



PEREZ-LLORCA

**IBA Joint Session on Mentoring and
Developing the Skills of Young Lawyers**

Constanza Vergara Jaakkola

9 October 2009

Etymological origin of the current concept of mentoring – one of the stories

- In *The Odyssey* by Homer, Mentor is the name of the person to whom Ulysses entrusts the care of his son, Telemachus, when he sets out for the Trojan War.
- Ulysses chooses Mentor due to his wisdom, soberness and loyalty.
- In recent years, especially in the management and human resources field, Mentor's name has become a shorthand term for a wise and trusted counselor and teacher.
- Mentoring refers to the process whereby one person acts as mentor to another, the mentee.

The practical meaning of mentoring

- Mentoring is:

“An employee training system under which a senior or more experienced individual (the mentor) is assigned to act as an advisor, counselor, or guide to a junior or trainee. The mentor is responsible for providing support to, and feedback on, the individual in his or her charge.” - BusinessDictionary.com
- Mentoring is NOT:
 - Solving the mentee’s problems.
 - Teaching, but stimulating and advising during the learning cycle.
 - Just acquiring knowledge or theory, but learning by practising.
 - Transferring responsibilities, but rather sharing them.
 - Something recently invented; it is an ancient technique to stimulate the learning process recycled to meet today’s needs.
 - Pushing the mentee to adopt the mentor’s precise style or follow in his/her footsteps, but promoting intentional learning.

Mentoring vs. Coaching

- Every mentor is a coach, but not every coach is a mentor.

	Coaching	Mentoring
Type	Formal	Formal or Informal
Function	Develops competencies the person already has.	Retains and develops the talent within the organization.
Addressed for	Everybody	High potential employees
Goal	Improves the performance	Develops skills
Duration	Short term	Long term

Some types of mentoring

1. INFORMAL - Without procedures or methodology involved.

An individual chooses another one with more experience whom he/she can ask for support or guidance, building an informal relationship. Alternatively, someone with more seniority may see a special talent in another and may choose to be a guide and a help in their development to get the best out of them.

2. FORMAL - A structured and planned process implemented in an organization and supervised by a coordinator.

This coordinator is key, since he/she defines the process, its developmental evolution and performance. Mentors are trained to perform efficiently in skills such as: assertiveness, active listening, feedback, team management and motivation techniques.

Some types of mentoring

3. FROM EQUAL TO EQUAL – A mutual advising between people at the same hierarchic and seniority level.

The learning process is reciprocal, and the mentor's as well and mentee's roles are flexible and interchangeable. Both parties must know that they play on equal terms, that help is reciprocal and that they complement each other.

4. MULTIPLE or NETWORKING - No structured process.

There is a network of mentors or potential mentors within the organization, to whom young lawyers can turn to when they need guidance (e.g. virtual platforms, etc.).

The importance of mentoring in the law sector

- For law firms, it is more and more common to hire recent graduates so that they can build and develop their careers at that particular Firm, if they wish to do so.
- When these new hires join the Firm, this is usually their first professional experience. That means that they may lack certain professional skills and knowledge that, though acceptable in class, may not be appropriate for the job.
- Since their first year at the Firm, young lawyers deal with confidential information, which requires a high dose of responsibility.
- It becomes a need then that a mentor guides them through the process



Developing the mentoring relationship

Step 1. Recruiting, what we look for in young lawyers

- **The Mentee's Profile**

A matter of attitude defined by:

- Openness:
 - Honest self-criticism to understand strengths and weaknesses
 - Listen and understand the feedback given by the mentor as constructive criticism – a critical skill
 - Learn and manage your own knowledge
- Proactivity:
 - Assume responsibility for your own learning process, clearing doubts, proposing ideas, etc.
- Motivation:
 - Enthusiasm about the whole experience

Step 1...

Other Academic Requirements according to the position they are recruited for: e.g. degree in law, solid student records, languages, etc.

- **Involvement**

The whole organization must be involved in the recruiting process: HR, lawyers and partners.

Developing the mentoring relationship

Step 2. The mentor's profile, how a mentor should be

SOME TIPS:

- **Empathic:** he/she must be able to put him/herself in the mentee's position to understand his/her perspective and needs.
- **Communication skills:** he/she must be able to listen to and communicate effectively.
- **Assertive:** he/she must transfer not only knowledge but also constructive feedback concerning the mentee's performance.
- **Approachable:** the mentees must feel comfortable asking questions.

Step 2...

- **Technical profile:**
 - demonstrates solid or superior achievement
 - sets high standards for him/herself and others
 - enjoys and is enthusiastic about his/her field
 - continually brings up to date his/her knowledge in the field
 - recognizes excellence in others and encourages it
 - enjoys intellectual engagement and likes to help others
 - global vision

Developing the mentoring relationship

Step 3. Matching mentors with mentees

Finally the junior lawyers join the Firm...and WHAT'S NEXT?

- The welcome pack (introductory pack to the daily life of the office)
- The beginning of the mentoring process: matching mentors with mentees
 - Main criteria: law field, expertise of mentor.
 - Tips for a successful relationship:
 - How to listen:
 - » Passive listening: the other person needs to vent frustration
 - » Active listening: involves verbal feedback (e.g. rephrasing the other's ideas in your own words).

Step 3...

- What to listen to:
 - » What is NOT said (non verbal communication)
 - » HOW something is said
- Counseling: helping someone look at a situation globally, and letting them decide the best option for them. **NOT telling them what to do.**
- Referral Agent: do not get too involved in personal matters. If your mentee comes with a personal problem, be supportive, but refer them to someone more appropriate. **Know the limits.**

What to expect of the mentoring relationship

Role of the mentor as “the learning leader”

- Promoting intentional learning: leads the mentee through problem solving processes, helping to identify problems and solutions.
- Shares “know how“ by talking about both positive and negative experiences: this way the mentee will know which ways lead to success and which ones to failure.
- Creates a positive counseling relationship and climate of open communication.
- Offers constructive feedback in a supportive way.
- Asks for feedback from the mentee.
- Refers the mentee to other business associates.

What to expect of the mentoring relationship Role of the mentor as “the learning leader” (II)

Being a good lawyer requires a combination of skills. The main skills a mentor must teach a young lawyer are:

- Ability to prioritize.
- Client (internal and external) development. Business-oriented attitude.
- Learn how to manage the pressure.
- Global vision: gradually help to evolve in this way.
- Looking ahead: considering long term consequences (not short term).
- Networking: its importance in the business development.
- Providing good representation, meticulous care of the image (personal image, documents, behaviour, etc.).
- Exercising judgement.

What to expect of the mentoring relationship

Role of the mentee

- The mentee is expected to show interest by guiding the meetings with the mentor, pointing out the questions he/she may have for the mentor to comment on.
- It is the mentee's responsibility to make the most of the opportunities shown in the process and use the connections given.
- Get involved.
- Develop meaningful relationships.
- Evolve and improve performance.

What to expect of the mentoring relationship

Benefits of the mentoring relationship

- For the **mentees**:
 - Develop their strengths and get the best out of their potential.
 - Feel and be in control of their own future.
- For the **law Firm**:
 - Shorten the learning cycle, consequently the productivity rises.
 - Retain and increase the knowledge and skills of talented employees.
 - Improve employee retention and job satisfaction.

PEREZ-LLORCA