

BY NOREEN E. CALDERBANK, P.ENG.

My first experience with mentoring, beyond my older siblings, was with a friend of the family. This friend took me under her wing and used her connections to put me in front of an engineering company vice-president—a tremendous boost to my early career as a fledgling engineering graduate.

In mentoring circles, the relationship I have described would be termed informal. Informal mentoring relationships are loosely structured and return on investment (ROI) is rarely a factor.

Formal mentoring, on the other hand, is a more structured scenario and is fast becoming a fixture in the corporate world. Why are corporations so excited about mentoring? The bottom line. Properly run, formal mentoring programs result in a net positive ROI, which is linked to increased productivity, employee retention, improved morale and succession planning.

Some experts in the field favour formal mentoring for its inclusivity and measurability. Most employees within an organization with such a mentoring program are aware of its existence and can choose to sign up. Benefiting from this proven tool for success does not depend on having the right chemistry; rather, it depends on an individual's motivation. With formal mentoring, parameters are defined, objectives are clearly stated and mechanisms for evaluation, on both an individual and overall basis, are established. A means of measuring success, therefore, is built in.

Over the past year, I've been responsible for developing a mentoring program for PEO's engineering interns (EITs) on their path to becoming licensed professional engineers. Our research led my assistant, Margaret Walcott, and me into helping to establish a new group, the Mentoring Community of Practitioners (MCOP). MCOP includes many of the mentoring programs throughout Toronto, and has become a great source of ideas, encouragement and connection to international

An evolution in mentoring

Mentoring is a crucial part of encouraging young engineering graduates on their path to a P.Eng. With a successful pilot mentoring program for EITs already under its belt, PEO embarks on a province-wide mentoring program for engineering interns.

leaders in the field. Here are several of the programs administered by members of MCOP.

Hospital Mentors for Foreign Trained Professionals Project

In May 2000, the Inner City Health Program at St. Michael's Hospital introduced a first-of-its-kind program in Canada—a mentoring model for internationally trained professionals. Organizers of the pilot project worked with community partners to develop a program where mentors were matched with protégés of the same profession who, despite being highly skilled, had experienced difficulty finding employment in Canada.

The Hospital Mentors for Foreign Trained Professionals Project gained instant popularity and grew when the hospital released *Making Connections: A New Model of Mentoring for Internationally-Trained Professionals*, a manual designed to help other organizations benefit from mentoring. St. Michael's Hospital now boasts 80 matches, 70 per cent of which have resulted in full-time employment, further education, or a more defined career path.

Traditional Mentors

The International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) Program at the University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy helps internationally trained pharmacists obtain their licence to practise in Ontario, in part, through a well-established mentorship network. Since the fall of 2002, nearly 100 pharmacists from across Ontario have been trained at Traditional Mentors (TM), where volunteer licensed pharmacists act as non-judgmental listeners and guides for IPGs.

A challenge was to find a way to enhance the experience of IPG students before classes began, since program officials found that many IPGs were not familiar with Canadian pharmacy practice and had difficulty once they began their classes and lab work. So, in April 2004, 11 TMs stepped forward to become "enhanced mentors" (EMs) and allowed IPG students to make visits to their community pharmacies to observe their practices. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

CanadaInfoNet

CanadaInfoNet.org is an online, interactive, mentoring forum that matches newcomers with successful professionals, and business and trades people who are willing to help them overcome the challenges faced during their transition to Canadian life. The site was launched in January 2002 by JVS Toronto, a non-profit, non-sectarian organization that partners with the government, and not-for-profit and business sectors to assist immigrants in becoming job ready and easing their transition to life in Canada.

Mentoring Partnership

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) is a multi-stakeholder initiative working to break down labour market barriers skilled immigrants face. TRIEC's Mentoring Partnership, launching this fall, is one avenue. While mentoring programs have traditionally partnered a more experienced person with one less experienced, Mentoring Partnership expands this notion by matching people along occupation-specific lines between workforce-ready under- or unemployed immigrants and their employed counterparts.

TRIEC's program consists of a network of agencies in Toronto and York and Peel regions to make mentoring more accessible to skilled immigrants. TRIEC is working with strategic partners, including employers, professional associations and occupational regulatory bodies, to recruit mentors. The Mentoring Partnership has a goal of 1000 mentoring matches for the first year.

CPAC Mentoring Program

With 18,000 members, the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada (CPAC) is the largest organization of immigrant professionals in Canada. The majority of CPAC members are internationally educated professionals (IEP). All CPAC members have university degrees and one third of them have postgraduate degrees. Yet, over 20 per cent of the members are unemployed and 40 per cent are working in unrelated fields. CPAC's mentoring program is designed to help its members with their career growth and professional employment and will target unemployed or underemployed IEPs who have been in Canada for fewer than five years.

CPAC is recruiting mentors from its membership and the community. Preferred mentors will have backgrounds in engineering, IT, accounting and medicine.

Mentoring for Employment Program

Skills for Change pioneered the Mentoring for Employment Program in 1993 and remains a leader in mentoring internationally trained professionals. This program has been widely acknowledged as an effective way of helping newcomers gain employment quickly. The program is a three-way partnership between the agency, internationally trained professionals (protégés) and volunteer mentors from the industrial and corporate sectors. The program provides the structure and resources for recruiting, screening, training and supporting mentoring relationships, which last for four months. The matches are occupation-specific and cross-cultural, and are based on the experience and expertise of the mentor and the protégé.

Mentor-Link Program

Mentor-Link is an email-based mentoring program that matches Ryerson University's female undergraduate engineering students with inspirational female engineers. Facilitated by the Women in Engineering (WIE) coordinator, students can ask questions and discuss topics related to engineering or work/life balance through email. Mentors and students receive guidelines on the mentoring process, and emails from the coordinator offering discussion ideas.

Students are encouraged and inspired by successful female engineers, and mentors are often overwhelmed at the difference they can make in a young woman's life by sharing their experiences and building confidence within the student.

Student Mentoring in Life and Education

A peer mentoring program that began last year as a Seneca College pilot project has quickly found success within the college community. The Student Mentoring in Life and Education (SMILE) program pairs new Seneca students with mentors who offer support and guidance during the transition to college life. More than 55 new students have signed up for SMILE, and mentors are now being trained. In addition, new staff members have been added to assist in the program's administration. The program will be expanded to a number of the college's campuses.

EIT Mentoring Program

PEO successfully ran a pilot project from 2002 to 2003 with 24 mentor-protégé pairs in the North Toronto and Toronto-Dufferin chapter areas. Protégés and mentors alike gave the program high marks and several of the participants attributed personal growth and professional development to their involvement in the project. PEO is now set to offer a province-wide mentoring program for engineering interns, the objective of which is to provide guidance on licensing requirements, ethical practice, decision making

and understanding of a professional engineer's responsibility to the public and the profession. Protégés will develop career strategies and receive mentoring on how to achieve life/skill balance.

The past year was spent researching best practices and developing a PEO-specific mentoring manual. The program is now entering the implementation phase and staff are in the process of selecting a specialty software program, which is crucial for matching and administering the large number of expected participants. By November, we will be making our selection and begin the testing phase by calling on our membership to sign up as mentors. We'll need roughly 600 mentor volunteers before we can get started on matching protégés. By the end of the first few months, we should be operating with approximately 300 pairs. ♦

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- Mentoring for Employment Program, Farida Zuberi, zuberi@skillsforchange.org
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