



## *Special Report*

MENTORING & COACHING: ARE BOTH  
NECESSARY AND WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

**Frumi & Associates, LLC**  
**By Frumi Rachel Barr, PhD**

949-729-1577

[www.clarityandresults.com](http://www.clarityandresults.com)

cpacoach@frumi.com

# *Special Report*

## MENTORING AND COACHING: ARE BOTH NECESSARY AND WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

### **Introduction:**

Having both a mentoring and coaching program is a tremendous aid to the growth and sustainability of an accounting firm. Often the two are confused, and it is therefore the purpose of this paper to clarify the difference between coaching and mentoring and to suggest how to create successful programs.

### **Part 1: Mentoring**

#### **What is Mentoring?**

A mentor is a wise and trusted counselor and guide. In “traditional” corporations an executive or senior person is assigned a “high potential” to assist in his or her development. A Mentor has a body of knowledge that a Mentee would like to learn. In an accounting firm, information regarding technical matters and professional development are often transferred from Mentor to Mentee. Coaching within the context of a mentoring relationship has to do with the skill of helping an individual fill a particular knowledge gap by learning how to do things more effectively. While coaching is always a part of mentoring, coaching does not always involve mentoring.

#### **The Mentor and Mentee form a partnership in which:**

1. Learning is the fundamental process and primary purpose of mentoring. The most effective mentoring occurs when it is learner-centered. The learner (Mentee) plays an active role in the learning. The Mentor’s role is one of the “guide on the side.”
2. Self-learning is essential to the mentoring process. Without a Mentor’s commitment to personal learning, the potential effectiveness of the learning relationship is greatly reduced.
3. A four-phase process describes the mentoring process: Preparing, Negotiating, Enabling, and Closure.

#### **The Four Phases of the Mentoring Process**

**Phase 1: *Preparing*:** Due to the unique nature of each mentoring relationship, both Mentor and Mentee must prepare individually and in partnership. Mentors explore personal motivation and their readiness to be a mentor. They assess their mentoring skills to identify areas for their own learning and development. Clarity about both expectation and role is essential for establishing a productive mentoring relationship. Preparing is also a discovery process.

**Phase 2: *Negotiating*:** Negotiating is described as the “business phase” of the mentoring relationship - the time where mentoring partners come to agreement on learning goals and define the content and process of the relationship. It is not as simple as drawing up an agreement. A key part is the conversation that leads up to it, when the ground rules for moving the relationship forward are developed. The negotiating phase has more to do with creating a shared understanding about assumptions, expectations, goals, and needs than actually putting a formal agreement in writing. It also involves talking about some

of the “soft” issues in a relationship - topics like confidentiality, boundaries, and limits, which often are left out of mentoring conversations because the partners find these issues difficult to talk about. Finally, negotiating includes the “details”- when and how to meet, responsibilities, criteria for success, accountability, and bringing the relationship to closure are mutually articulated during this phase.

**Phase 3: *Enabling*:** This phase takes the longest to complete because it is the implementation phase of the learning relationship. It is a complex phase because although it offers the greatest opportunity for nurturing learning and development, the mentoring partners are also most vulnerable to myriad obstacles that can contribute to a derailment of the relationship. Even when goals are clearly articulated, the process well defined, and the milestones identified, every relationship must find its own path. The enabling phase is a process of path building: maintaining a sufficient level of trust to develop the quality of the mentoring relationship and promote learning. Effective communication is key. The Mentor’s role during this phase is to nurture the Mentee’s growth by establishing and maintaining an open and affirming learning climate and providing thoughtful, timely, candid, and constructive feedback.

**Phase 4: *Coming to Closure*:** This is an evolutionary process that has a beginning (establishing closure protocols when setting up a mentoring agreement), a middle (anticipating and addressing obstacles along the way), and an end (ensuring that there has been positive learning, no matter what the circumstances). All three components are necessary for satisfactory closure. Closure involves evaluating, acknowledging, and celebrating achievement of learning outcomes. It is beneficial for the Mentee, and for the Mentor.

### **Creating a Mentoring Program That Works**

In order to be successful it is crucial to create high expectations, set demanding goals and achieve excellent results on a consistent basis. We perform better if we know what is expected and when there is feedback and a means to measure success. Then rewards and compensation should then be in line with those.

Once you find qualified talent, it is a reward system, mentoring and coaching that will play a significant part in retaining your talent.

### **Why mentoring?**

- Initiate and orient new staff
- Develop high potential personnel
- Assist in succession planning
- Improve quality of life
- Training
- Avoid the “Culture of Fear” break out from being a subservient “student” and learn to speak up and ask questions.
- Create strong relationship with seasoned accountants

### **Goals of Mentoring**

- Training
- Performance feedback
- Short-term career advice
  - i. Passing exams
  - ii. Learning how to use all the tools
  - iii. Meeting the charge hours

- Long-term career advice
  - i. Are they getting diversity/sample of work?
- Personal Counseling
  - Address communication between necessary parties
  - Being an advocate for the mentee
  - Socialization
  - Understanding expectations

### **What Makes a Mentoring Program Successful?**

The ingredients for a successful mentoring program include the commitment of both the Mentor and Mentee to the relationship; accountability and follow-up to conversations; a mutual respect and adherence to boundaries; encouragement and personal guidance.

### **Types of Programs**

There are three types of mentoring programs:

- Situational (not formal) – the Firm Administrator should sit down with each and everybody in the firm once a quarter
- Informal – assigned/chosen mentors, expected to maintain regular contact. There is no reporting or monitoring
- Formal
  - i. Required, regular meetings – at least quarterly
  - ii. Checklists – for tracking and reporting – surveys assessing the mentoring
  - iii. Opportunity to change mentors, at least annually
  - iv. Details of meeting remain confidential

### **Mentor Responsibilities**

- React to needs of mentee
- Be available
- Allow them to vent
- Provide encouragement
- Teach new skills
- Listen with empathy
- Follow through on commitments
- Communicate often

### **Mentee Responsibilities**

- Be appreciative
- Welcome the interest and concern of your Mentor
- Take responsibility
- Communicate
- Initiate contact when needed
- Contribute ideas and solutions rather than presenting problems all the time
- Accept feedback

## **Part 2: Coaching**

### **What is coaching?**

Coaching is a collaborative process that integrates business and personal goals, building on individual strengths at the office and in home life. The process usually begins with an initial in-depth consultation with the CEO or managing partner to align coaching and firm goals before work with individuals or a team proceeds.

Coaching can also be one-on-one guidance and extended support for professional and personal growth and change. It recognizes that who one is as a person and as a professional are intricately linked. The work usually takes place on two levels concurrently – there is an underlying developmental plan as well as conversations which take place in real time to support an individual through a crisis or a hiccup on their path. It is designed to ensure lasting change and promote continuous growth. Coaching deals specifically with performance enhancement, self-observation and self-correction in order to make the changes sustainable.

### **Creating a coaching culture**

Creating a coaching culture provides an environment in which objective assessments and candid feedback are seen as essential to personal development. We all know that supervisors and managers of all ranks generally don't provide such feedback to subordinates. Staff often has no idea what is really expected of them and what they need to do in order to be successful. Why don't managers provide consistent candid feedback? Candor generates emotion, and emotion can be very uncomfortable. An environment for safe feedback needs to be created and the skills to do so are skills that can be taught.

Unlike most business processes coaching engages with people in ways that acknowledge and honor their individuality. It helps people know themselves better, live more consciously, and contribute more richly. The essentially human nature of coaching is what makes it work and it is also what makes it nearly impossible to quantify.

While strategic retreats are now common for companies to re-evaluate their vision, mission and strategic plans, it is curious how many smart, highly motivated, and apparently responsible people rarely pause to do the same for their own lives. Often more inclined to stay in action than to reflect deeply, executives and professionals may reach the top ranks without addressing their limitations or what “gets in their way”. Coaching encourages them to slow down, gain awareness, and notice the effects of their words and actions. That enables “coachees” to perceive conscious choices rather than simply react to events; and ultimately, coaching can empower them to assume responsibility for their impact on the people they interact with.

In addition to creating self-awareness, coaching is a form of active learning that transfers essential communication and relationship skills. Strategic coaching should integrate personal development and the needs of the firm. This approach can help partners adapt to new responsibilities, reduce destructive behaviors, improve retention with a perceived perk, enhance teamwork, align individuals to collective goals, facilitate succession, and support growth and change.

### **Key Benefits of Customized Coaching Programs**

#### Attraction of talent:

- Attracting the best talent is the first step to ensuring the success of firms or organizations

- An effective employer branding strategy encompasses a wide range of Human Resources and coaching elements, including:
  - Reward and recognition
  - Internal communication
  - Goal setting
  - Work practices
  - Career development
  - Working environment
  - The values and ethics of the organization
  - Mentoring

#### Retention

- Retention of excellent employees is one of the most important challenges in organizations today. Key employee retention is critical to the long term health and success of professional firms and businesses in general.
- Retaining your best employees ensures customer satisfaction, client retention, satisfied coworkers and reporting staff, effective succession planning and deeply imbedded organizational knowledge and learning.
- Talent retention depends on how well a firm or organization implements the promises of the attraction strategy mentioned above.

#### Reducing burnout

- When people are aligned with what they do, they will achieve extraordinary results.
- Increased productivity and performance is the result of changing some behaviors of successful people through the coaching process. Coaching creates a higher level of self-awareness which promotes course correction.
- Clarifying what's important, recognizing and supporting the whole person and continually experimenting with the way work is being done are three elements which reduce burnout and lead to greater job satisfaction. Coaching assists people in making the changes that can help create the work and life environment they can thrive in.

#### Exposing systems issues

- Often companies are built, much like a house, on a foundation that supports only a couple of stories. As the firm grows, the foundation struggles under what has now become a 15 story building.
- Through coaching conversations, what may have appeared as a communication breakdown or conflict among employees is exposed as a systems issues.

### **Coaching leads to many positive outcomes**

*For individual employees, coaching:*

- Leads to breakthroughs on personal bottlenecks that limit performance.
- Brings performance to its highest capacity.
- Helps employees understand the intersection between themselves and their jobs.
- Creates enormous gains in emotional intelligence and effectiveness in people's entire interpersonal domain.

*At the company or firm level:*

- Problems are no longer tolerated, covered up and allowed to snowball.
- The level of trust and motivation rises.
- People get better at telling the truth.
- Coaching removes barriers to people's performance.
- Performance of the management team improves dramatically.

Three conditions must exist before any company can realize the benefits of coaching.

1. Coaching must be introduced as a developmental, not as a deficit or fix-it, tool.
2. Confidentiality must be respected in all coaching situations.
3. Coaching must be voluntary.

### **How is coaching delivered?**

Programs are tailored to the individual needs of firms in alignment with their size and stage of growth and maturity.

The following elements are commonly incorporated into our programs:

- A climate assessment or discovery process is explored first to understand the firm's needs.
- Assessments are utilized to create a development plan for each individual involved. Coaching then creates the environment for the development plan to be implemented.
- A series of exercises helps individuals or teams develop and articulate a vision and establish their personal and professional goals.
- Once goals are in place, clients pursue individualized strategies to increase self-awareness and build skills that draw on their personal and professional strengths. Considerable emphasis is placed on both action planning and achieving measurable results linked to identified business objectives.
- Coaching sessions take place on a one-to-one basis every two weeks, either in-person or by telephone. In addition the coach is available by email and phone calls to support the just-in-time development of the coachees.
- For maximum results coaching programs extend for a period of 6 months to 1 year.

### **The ROI of Coaching**

A study by Manchester Inc. showed that coaching programs delivered an average return on investment of 5.7 times the initial investment in a typical executive coaching assignment.

A study by Kotter and Heskett (1992) showed the following:

#### **Performance Measure (over an eleven-year period)**

	Organizations with Performance - Enhancing Cultures	Organizations without Performance - Enhancing Cultures
Revenue Growth	682%	166%
Employment Growth	282%	36%
Stock-Price Growth	901%	74%
Net - Income Growth	756%	1%

### **Summing up the differences between Coaching and Mentoring**

The key distinction between mentoring and coaching can be thought of as follows. Mentoring is the *transference* of information from the person who has it, to the person desiring the information. Coaching is a *development* process defined by the specific needs of the person being coached.

When considering the value of both programs, if your firm is like many others, you will find that many of your partners have the technical skills to impart. How many of them would you recommend to coach others in communication and interpersonal relationships? The answer to that question suggests that the same people may not be qualified for both purposes.

### **About the Author:**

#### **Frumi Rachel Barr, Ph.D.**

Frumi is an experienced business advisor, mentor and coach. She has a passion for working with decision makers in companies and professional firms where she specializes in accelerating business results and resolving the people issues that may limit their success.

Frumi has had a distinguished career history as an entrepreneur and financial executive. Her experience and expertise as both a CEO and a CFO has allowed her to provide responsive and collaborative support to executives in a wide array of companies and industries, including manufacturing, service industries and direct marketing.

Frumi's clients say that she is a positive catalyst for the changes that increase performance, profitability and life satisfaction. Clients appreciate her unique blend of practical, theoretical and communications/strategic skills that makes the work Frumi does unique among business advisors and coaches. They say that the motivation and inspiration she provides makes a difference in their lives and in the results they achieve.

Frumi also serves as a PAC leader for the Presidents Advisory Committee. In this capacity she creates, facilitates and coaches CEOs in a peer roundtable format in order to foster and support development of each others companies.

