors to give their time.

In “Reasons to Be a Mentor,” Phillips-Jones writes: “Successful people are getting busier, and many aren’t sure they want to make time to serve as mentors.” But she points out that mentoring is not just a one-way street and there are several benefits that mentors enjoy including:

- **Learning:** “By serving as a mentor, you’ll learn from your mentees,” writes Phillips-Jones. “They’ll have knowledge you don’t have, maybe teach you a job-specific skill, and help you enhance your people-development skills.”
- **Giving back:** Phillips-Jones suggests that anyone who received the benefits of mentoring should consider the opportunity to “put something back in the pot.”
- **Recognition:** “You could receive recognition from peers and superiors,” says Phillips-Jones. “Being an effective people developer won’t go unrecognized.”
- **Increased productivity:** According to Phillips-Jones, through mentoring “you may get some extra work done. Within ethical limits, your mentees can work on your research, help with a project, or finish other work that remains undone.”
- **Personal validation:** “When you have a positive effect on your mentees, expect several positive feelings of pride, satisfaction, happiness, contentment, and excitement along with the enjoyable reactions that go with them.”
- **Helping your organization:** “Mentoring employees can help give your organization a recruitment edge, shorten learning curves, increase your mentees’ job satisfaction and loyalty, and improve productivity and quality.”
- **Random acts of senseless kindness:** “Taking the time to reach out to others, share your life’s wisdom, and convey your respect for them is probably the least expensive and most powerful way to change the world, one life at a time,” Phillips-Jones concludes.

Although people who have achieved success have busy schedules, it’s important for them to look back and remember where they once were. If you can remember the person who may have been instrumental in your success, then you know how important it is to give something back. Through mentoring, a successful businessperson can extend a hand to the future—which is the gift that keeps on giving.