

# Today's Church Requires a New Set of Mentoring Techniques

*“Are you missing a learning opportunity?” – M. Russell*

Mentoring continues to prove to be an effective workplace developmental tool but how can mentoring be effective in the church? Never before have the diverse generational factors within the workplace had so many unique competencies as well as opportunities to offer to both young aspiring employees as well as experienced senior staff. But how can we transition these learning opportunities into the church to benefit the staff and further the kingdom?

What are some factors to consider in building a successful church mentoring program for your staff? Beth Ann Kaminkow of Crain Communication suggests we begin by knowing where we want to end up, “The primary benefit is to share knowledge up and down the talent chain. Younger employees (the digital natives) have a different sensibility, literacy and competency from older, more experienced generations in the work force”.

Often senior staff members are more experienced with a seasoned background, a deeper understanding of the inner workings of the church as well as a greater depth of exposure regarding congregational issues. The technological changes taking place has created a new playing field and often senior staff members are behind the learning curve and are now playing catch up to reach younger church families and members.

*“Here are two new approaches to developing a mentoring program for your church staff”*

## GROUP MENTORING PROJECT

Too often people think the one-on-one mentoring interaction is the only way senior staff can groom their younger protégés. Although this approach can be extremely successful, and often is required to achieve long-term results, the group mentoring project can benefit a number of people and build on desired results at the same time. Group mentoring is when a number of people come together to learn about a particular topic such as new construction, financial accountability, training youth and volunteer workers, or transportation safety. Topically driven group mentoring is a powerful tool in the transition of knowledge to productivity as evidenced in the Triple Creek study. And upon completion all learners in the group are on the same page and have a better understanding on their specific role. Randy Emelo CEO of Triple Creek Consulting states, “Situational mentoring engagements are structured to allow learners to receive quick answers to their immediate needs from one or more advisors who can help with short-term issues.”

A 2009 study by Triple Creek looked at the impact of open mentoring on productivity and effectiveness with the following results:

- 88 percent of open mentoring users agreed that their productivity increased due to mentoring
- 97 percent of participants that spent at least one hour a month on mentoring were satisfied with their experience
- Participants in the mentoring experience rated “expanded my network”, “interpersonal effectiveness” and “confidence in role” as the top three areas in which they improved the most as a result of mentoring



One Pastor said to me recently, “I am a pastor...not a contractor!” Facing a new challenge in his ministry this pastor recognized he was ill equipped to start a new building project and needed help understanding the intricacies of the world of building plans, financing, sub-contractors, required insurance and workers’ compensation. I suggested he recruit someone in his congregation, or a member of the community, to meet with him to learn about the process to build a new educational structure. Upon securing the experienced contractor (advisor) the pastor had him meet with the building committee to discuss the areas the church needed to focus on, how to define their objectives, and establish their desired outcome. It is a unique process that develops when the advisor and the learners come together as student and teacher in the group learning process.

Here are the results of the Triple-Creek study regarding the Group Mentoring approach:

- 90 percent of the participants were satisfied with the group mentoring experience
- 93 percent say their group’s topic was relevant to their role in the organization
- 96 percent report that they could apply the information gained from the group mentoring experience directly to their role in the organization
- 95 percent would recommend the group mentoring approach to others
- 85 percent agree that the group mentoring environment was a safe learning environment

These research results show that group mentoring offers a unique learning opportunity that can address specific issues and can spread knowledge to a large number of participants and build unity with the church body.

To read the full study, please go to [www.3creek.com/research/Group-Mentoring-Research.pdf](http://www.3creek.com/research/Group-Mentoring-Research.pdf).



# REVERSE MENTORING

Traditional mentoring teaching has the young learning from the older more experienced advisor or mentor. Yet generational differences have been identified as being potential barriers between people and this represents a missed opportunity within the church environment. This traditional method has been the accepted norm through the social practices of human interaction through the family, to schools, club activities and into the workplace. Thus people who are generationally close to each other have barriers of communication and learning (Raines 2002). "These generational differences can cause friction, mistrust, communication breakdowns; prevent effective teamwork and collaboration; and impact job satisfaction, retention, and productivity" (Ruth 2005).

Reverse mentoring is a process where a young person is asked to use their knowledge of technology to coach a more senior colleague or older church member in its use (Coles and Gardner 2001). This process is considered mutually beneficial as the young person is able to learn the strategy of ministry to gain valuable knowledge from a more experienced staff member in return.

One of my consulting clients stated he needed assistance in understanding the new social-network opportunities but did not know where to start. I advised him to find a young staff intern, or church member, who would teach him the intricacies of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube in exchange for shadowing this senior staff member as he conducted hospital visits. The results were beyond expectations as the two 'generationally separated' church staff members became strong advocates. Such a parental authority scenario was overcome and communication between them improved.

## What is required to have a successful mentoring program?

*Mentoring (Group or Reverse) depends on several factors to provide success:*

1. Be a good listener
2. Set realistic goals and standards
3. Emphasize self-improvement and discovery
4. Stay on schedule
5. Appreciate the value of participants interests and abilities
6. Develop trust and confidence in the relationship(s)
7. Recognize learners respect integrity and the capabilities of the advisor(s)

By concentrating on specific problems that are hardest to understand and improve on; finding a qualified advisor; and realizing there are always new things we can learn from senior advisors as well as youthful contributors the church can remove barriers and improve communication among staff members and the congregation. These concepts will help change the mindset as everyone benefits from group and reverse mentoring strategies.

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