

Surprising Benefits of Being a Mentor

While most are aware of the numerous [benefits of mentor programs](#), such as gaining a clearer understanding of professional goals, improving skill sets, and building stronger professional networks, the common perception is that mentees receive more from mentoring relationships than their mentors. The goal of most mentor programs is to help companies develop their future leaders and keep their top performers engaged. But mentees are not the only ones who grow and benefit from these types of programs. The wonderful reality is that mentors have as much to gain as their mentees.

[Mentor Scout](#), a division of Nobscot Corporation, recently sponsored a webinar, “The Secrets for Successful Mentoring Relationships: Discussion Panel of Award Winning Mentor-Mentee Pairs,” which featured the reigning 2011 Mentor of the Year winner, Shirley Erlbacher, and two of the honorable mention mentors, Patricia Heffernan and Frank Rogan. The immediate and lasting effects of being in the mentor role were significant and unexpected, even for these seasoned professionals who hold major leadership roles in top organizations. In fact, all three discovered that the mentorship gave them refreshing outlooks on their own professional careers, as well as many other surprising benefits.

Being a Mentor Allows You to Self-Reflect

Erlbacher, Heffernan and Rogan, initially volunteered as mentors because they wanted to “give back” and help junior employees with their professional growth. None of them expected that helping their mentees work through situations and challenges would give them opportunities to look back on their own professional experiences and decisions, including both successes and mistakes. According to Ms. Heffernan, the mentorship brought back memories of lessons learned long ago, some that she had forgotten. Ms. Erlbacher noted that the mentorship allowed her to “self-reflect on the choices I’ve made in my own career – good, bad or indifferent,” in order for her mentee to learn from her experiences.

Being a Mentor Gives You a Break

While many potential mentors have inhibitions about volunteering because they believe mentoring is a large time commitment, the top mentors on the webinar panel actually found that mentoring gave them a much needed break from the stresses of their own positions. When Ms. Heffernan met with her mentee, she observed, “I can just stop thinking about all my responsibilities and problems to chew on the issue she’s talking about.” It gave her the chance to have a glimpse into a whole other world – one in which she didn’t have responsibilities and stresses. In fact, the mentorship often gave her a “fun” break from her regular duties, as it featured many opportunities to be creative and brainstorm the challenges and issues her mentee was experiencing.

Being a Mentor Improves You

It is widely confirmed that working with a mentee can help sharpen a mentor's own skill sets, such as with modern technological tools. However, there are many other surprising ways a mentor may improve through a mentorship. Mr. Rogan said that mentor-mentee relationship is a paradox - "In the relationship, you get away from yourself by focusing on somebody else, but you get a deeper understanding of yourself." Ms. Heffernan recalled that when she was giving her mentee advice, she thought, "You better listen to what you're telling her and do it yourself."

Being a Mentor Makes You a Better Manager

As in many mentor programs, the winning participants were matched up with people they did not work with on a regular, daily basis. However, the lessons learned by the mentors actually helped them with their own direct reports and junior personnel. "In the end, it (the mentorship) really made me a better person, better manager and a better leader of people," said Ms. Erlbacher of the mentorship. While Mr. Rogan's mentee worked three hours away in a different office, he believes the mentorship helped him better understand his own junior staff members, including what they go through and think throughout the workday.

Being a Mentor Makes You Feel Good

Everyone is familiar with the phrase, "It is better to give than receive," and giving their time and energy to the mentor relationship was both professionally and personally fulfilling for Erlbacher, Heffernan and Rogan. It allowed Ms. Erlbacher the opportunity to reflect on all the things she has in own her professional and personal life, and she believes that she values them even more after the mentorship. Ms. Heffernan summed it up with, "I ended up with a good feeling at the end of the day," which is extremely beneficial and important when you have a stressful position or workplace.

The mentors featured in the webinar were part of mentoring programs supported by [Mentor Scout](#) software, which was created to improve the efficiency and automation of corporate and association mentoring programs. Initially a platform to help [match mentors and mentees](#), the program has grown to include a full mentoring administration system for both self-match and administrative-match employee/member mentoring programs. Mentor Scout is a wholly owned division of Nobscot Corporation, the global leader in web-based exit interview management software and systems.

For more information on this webinar and Nobscot products, please contact our friendly mentoring, new hire and exit interview experts at 888-662-7444 and visit us on the web at <http://www.mentorscout.com>.

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