The Impact of Mentorship:
Why Organizations Should Grow Their Own Talent

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Abstract

How important is mentorship in organizations? According to the research, interviews, literature, and surveys conducted in this project, it is one of the most important components of an organization. The opportunity for employees to find mentorship opportunities internally does many things to benefit the organization. From increasing retention and employee satisfaction to recruitment and advancement, having an organization that does well to train and improve its own is a trait that speaks volumes. And, employees are looking for these opportunities. Employees are looking for someone to help them on their path, to show them how to grow, and discuss where they can improve daily. By encouraging those relationships, nonprofits can begin to serve those internally much more successfully than ever before. This project aims to identify the importance of mentorship within organizations, evaluating its impact on retention, satisfaction, and mentee development. From there, this report will propose a model of mentorship that fulfills the needs of all entities of the mentorship relationship: mentors, mentees, and the organizations. Finally, the project will provide recommendations for organizations looking to improve their own mentorship practices and explanations for where they should focus their attention to improve their mentee development.
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Section 1. Introduction

The importance of developing relationships within an organization is important; relationships enhance the work experience and, with collaboration, provide an opportunity for quality work to form. In the workplace, there are many opportunities for these relationships to appear. One of the most prevalent relationships in the workplace is a one-on-one relationship between two employees where one of these individuals is a supervisor, coach, or mentor.

These terms are often interchanged when describing this relationship, but they are three different relationships in their own right and it is important to differentiate between them for the purposes of this report. Understanding the differences between a mentor, teacher, coach, and supervisor drastically impacts the data and results of this report. So before going any further, assigning definitions to these similar terms in important.

Supervisor

In the workplace, a supervisor is a typical role for a more experienced professional to take. The Business Dictionary offers a comprehensive definition of a supervisor:

Person in the first-line management who monitors and regulates employees in their performance of assigned or delegated tasks. Supervisors are usually authorized to recommend and/or effect hiring, disciplining, promoting, punishing, rewarding, and other associated activities regarding the employees in their departments. ("supervisor", 2017)

In this role, a supervisor is hands-on in the daily work of an employee, impacts their company standing, and is in direct communication with the employee on their progress, growth, and evaluation. As a supervisor, the relationship is very professional, as all communication and context is within the day-to-day work environment.

Coach

A coach is another role that appears in the workplace. The Business Dictionary offers two definitions of a coach, both of which impact the relationships at play.

1. Person at the first reporting level (above the working team) in a team based organization where leadership is shared among team members. A coach (unlike traditional supervisors) leads more through collaborating than through 'directing.' Also sometimes called coordinator, facilitator, or mentor.

2. To encourage and train someone to accomplish a goal or task. ("coach", 2017)
As a coach, collaboration, facilitation, and training are key. This role allows for a person to “quarterback”, or lead through a team environment, rather than as a direct superior to an employee. Additionally, a coach provides more training for employees to help them grow and achieve success.

**Mentor (Mentoring)**

The last term to define is mentor. The Business Dictionary provides a definition of mentoring that can be used to determine the role of a mentor.

... 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.

(“mentoring”, 2017)

According to this definition, a mentor’s role is to leverage their experience to aid a junior employee, supporting them in their work and career, providing feedback on their work, and most importantly, offering guidance to mentees as they work through issues and work situations.

**Key Differences in Supervisor, Coach, and Mentor**

Looking at these definitions, several key differences stand out which will provide the foundation for the rest of this report.

**Role in evaluation.** Supervisor, coaches, and mentors all play a part in evaluating performance, although each role has different factors that impact this conversation. Supervisors generally have hiring/firing/promoting authorization built into their roles, and an evaluation conversation can happen in the context of the one-on-one relationship between the supervisor and employee. Coaches are running and coordinating a team, so any evaluation conversation will happen in the context of the greater team, and they do not have authorization to advance an employee’s career. Mentors play a different role in evaluation by providing constructive feedback that can be in many contexts: the overall impact on the organization, on a particular work assignment, or even in the context of their career growth. There is more lateral mobility in evaluation from a mentor because they are not necessarily confined to reporting as a direct superior, but rather as a senior employee with years of experience.

**Role in development.** Supervisor, coaches, and mentors all impact employee development as well. Supervisors have direct access to employees and can offer concrete, constructive guidance for employees to help with their career growth. However, a supervisor’s presence in an organization can hinder the growth of an employee due to lack of upward mobility. A coach’s role is to develop and provide
training to employees. In this role, they can impact the growth of employees in a positive way so they can continue growing and run their own programs. A mentor should provide counseling and guidance to employees, providing tools and feedback to help them improve as professionals. With their experience, they can be a valuable asset to an individual’s growth.

So where does that leave us?

These three roles are often interchanged in vernacular, but after careful evaluation, the differences between these roles begins to solidify. The key takeaway is that a mentor is an individual who is a combination of the two other roles (supervisor and coach) in a way that shifts the context from performance to growth. Therefore, I offer a new definition of mentor, one which the rest of this project will be built upon.

**Mentor.** A senior or more experienced individual acting as an advisor, counselor, or guide to a junior or trainee. The mentor is responsible for (1) providing support to, and feedback on, the individual, (2) training the individual to improve their work performance, and (3) recommending the advancement of the employee within the organization, if applicable.

This new definition encompasses all three terms in a way that allows for a relationship between the mentor and mentee to develop. With the stress of evaluation within the context of job security and promotion, the relationship between a supervisor and employee can be affected negatively, due to the nature of the structure in the organization. And with the team structure, a coach has an opportunity to train and develop employees. At the same time, there is a guidance component and a one-on-one relationship that cannot develop in a way that benefits an employee, again due to the structure. Therefore, bringing in the benefits of each of these relationships to the role of a mentor allows for a relationship to form that benefits the growth and performance of employees.

Now that there is a working definition of a mentor, it is paramount to determine how important this role is within an organization. This report will explain the importance of these relationships, how it affects talent development, and the impact that quality mentorship has on the greater organization and nonprofit sector.

**Section 2: Literature Review**

So, how important is mentoring and mentorship within organizations? After deep research, the significance of these relationships can be seen in literature and studies that look at actual organizations and the impact that was felt when programs were instituted.
Relationships At Play

Building on the previous section, the impact of the relationships that mentors have in comparison to supervisors is observed in a *Journal Of Organizational Behavior* article from 2003. In this article,

“formal mentoring programs in two companies were examined regarding (1) the extent to which mentees and mentors agreed on the nature of the mentoring relationships and (2) the extent to which dimensions of mentoring relationships were related to outcomes for the mentees, compared with the extent to which dimensions of supervisory and coworker relationships were related to the same outcomes: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.” (Raabe and Beehr, 2003).

Raabe and Beehr determine these two questions from the notions that (1) mentoring interactions are based on reactions, thoughts and feelings, and expectations of the two parties, and (2) to determine effectiveness, a comparison to other potentially important relationships was necessary. Through their research, they determined that “The prototypical mentor relationship is supposed to be very close, which should foster common understanding and agreement about the relationship.” (Raabe et al, 2003). They also noted that there is a perception issue between mentors and mentees in organizations, especially those with mentoring programs that are being overseen by a program manager. They attribute this to authenticity and honesty between the two parties (i.e. a mentee feels that they made a favorable impression where the mentor feels they did not) and that disconnect can be due to many factors. It amounts to an underdeveloped mentoring relationship.

Raabe and Beehr also determined that “formal mentoring programs of the type in the present study are simply at a disadvantage for affecting mentee outcomes; mentors who are two levels above the mentees are not normally in close contact with them, and because of their relatively high level of responsibility, they might often be busy and not have a great deal of time to spend with a mentee as an ‘extra’ task.” (Raabe et al, 2003). This adds an extra consideration for the impact of mentoring in that the mentor has to want to make time and stay in close connection with their mentee to have an impact.

From this research, it can be gleaned that, for mentoring relationships to have an impact, the relationship needs to be close, fostering understanding, and both parties need to be committed to the relationship for it to be successful.

Another paper was written in the *Journal of Business Psychology* that discusses the psychological impact of mentoring as a social exchange relationship. Haggard discusses “…the link between mentoring breach and PCB to be stronger for protégés in formal relationships, because formal relationships are sanctioned and facilitated
by the organization (Kram 1985; Murray 1991) and, therefore, formal mentors might be perceived more directly as making promises on behalf of the organization.” (Haggard, 2012).

Haggard goes on to state that a major practical implication is that, while formal mentoring programs can include training and direction, they are not so successful in providing direction for informal relationships (Haggard, 2012). This is in line with Raabe’s findings, where relationships that are closer (i.e. monitored and work related) are more successful. However, Haggard finishes with suggesting that organizations should provide training to managers on mentoring, regardless of the formality of the relationship. This training would help increase the success of all mentoring relationships.

**Work Culture**

Gallup conducted a poll regarding millennial engagement in the workplace, as it pertains to work culture, retention, and satisfaction. Since millennials make up the vast majority of the lower-level employee workforce, it can be assumed that this is the mentee audience that most of the studies reference. In the survey, 50% of millennials don’t see a future with their current company (Gallup, 2016). Additionally, 29% of millennials report that they are engaged at work, which in turn means “only about three in 10 are emotionally and behaviorally connected to their job and company.” (Gallup, 2016).

Several studies were conducted to evaluate how mentoring influenced work culture, job satisfaction, and retention. One study was conducted at Texas A&M University to examine the relationship between mentoring and commitment and turnover. The findings reflected in the study indicate that “mentoring may actually contribute to higher levels of affective and continuance commitment to an organization.” (Payne and Huffman, 2005). This study also examined the supervisor mentorships and nonsupervisory mentorships.

“Supervisory mentorships differ from nonsupervisory mentorships on three dimensions: amount and type of mentoring support as well as perspective on and understanding of protégés.” (Payne et. al, 2005)

This distinction is important to note because, again, the relationship between mentor and mentee is thrust into the spotlight. Context of support, perspective, and understanding all impact these relationships, and the more context available, the better the relationship will be. Finally, this study indicated that “organizations may want to explore the possibility of developing formal mentoring programs in which supervisors are identified as mentors” (Payne et. al, 2005). This again comes from the relational component of mentorship; the closer the mentor and mentee are, the more impactful this relationship becomes.
A similar study conducted by Hetty van Emmerik evaluated the benefits of mentorship when adverse work conditions are prevalent. Through this study, several key findings were made:

1. Mentoring is positively associated with positive work outcomes (i.e. intrinsic job satisfaction and career satisfaction).
2. Mentoring moderates the negative relationship between adverse working conditions and positive work outcomes, such that for those without a mentor this relationship is stronger than for those with a mentor.
3. Mentoring shows to be negatively associated with all three burnout dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) employee outcomes (Hetty van, 2004)

The practical implications of these findings are important for organizations to note: mentorship enhances the work experience of employees, provides an increased satisfaction in their work, and can improve retention even in times of adverse working conditions and burnout.

Additionally, it is important to consider how these relationships at work can impact the out-of-the-office life of individuals. A study examined “whether protégés have more favorable perceptions of an organization's culture for balancing work and family than non-protégés.” (Monica, 2005). This study found that “the results strongly support the view that protégés had more favorable perceptions than non-protégés of the organization's work-family culture - the degree to which integration of employees' work and family lives is supported.” (Monica, 2005). This is an important consideration for organizations because it can serve as a recruitment tool; to attract and retain employees, organizations encouraging mentoring can transmit the message to their employees of resources and support available to help achieve a work-life balance.

**Building a New Culture**

With the literature dictating that a culture of mentorship is important for an organization’s health and sustainability, it is important to discuss how to build a culture that is focused on mentorship. A study conducted determined that

“There is a considerable amount of literature that addresses the notion of coaching cultures and how such cultures can be used to support change. It would appear that coaching based initiatives are being leveraged and developed to support and change organisational [sic] cultures strategically and with positive results. It is clear that it is important to take a holistic view beyond the coaching skills being developed...has convinced us that it is essential for leaders and organisations [sic] to carefully reflect on the purpose of introducing a coaching culture.” (Francis, 2009).
This opens the door to redefining the culture in organizations to be focused on developing talent, or mentoring employees, to make change and build for the future. This idea is further supported when considering how mentorship can be a factor in management contexts. Dr. Ojedokun examines this in his paper, stating the following:

“It has been pointed out that under the direction of the mentor; the protégé is given immediate access to valuable insights and past experiences. Within mentoring relationships, individuals are learning by doing. Thus individuals are able to practice what they are learning. Mentoring relationship increases professional development, helps in attracting and retaining talent, increases retention through reduction in turnover, and paves way for smooth succession. When protégés acquire the benefits associated with mentoring, there is a high probability that experienced manager would spend much less time in managing crises and fixing problems, and the organization [sic] would be better for it. In other words, it would free senior managers to engage in other more result oriented ventures for the organisations [sic].” (Ojedokun, 2011)

With the ability to redefine the culture of an organization to fit into a coaching/mentoring/talent development environment, organizations would actually become more efficient, based on Dr. Ojedokun’s findings. Built on the foundation of mentoring, organizations can develop their own talent, decrease inefficiencies, and prepare for the future internally.

Finally, mentoring relationships can greatly impact the work culture in terms of diversity. According to a study published in The Diversity Factor,

“The ideal mentoring relationship develops informally, in the course of carrying out daily responsibilities... However, the informal mentoring relationship can be problematic for members of underrepresented groups. Research indicates that mentors tend to seek out demographically similar protégés. It is easier for the potential mentor to see him/herself in a potential protégé who looks like them, as they may perceive that this protégé shares the same world view. In other words, white men develop informal mentoring relationships more easily with other white men compared to members of underrepresented groups.” (Knouse, 2005)

This is a conundrum that many organizations face, and creating a mentorship culture that accounts for intersectionality helps increase diversity in organizations. The key distinction that this study makes is the informality of the mentorship relationship. Many organizations assign mentors that are demographically dissimilar. According to the study, “cross-racial mentoring relationships can be awkward and lacking in the emotional depth characteristic of mentoring relationships among demographically similar mentors and protégés.” (Knouse, 2005).
When considering diversity as a part of an organizational culture, it is important to look at potential mentors for new employees to look up to that are like themselves. It is that informal relationship that creates a close-knit culture that can be the backbone of an organization.

**Conclusions**

The literature lends itself to the overall hypothesis that mentorship is impactful in an organization. There are many layers to the impact especially when considering what sort of changes are being discussed. For the most part, based on the literature, moving to a work culture that is focused on developing talent internally through mentorship is a generally positive experience with many different implications.

**Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

To further evaluate the importance of mentorship in practice, new data had to be collected and analyzed. This was done through two channels: interviews and survey collections.

Interviews were conducted in person and over the phone, recorded, and transcribed (see Appendix A). These were semi-scripted surveys, using guiding questions to glean insights as to the impact of mentorship in organizations from a high level. Three experts were consulted for this report: Roger Morris, a Senior Partner of Quarles and Brady LLP, Josh Orendi, President of PhiredUp, and Erin René Nelson, Master of Nonprofit Administration focusing on Succession Planning and Talent Development. These experts were chosen to offer different ideas on mentorship based on their own varying contexts to the subject.

Survey results were collected online and were dispersed via social media channels, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc. These methods were chosen to strategically target people who, more than likely, were on the mentee side of the relationship, a generally younger audience at the beginning phases of their careers. This thirteen-question survey aimed to understand what mentees wanted from mentors and how important those mentors were to their own happiness and job satisfaction. Demographic questions, such as gender, age, and education, were asked to categorize answers based on demographics. One limitation of this survey was an opportunity to include more intersectionality (race, orientation, etc.).

Based on my own work experience and current role, I believe that providing mentorship in organizations is the first and foremost important structural component of the organization. As a backbone, mentorship can provide growth and change internally, provide a sense of belonging and wellbeing, and create a fresh and enticing work
atmosphere. Therefore, all of the questions and topics discussed had some bias in the direction of pro-mentoring.

Section 4. Data Analysis

Starting with the survey results, the data can be boiled down to three major findings:

1. Mentees are looking for many different things from mentors, but generally, they are looking for a) career advice and/or advancement, b) constructive criticism, and c) accountability in their work. (See Chart 1)

2. The mentor/mentee relationship is important to a mentee’s job satisfaction. (See Chart 2)

3. The mentor/mentee relationship, when strong, can impact retention negatively (See Chart 3)

Chart 1: What Do You Want a Mentor to Provide in A Relationship?

![Chart 1: What Do You Want a Mentor to Provide in A Relationship?](image)

Chart 2: Are Mentees More Likely to Stay in Their Current Position to Work with Their Mentor?

![Chart 2: Are Mentees More Likely to Stay in Their Current Position to Work with Their Mentor?](image)
Simply put, according to the survey results, from the mentee perspective, they are looking for improvement. The more mentees are improving, the more satisfied they are in the relationship. Additionally, Mentees are more likely to stay in a job if their mentor is there and they are working together. Consequently, a mentee is more likely to follow their mentor to a new opportunity (if an opportunity were to be presented).

From the expert interviews, two different types of mentorship emerge: structural (or programmatic) mentorship and relational mentorship.

Structural mentorship pertains to an environment where there are defined mentors and mentees (mentorship programs developed by the organization) or supervisor/subordinate relationships. These relationships can be effective in large organizations where there is opportunity for career advancement internally, rather than needing to find that advancement elsewhere. These relationships were discussed in the literature and supported by Roger Morris. His firm, Quarles and Brady LLP, has a formal mentorship program.
“My firm currently does have a formal mentor program. We assign, for any new young lawyer, a mentor for a couple of years. A mentor is generally someone in their same group, but it doesn’t have to be. We’ve gone through things with the same sex or the same race, and sometimes we don’t do that in terms of processes...We don’t ask the mentors to evaluate the mentees. They’re supposed to be there as just that person who they can talk to and deal with...Some of it works, some of it doesn’t. Some of it’s hard when it’s forced on people.” Excerpt from interview with Roger Morris

This type of program can be very helpful in a large organization where it is hard for higher up executives to directly mentor employees. Creating a mentorship program where new mentors can emerge and develop talent as they are being mentored by higher up employees creates a working program to develop talent, as experienced at Quarles and Brady. However, as Roger Morris touched upon, there are drawbacks and challenges with this institutional structure of mentorship, with it being forced and sometimes not accounting for intersectionality. However, later in the interview, he explains how intersectionality has played a major role in mentorship in his practice.

“That was always one of the criticisms is, it’s harder for people to succeed if they don’t see models that look like them. And so if you get a big enough group of people, it becomes much easier. I mean, when I started there were very few female attorneys doing it. I happened to have a fairly large female group. And all of a sudden it’s become really easy to recruit more females and more females because they have a lot of models that that they can look at them.” Excerpt from interview with Roger Morris

With a structural mentorship model, there is a lot more control over what is happening in the office and much more oversight into what the mentors are doing with the mentees. Everything from job instruction to administrative tasks (like expense reports from mentors and mentees) is seen to determine the success of the program. And, in such a big environment, this program can find success because, otherwise, there would be no easy access to mentorship. There are just too many people in the organization to have an organic, informal mentorship practice.

On the other hand, relational mentorship pertains to an environment where mentor/mentee relationships are formed outside of any structure, generally as the result of conversations and collaborations. These relationships can be effective in small-medium size organizations where these relationships can help foster growth and increase job fulfillment without necessarily having a “career-advancement” mentality. Also discussed in the literature, these relationships were further supported by Josh Orendi, President of PhiredUp, Inc.
“…there is a guy that's in our staff for-- this would've been his seven year anniversary next week, and he's leaving staff, so I was reflecting back on seven years of mentoring him. And although I wasn't his direct report or direct supervisor for the majority of that time, he and I have had a wonderful relationship where I've gotten to play a role of guiding him professionally and helping him develop personally. And sometimes that's a very structured role, weekly calls, scheduled and on the calendar. And other times it's really been a looser format on kind of an as-needed basis, but the relationship is maintained."

Excerpt from interview with Josh Orendi

The relationship that Josh is discussing here is one that spans beyond the four walls of the office, bringing in personal life and personal balance to the relationship. As discussed in the literature, using mentorship to create a work-life balance is important for retention and overall satisfaction in the organization. Josh continued this point, regarding structural mentorship, stated

“...I can't actually think of an example when it's worked outside of the workplace. When we have a new staff-- when we have a new hire, it's not uncommon that I become part of their training program, or I have a touchpoint with the once a month, or something like that. And that's certainly fine because there's structure and purpose around it that directly relates to their job. But at least once or twice a year, it feels like, somebody will call me and say, "Hey, I really appreciated something you did, or a speech that you gave, or work that we used to do together. I'm really looking for somebody to be a mentor." And I'm always flattered by that, right? And I usually say, "Okay. Give me an idea how that works." And I wouldn't say it never worked. It's just never lasted. Either there wasn't the relationship behind it for it to happen or it never developed into a relationship that made it feel long-term purposeful.” Excerpt from interview with Josh Orendi

In other words, to create long-lasting, fulfilling mentorship relationships, it is important to develop a real relationship with someone. This can be achieved many ways, but it requires authenticity and effort from both parties. In an organization of twenty-five employees where there is little separating the President and a new hire, this is achievable because everyone can buy into the idea that everyone is there to make everyone else better; by building the culture around team improvement, such is the way at PhiredUp, the backbone of the organization shifts to authentic interpersonal relationships, which can then be parlayed into meaningful, lasting mentorship relationships.

Both of these philosophies are important to consider for all organizations when planning ahead. Erin René Nelson studied Succession Planning during her Master of Nonprofit Administration program. Through her work, she determined the importance of
succession planning as a practice and how organizations can shift to planning. When I approached Erin René and asked how this impacts mentorship, she explained

“...is that as a staff we should look at that [mentorship] more. Like the five year, kind of what do each of us individually want to be, and what do we want to be as a whole? And working on building those relationships with all the current staff.”

*Excerpt from interview with Erin René Nelson*

She also touched on the overlap between structural mentorship and relational mentorship and how both of these approaches can lead into each other.

“The other thing that's interesting that's happened is here at the Haas Business School, they have started this coffee chat thing where, because the Haas school is so big, not all of us know each other... it's randomly pairing you up with people in the school and you're supposed to just go out for coffee. And most of those people end up being younger than me and new in their career or just kind of getting towards mid-career, and it ends up being a mentor session. Like, "How did you get where you are?" And, "Did you think you were going to go down that path?" In particular, for people in events because my path started in events. So most of it has been organic. That was a formal process of meeting people, but it turning into a mentoring session was very organic.” *Excerpt from interview with Erin René Nelson*

From Erin’s perspective, it is natural to start out with a structured mentorship program, but with the appropriate effort made, it can move to a relational mentorship environment. This is an important consideration for organizations to make when determining the best way to implement mentorship programs.

Based on all the interviews and survey results, from all accounts, mentorship is a foundational piece of an organization and it should not be overlooked. The importance of mentors working with mentees can be felt all throughout the organization and, for mentees, it is an important consideration when looking for employment opportunities.

The needs and goals of the three parties involved (mentees, mentors, and the organization) can be illustrated by the following model.
Boiling down the logic model, the needs of all three entities are important to note:

**Model 2: Logic Model Needs Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What mentees want:</th>
<th>What mentors want:</th>
<th>What organizations want:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Feedback on work</td>
<td>1. Relationship with mentees</td>
<td>1. Lower turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job advancement/development</td>
<td>2. An opportunity to impart wisdom</td>
<td>2. Better use of resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data, research, and interviews conducted, mentorship opportunities are integral and necessary in organizations to improve employee satisfaction, growth, and overall success. Therefore, a practice of mentorship should be adopted by organizations.
Therefore, when considering all the data and literature, mentorship is integral and necessary in organizations for a host of reasons. So, it is imperative that organizations should adopt a practice of mentorship to ensure that mentors understand how to best fill their role, as well as to communicate the role the mentee plays in the relationship.

Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

As discussed in previous sections, mentorship is a key component to an organization. In the nonprofit sector where organizations are constantly dealing with turnover, short staff, impossible requests, and high stress, having mentors can help turn these adverse work conditions into something more positive for employees.

In the sector, burnout is the enemy. Employees are tired, overworked, and underpaid, generally. Based on the literature and data collected, mentorship programs can be a focal element for organizations to improve their company culture and increase the satisfaction of their employees while continuing to develop talent and becoming more appealing to new talent.

The big question is where to start. After analyzing the needs of all the different entities involved in mentorship relationships, I propose a framework for mentorship that will allow mentees to feel heard and grow, mentors to be engaged with their mentees but not to the extent that it hinders their own work, and for the organization to benefit at the end of the day.

The Cup Framework of Mentorship

The Cup Framework is a way of thinking about the relationship between a mentor and mentee. In this framework, there are two elements to consider in relation to the mentee: content and context. Content refers to the inputs that a mentee is absorbing. This is information pertaining to the job, life, etc. that they are constantly absorbing, digesting, and understanding throughout the day. Context refers to the capacity for which the mentee can understand and absorb information.

A simple example of the relationship of context vs. content is the age old saying “crawl, walk, run”. It is foolish to expect an infant to run, let alone walk, before they understand how to crawl. The context of the infant is they do not know how to crawl, so it is the parent’s responsibility to provide content fitting the context. Maybe that is the parent playing with the child while lying on their stomach; maybe it is demonstrating the skill.

What’s important for mentors is not the content, but the context. It is the mentor’s job to help expand their mentee’s cup, rather than just pouring more water. With bigger cups, mentees are now better positioned to receive feedback, take on bigger roles, and grow their career. So, rather than teaching a mentee how to handle all the work, a
mentor can help them develop the skills necessary to do the work on their own. This is a tactic that Roger Morris uses in his work.

“...when I have hearings coming up, I'll have some of the young lawyers help me prepare for the hearings, I'll have them prepare the questions, sit with me with the witness prep or go through it. And then a lot of times - and it's sort of becomes a running joke against the people who've worked with me long enough - the night before the matter, I'll call the lawyer up at home and say, "By the way, make sure you wear something nice because you're likely to do this one."

And so I'm sure they have a night of nervousness, but they don't have weeks and weeks of it. And then we're done with the first of anything for them and they're done with it. And they no longer have to worry about, "I've never done this."

Excerpt from interview with Roger Morris

What Roger does is ensures that the mentee has all of the skills necessary to perform the tasks. Rather than explaining every detail, spending time training and instructing, he collaborates, let’s the mentee participate, and then when the mentee’s cup is ready, allows them to handle things on their own. He provides the space for them to fill their own cup, rather than filling it for them.

This practice separates a mentor from the other definitions (supervisor and coach) described at the beginning of the report. The ability to increase the mentee’s cup is where a mentor can exponentially change a mentee. A supervisor has to worry about the day-to-day work of an employee; they don’t have the time or capacity for this approach. Similarly, a coach has to manage results and coordinate many moving pieces. This approach falls short for them as well. A mentor has the perfect capacity, experience, and space for this framework.

Model 3: An Illustration of The Cup Framework of Mentorship
Recommendations

Through all of the research and data analysis, there are a few recommendations that organizations can take forward when evaluating the need for mentorship structures and opportunities.

**Mentorship Cultures are Important.** Organizations should create a mentorship culture to build relationships internally. These relationships will improve organizational outputs, efficiency, satisfaction, and services. It will also increase recruitment and increase retention.

**Focus on Relational Mentorship.** Improving the art of mentorship (relationship-building) does more for mentees than expected. Mentees feel attached to their mentors and are more likely to remain in their current role to work with their mentor. Consequently, they are more likely to follow them to another opportunity. Building those relationships is one way to secure mentee commitment to the organization.

**Encourage Active Mentorship.** Passive, hands-off mentorship is not sustainable and not desirable for mentees. Providing active, hands-on mentors to employees will not only improve retention, but will open more doors for advancement, both internally and in the sector. Additionally, having active mentors is an attractive quality for potential employees who are looking for a place to grow.

**Stress the Importance of Mentorship.** Sometimes the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and even the Executive Team doesn’t understand the value of mentorship in an organization. It can be viewed as a waste of resources better spent elsewhere. While mentorship can be implemented by anyone in the organization, achieving buy-in from the top of the organization is important for sustainability.

**Implement the Cup Framework.** The Cup Framework can be used to build an organizational culture around mentorship, appreciate and encourage growth of employees, and will allow for mentors to feel fulfilled in their role without spending too much time and energy outside of their own work.

Section 6: Conclusions

The main objective of this report was to determine the importance of mentorship in organizations and how these relationships can manifest either positively or negatively. Additionally, this report aimed to understand the relationship between mentorship and retention, either positively or negatively. Finally, this project looked to understand mentorship best practices with the hope of uncovering an approach to mentorship that can be applied to an organizational setting.
Through the literature, data analysis, surveys, interviews, and discussions, it is apparent that mentorship is impactful within an organization. It is an important component of the professional sector and can be a major feature of the nonprofit sector. Uncovering the positive relationship between mentorship and retention highlights a potential saving grace for the nonprofit sector’s retention issues; employees are happier and more fulfilled when they have a mentor they are working with. In a high stress environment, such that of the nonprofit sector, this can be one tool to drastically improve the sector. Finally, the Cup Model combines a few mentorship practices to create an environment where a mentee can learn while doing and constantly grow without taking too much attention from their mentor while still leaving the door open for a deeper relationship.

More research can be conducted into intersectionality issues as they impact mentorship and relationships. Additionally, observing mentorship relationships over longer periods of time to observe how lasting these relationships are is another topic that could be observed through the lens of improving the sector through mentorship and development.
List of References


Appendix A: Interview with Roger Morris

S1 00:00 Let me make sure it's-- okay, cool. It's going. So like I said yesterday, and I said in my emails, I'm really trying to use this paper as a way to understand how having mentorship programs, whether it's organic and kind of sought out by employees or encouraged by organizations, is important for longevity and success of the business, or the company, or the non-profit, for that matter. So I'm just looking for people to kind of talk about-- people who have been in relationships, whether it's like a mentor/mentee or supervisor, especially in the work setting, and kind of how that related to their experience and kind of what that looked like. So I'm putting out a survey for kind of understanding that from some people. And then for the interviews that I'm doing, I was more of trying to understand, from people who have been in the workforce for a long time, who have done lots of different things and worked with lots of different people, how their experience was tailored and improved by having those types of relationships and how they're continuing that on forward. So that's kind of where I'm at to kind of start with.

S2 01:07 So we can obviously talk about it more expanded, but let me give you a couple of thoughts. My firm currently does have a formal mentor program. We assign, for any new young lawyer, a mentor for a couple of years. A mentor is generally someone in their same group, but it doesn't have to be. We've gone through things with the same sex or the same race, and sometimes we don't do that in terms of processes. But we give the mentor a budget. And I think they get a $1,000 over the course of each year for two years to do things with the mentee, whether it's to go to dinners, go to a spa, something that just sort of develops some rapport. We don't ask the mentors to evaluate the mentees. They're supposed to be there as just that person who they can talk to and deal with. So that's the formal program that goes on. Some of it works, some of it doesn't. Some of it's hard when it's forced on people. That's the current program.

S2 01:59 Now, when I started the practice of law, we did not have this formal mentor/mentor program, but there's several people who I sort of developed as mentors for a period of time. And I think you go through phases with it. Each of them were, at one point or another, someone supervisory to me, and then you later either became equal to them, and in some cases you actually became their boss, depending on what was going on. But what I found from it is just being able to look and have someone you can talk to and have someone you can model after. There was a gentleman I worked with when I was a younger attorney his name is Ed. Ed has since passed away, but I watched Ed in a number
of settings invite me to things with clients, let me participate where I might not have been normally allowed to do that or not, and I watched him be a person with them. I mean literally, I'd never seen people show pictures of their kids and their vacations when they were talking, and it made more sense to me when I saw it, but I always thought everything was so formal. So I got to see him sort of model some of that stuff. He also was a good source when I was being promoted on the different pay raises and I would always just go to him and ask him, "Is my pay raise fair? I don't care if it's the most or the least, is it in the ballpark of fair?" And if he was comfortable with it, I was comfortable and we moved on. I had other people-- a gentleman named Tim, who was more of a colleague who I worked with, and who would, again, be available. These folks helped me grow up. There's another gentleman who's since passed away also. A gentleman named John who was available and helped on a bunch of things and helped challenge me. I had some early matters when I was a very, very young partner that were quite explosive and they had the potential to be either very beneficial economically for the firm or very dangerous for the firm. And John, on one of them where it was pretty much touch and go on it, John backed me on it and said, "It's a slow summer. I'm willing to throw in through our journeys and I think it's going to do that," and it turned out to be phenomenally beneficial. But for that, I don't know how it would have worked.

So because of those experiences, I've turned and tried to play those all forward with others. And so I've had the opportunity to either supervise a lot of people or to, in some ways, mentor. And we actually have a program at the firm now which we call the Star Mentor Program where every year, people can nominate someone who they think is a star mentor and each of the offices awards an award to 'their star mentor'. And there's not necessarily just one, there may be two or three in each office, but I've been nominated several times. I've won a couple of times from some of the younger folks that are there. My goal at this point is not to be "the younger folks'" mentors, but to help the more senior lawyers who are maturing themselves do it. But when you play it forward, some of it is knowing some of the nervousness of some of the young folks, is getting the nervousness out of the way. So I will, when I have hearings coming up, I'll have some of the young lawyers help me prepare for the hearings, I'll have them prepare the questions, sit with me with the witness prep or go through it. And then a lot of times - and it's sort of becomes a running joke against the people who've worked with me long enough - the night before the matter, I'll call the lawyer up at home and say, "By the way, make sure you wear something nice because you're likely to do this one." And so I'm sure
they have a night of nervousness, but they don't have weeks and weeks of it. And then we're done with the first of anything for them and they're done with it. And they no longer have to worry about, "I've never done this." And so a lot of the folks that I've worked with have had their "first" lot of different things way younger than a lot of other lawyers. Whether it's the first time they talk on the phone to the client. If it's the first time they meet the client. Whether it's the first time they appear at the client's office. Whether it's the first time they go out and do a hearing, or prepare a witness, or do this stuff. And I find that they're just able to take off much better. Every once in a while I have a misstep and somebody just doesn't handle it well and doesn't perform, but it's better to learn that early. And it's better for them to learn that early, that they're not capable of doing that. So I think some of it is a goal.

S2 05:53
I will tell you there's a client of the firms - not one that I've work with - she's only got about two years left in her practice and she has decided she wants to mentor-- and she's on a particular racial occasion. She wants to mentor people of that same race. And so she's making a huge effort, and she's reached out to the firm and said, "I'd like to know all of the same lawyers that you have of this race. I'd like to invite them over. I frankly would like to get some time to introduce them to a number of my colleagues and to be able to do it." So she's doing it very directly on a race basis to make that happen and I think it's interesting. And she is assigning work on that basis. And so they're interesting programs. So I don't know if that answers your question but--

S1 06:34
It definitely does, and there's some things I would love to kind of dive in a little bit deeper on what you talked about [inaudible]. When you were starting out, and there wasn't a mentorship program, did you seek out those mentorships or the senior partners just saw something in you of like, "This is someone I need to be tapping into and helping grow?" Or was it kind of mutual thing?

S2 06:51
I don't think I'd use the word "mentor" in that thought to seek it out. You had colleagues who you work with, and I actually have a friend who has been at the firm the exact same length of time I have. We started the same day and we use each other to test arguments. He and I don't practice in the same area. And when I have an argument that I know is legally sound but I'm not sure it's going to work practically or facially, I'll make the argument and see what he says, and back and forth. That's more of a colleague than a mentor. But on the other ones, they just sort of develop. You found a rapport with someone, you worked with them, you observed what they were doing, and then you found opportunities to work with them. And in most law firms, it's sort of a--
what is it? There's a term for it. They call it laissez-faire, or open-market policy, where the lawyers assign work to younger lawyers, and the better the younger lawyer does, the more work the lawyer assigns to you. And it's free-market system, is probably the better way to do it. And so the good young lawyers always get pulled up very fast. So I've seen other firms that have literally a supervisor assigned a young lawyer, and this supervisor go together. And this supervisor has to work with that young lawyer. That doesn't work as well with some supervisors. So the free-market one allows the young lawyer to sort of to catch on in certain areas with a bunch of different lawyers. And it's interesting because the evaluations are always pretty positive because the people who work with you the most are the ones who-- because they give you more and more work because they're satisfied with your work. And they're the ones who are going to have the best opportunity to evaluate you. So it's funny when you see the people who you might work with extensively or frequently, you almost always have good evaluations. It's only the people who you work with rarely or occasionally, because you have the bad one-- because you work with them once or twice, you weren't happy with what they did and you don't go back to them.

S1 08:38

So with that idea in mind, when we're looking at organizations, now your law firm has a mentorship program. Do you think that plays more into actually helping to develop a younger talent than having this free-market as somewhere maybe not everyone is getting a fair shake? Or do you think that that's not--?

S2 08:56

I think it's a start. I think we're doing a better job of training the mentors and actually having some programs to tell them what we want them to do before they start working with the mentees. But one of the difficulties is, like anything, all mentors are not the same. Obviously, and in a sense I've-- some are better, some are worse than others. And some people could mentor six people. Other people could only mentor one. And so it's easier. I think we're getting better at it. I think we're also trying harder because diversity has become such an important thing that we're trying to find ways to make sure we're helping all the diverse candidates there. That was always one of the criticisms is, it's harder for people to succeed if they don't see models that look like them. And so if you get a big enough group of people, it becomes much easier. I mean, when I started there were very few female attorneys doing it. I happened to have a fairly large female group. And all of a sudden it's become really easy to recruit more females and more females because they have a lot of models that that they can look at them.
Absolutely. So you mentioned that Quarles & Brady does do training for these mentors. What does that look like? What are the things that you all are trying to train these mentors on being able to do--?

Well I think part of it is just training about the program itself. What are you supposed to do? What are we looking for in terms of amount of time commitment? Some of it's ministerial. How do you spend money? How do you keep track of records? What is it that you're supposed to report back to the firm as a whole and what are you not? Because obviously, if someone is telling you, "I'm not sure I can cut it. I'm going to commit suicide," that's something that you should report back and get the right people involved with. On the other hand, someone who's having misgivings, "Do I really want to be a bankruptcy attorney? Maybe I want to be a labor attorney." That's one that you can guide them with, but you let the younger attorney make that decision. So it's setting some of the parameters, helping them, giving them ideas of examples, having people who have had successful mentor/mentee relationships come in and talk to them. And someone who would sit there and say, "Hey, I was a mentee six years ago and this was my mentor, and let me tell you what he did. Let me tell you what I did. Let me give you an observation of what I learned from that." And then you'll have the mentor say, "This is what I was doing, what I was trying to teach." And then he'll say, "Well, that wasn't what you taught at all, but you taught me something different and it was helpful in that process." So it's not a particularly detailed one. I think it probably is, in all, the training is 10 to 15 hours. So it's not a large amount of time. But it's the idea that there's one more source for people to do. We're actually also trying, when we bring in more senior people as lateral attorneys, to assign an integration partner with them. That's a little more than a mentor, but it's also just to tell them how the place runs. Where do you find pencils and tablets? And what do you do when your secretary doesn't work well with you, or you're having problems with this boss, or that kind of stuff? But it's, again, similar.

Great. Going kind of a little bit higher look, when you're a mentor, what are your - maybe the term is philosophies - your goals, kind of your approach to being a mentor for someone? What are the kind of things that you're looking to do, the kind of questions you want to ask, and the end result, kind of, what is your goal for that mentor?

Sure. My goal is for them to be a successful lawyer within the firm. Some of that is how do they get there and figure it out? And some of it is-- I mean, I've also worked in this role a bunch of times when a supervisor can counsel people out and said, "This may not be the right place for you. I think you're working really hard, you're doing the
evaluations-- you're doing the stuff correctly, but it's not working. It's taking too much toll on you physically, in terms of family and what else." But for the others, it's to help them maximize what's there. And some of it is to put in place, "Hey, here's what you're going to hear from real rules. And the rules in the start are going to be-- just concentrate on doing the best work. Don't worry about getting clients because years from now you can worry about that. And in my advice to you is varbage." That's the advice you want to start with today. You want to start building it. And a lot of your relationships that you want to build are relationships you start with today. And it takes 5 or 10 years to build them, so you want to stay in contact with all of your colleagues. So some of it is getting them to go through some exercises and find what they want. So some of the things I will do with them is I'll tell them I want them to work on 10 different ways in which you can market. Some of it is personal, some of it is writing, some of it is speeches, some of it is collaborating with other people. And I want to have them get an experience in all of it so that they'll find which ones are best for them. And they may think they know which ones work, they may not. But every person has different personalities and some think you may be a perfect writer and get work that way. Other people may do it one-on-one. Other people are much better in a group setting or in a teaching setting. So the more opportunities I create for them to have experiences, then they'll get to see what's successful. So my job to do this is to give them the opportunities, give them the tools to help them succeed with it, and then evaluate what worked, what didn't work. Did you put the right effort in and--?

S1 13:44  They're here. Cool. Okay. All right.
Appendix B: Interview with Josh Orendi

S1 00:10 Hello, Josh?

[silence]

S2 01:36 Hey, this is Josh Orendi.

S1 01:38 Hey, Josh. How are you doing?

S2 01:40 I'm well. How are you?

S1 01:42 I'm great. Good to hear from you. How've you been?

S2 01:45 Pretty good. Pretty good. No complaints.

S1 01:48 Yeah? Good to hear. I'm sorry for being a little bit behind the eight ball with all this. My days are getting kind of mixed up in my mind with everything I've got going on, so I appreciate you being a little bit flexible with me. But I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to talk to you about this because, truthfully, this topic kind of started brewing in my head when I was in my first year of consulting. And you [gave?] your keynote at the end of the Field Staff training my first year, so that would have been summer of 2013. And the idea of mentorship and kind of being an advisor and a teacher, kind of what that looks like, has kind of been brewing in my mind since then, and I'm excited to kind of dive deeper into this with my capstone, and I'm thrilled that you're able to talk to me about it.

S2 02:53 [Happy to?]. Actually, I would love just a little refresher if that's okay with you. I know it's--

S1 02:57 Absolutely.

S2 02:58 --[inaudible] passages and stuff. I want to get my head in the right place, so if you can kind of catch me up again, that would help me.

S1 03:04 For sure. Absolutely. And so you know, I intentionally didn't want to give too much context because I wanted you to come in with kind of fresh perspective and kind of real-- I look at what I'm doing in more of a qualitative perspective as far as the research I'm doing. So my project here is to basically as I can boil it down to is to evaluate the importance of mentorship, whether it is organic or structured, and kind of put into place in organizations and the impacts that a mentorship program or relationship has on both individuals, the mentor and the mentee, but more importantly and holistically, the health of an organization. For example, does having a mentorship program give people more of an incentive to stay in an organization for longer because they have the relationships there and feel like they're being validated and they're
working towards something bigger? Or is that not impacting attrition and things like that? So really looking at an organization, whether it's for-profit or non-profit, and understanding the finer points of a mentor/mentee relationship and how those individual relationships, when they're compiled together, create a-- if they do impact an organization's health and longevity.

S1 04:32

I think a lot of times when people are looking at the health of organizations, they look at kind of succession planning, and planning for the future, and finding your successor, and picking the person to kind of be your successor. But I feel like sometimes, lost in the shuffle, are the opportunities to just mentor someone for the sake of being a mentor and wanting that relationship and what it does to both parties rather than someone just saying, "I want to tap you to be the next in line," and then that's it. But I feel like the difference between picking a successor and finding someone to mentor is picking a successor is really a one-sided exchange, whereas finding someone to mentor is a two-way street there. So kind of looking at what that looks like in an organization and how that impacts the health of the organization.

S1 05:25

And what really sparked this for me was going back to that summer at Field Staff when you gave the conversation about context versus content. And it's something I've actually kind of evolved with and started putting into my practice now because now I am a youth advisor, and I run a youth program, and I work with a youth board, and I teach, and I do a lot of teaching. And one of the principals I work with [inaudible], and in her role is that my job isn't to necessarily provide her with tons and tons of information that are going to be things that she needs to know. But more importantly is to give her the tools to have her understanding of how to be a leader grow so that she can bring in more information that makes more sense. So kind of going off that cup analogy that you used is what I've told her is my role is to make her cup bigger, not give her more water for her cup. Just kind of use your analogy there. So it's something I still use, and I'm interested in looking at how those principles impact an organization holistically. For this conversation, it's more about me getting to know you and hearing more about your story and how mentorship has played a part in your career and in your personal life to kind of understand-- you had great success in your career, and how has mentorship impacted that, how has it impacted the way that you teach, and the way that you help other people, and different things like that and then to kind of take some of your opinions of mentorship and what you think of that practice. So I hope that's a broad enough and at the same time detailed enough kind of exploration into what I'm doing to kind of catch you up
to speed.

S2 07:18  Yep, that's exactly what I needed. That's helpful.

S1 07:22  Perfect. So I love stories. I'm a big fan of storytelling. I think you can learn a lot of information from that. So I just wanted to hear some stories about how mentorship has impacted you. Did you have a mentor at the beginning of your career and through your life and how has that impacted you and then paying it forward of different stories about you mentoring other people, things like that.

S2 07:47  Yeah, happy to do that. I was thinking a little bit about-- as you were telling me the background of what you're looking for, it made me think about two different groupings of people in my life. Some of the mentor-- some of the mentors I have are situational, and some are, I guess I would call them, maybe relational. And so I think about-- maybe how we started the company is a good example. Matt and I were-- I mean, gosh, this was 15 years ago. So we were in our early 20s and didn't know what we didn't know. So there were people that we needed guidance from, from our perspective. There was this wonderful market [and this?] entire industry of people that we cared deeply about and had no idea [inaudible] in a way that we thought was good. So we wanted to do something about it. And so I remember having-- Matt and I, neither of us are business majors. Neither of us had started a business before, so the idea of doing something like that was intimidating, right? So we really needed to reach out to some other folks. So there were a handful of people that kinda come to mind. So let me do this. For a moment, I'm just going to put you on pause because I had an emergency text come in, and then I'll pick right back up. It'll take me about 30 seconds.

S1 09:19   That's fine.

[silence]

S2 12:13  Sorry about that. A little crisis at the office. Everything's better now. Yeah, so in the early days, I remember we really had to look to some folks that we could lean on for advice: people who understood the industry, people who understood business, certainly people that we just trusted to share a crazy idea with. And we thought they would do-- we hoped that they would do more than just say, "Oh, great idea. Go get them." They'd really punch some holes in it. So in those early days, I vividly remember 15 years ago, and I vividly remember conversations with Karen [Nishimura's?] niece, sitting down at a Panera Bread and her just railing into me in her kindest way, because I don't think she has a mean bone in her body, as I told her this big dream I had, right? And
she was like, "No. You got to narrow it down. You got to make it simpler for people." And I was like, "Okay. Well, what if I did this, and this, and this, and this?" And she was like, "That's a little better, but that's still not going to get you what you want. You got to narrow it down. Narrow it down." We did it back and forth, and eventually, she just said, "Simpler," and "Narrow it down," and all those things enough times that I remember being physically frustrated at the table, like, "Why is she not hearing me? Why does she not get this?" And I'm just so glad we had that conversation because that was really how we narrowed down from being more of a traditional consulting firm down to a company that focused, well, exclusively on recruitment and growth. That was a really big pivotal moment for us and similarly, Pete SmithHisler having conversations with us about the industry as a whole, and how we needed to approach headquarters and executive directors, and how that varied from campuses, and where markets were within the market. He was really helpful to offer some direction and validation. There were probably lots of stories like that, but I would consider those to be very situational. Even though I had great relationships with both of them, I didn't lean on them or go to them again for, in some cases, 5, 10 plus years for another question, or another piece of advice, or another lunch. But those singular meet-ups were critical and still very memorable today.

So 15 years later, the business is thriving and growing. And, gosh, we just had an event last night called Growth Summit, and we're in our eighth year doing that event. We had like 208 professionals from 40 different organizations, exclusively people who are responsible for or charged with the initiative of growth for their national fraternity and sorority that are there. And Phired Up, TechniPhi, and Innova, the three companies, had 25 employees there and ready to help. And it was the weirdest thing in the world. I didn't have anything that I had to do, and it was such a bizarre feeling because in the early days I did all 25 of those jobs. You know what I mean? There wasn't anybody else to do it. So it was surreal for me, and that feels very fresh because it was last night. But as I'm sitting around some of those people, I was thinking about the role that I've gotten to play in some of their lives. And I didn't use these words yesterday when I was reflecting on it, but yeah, for some of them I've been a situational mentor. And they've just had something random in their personal life, and I'm the only person they know with two daughters, and they're having their first daughter, and we'd start talking about what that's like. And other times, it's very relational, and it's somebody that I've-- there is a guy that's in our staff for-- this would've been his seven year anniversary next week, and he's leaving staff, so I was reflecting back on seven years of mentoring him.
And although I wasn't his direct report or direct supervisor for the majority of that time, he and I have-- he and I have had a wonderful relationship where I've gotten to play a role of guiding him professionally and helping him develop personally. And sometimes that's a very structured role, weekly calls, scheduled and on the calendar. And other times it's really been a looser format on kind of an as-needed basis, but the relationship is maintained. And I sure do hope it-- I sure do hope it continues for a long, long time because he's become a really good, important friend in my life. I'd love to keep rambling, but I don't want to just do that aimlessly. So if you want to give me some direction, I'll go.

Well, I mean, rambling's always good for me because you kind of pick up on these little tidbits. And I think what's important is something I never thought about where the different ways that mentorship kind of evolved. I mean you have the situational one where you're looking at your supervisor or someone that you're reporting up to in. Or in the example of success and planning, there's a situational mentor of a means-- not a means to an end, because I think that's kind of a negative way of looking at it. But there's clear tasks at the end that you're going to someone who's done that, who knows that. And it's like once that's done, it's, "Okay. Well, now what's that relationship going to continue like?" But it's the thing, when you segment that off from relational mentorship, I mean, you get the different conversation of-- we have these conversations with Pete Smithhisler, and he's great, and we had wonderful talks and understanding. But once we were done with that portion of what we were learning, we still kept in touch with things, but there's a different feeling, it sounds like, even in your tone of voice when you're describing a staff member who's leaving after seven years who you didn't supervise or who wasn't directly reporting to but you want that relationship to continue. So I mean, I never really looked at mentorship-- I mean, I looked at mentors in that I would love to have a mentor. Not just a work mentor, but a life mentor of someone I can call up and say, "Hey, I have this actual problem that I would love to kind of talk through," or things like that. And I think that's where you kind of get those two different pieces to that. It's not just this is your supervisor or your boss but someone who's really important in your life, where it's kind of that life coach, so to speak.

Yeah. In fact, manufactured mentorship, I can't actually think of an example when it's worked outside of the workplace. When we have a new staff-- when we have a new hire, it's not uncommon that I become part of their training program, or I have a touchpoint with the once a month, or something like that. And that's certainly fine because there's structure and purpose around it that directly relates to their job. But at
least once or twice a year, it feels like, somebody will call me and say, "Hey, I really appreciated something you did, or a speech that you gave, or work that we used to do together. I'm really looking for somebody to be a mentor." And I'm always flattered by that, right? And I usually say, "Okay. Give me an idea how that works." And I wouldn't say it never worked. It's just never lasted. Either there wasn't the relationship behind it for it to happen or it never developed into a relationship that made it feel long-term purposeful. And it would have probably been-- it would have been more helpful in those cases for that person to say, "I have a project," or, "I have a specific request. It's more situational, and I'd kind of need some help," right? And I think that would have been-- I probably would have said yes to both, right? But sometimes when we think of traditional mentorship, we think that somebody's either-- I do at least. I think somebody's either asking me to be their best friend every week for 20 minutes on a phone or they're looking for some professional guidance over the next 10 years in their life. And in either case, it feels heavy, and daunting, and awkward. I don't quite know what to do with that. But when it's done a little more organically, maybe, is a good way to put it, it just feels more natural. And it tends to be more lasting, unless it's situational, which I appreciate, too, because then it's one or two meetings, and everybody's happy when it's done.

So looking at the organic relationship developments, I love the idea of mentorship, and I always struggle with this. And someone who was really good at it was Kyle Riegler, and he still is. He's one of the best at it, and I never understood how-- I think what he did was he actually went up to people and built these relationships. And he did it with-- I don't know if he still has a relationship, but for a while it was Brian Tenclinger when Brian was with Triangle. There were a lot of conversations in that mentorship relationship. But when you're looking at those organic relationships, is that a two-- do you think that means to be a two-sided street there, or is it one person reaching out to someone saying, "I'm looking for this mentor," or is it you as the mentor in that relationship picking someone, saying, "You know what? Let's work together," or is it kind of a mixture of the two? How do you think those relationships really need to develop to make them lasting?

Yeah, that's a fair question. I've never thought about it. And I guess it seems practical to me that somebody has to initiate the conversation. But I'm trying to think. In the experiences that I've had, the lasting mentorship relationships I've had, it felt-- what's a way to put this? It felt more like we're sitting on both sides of the table together-- on the same side of the table together, as opposed to sitting across the table or across the desk looking up at-- and I tend to think the word
mentorship, for me, makes me feel like I have somebody that's aspirational in my life, or I have somebody that's going to help me get up the ladder, or I have somebody that's going to do, [right?], something like that. And maybe I just have some baggage tied with the word mentorship. But it sort of feels like I'm reaching out, asking somebody to help me ascend in some specific way. And the nature of that has almost a hierarchy to it. But that hasn't been practical in my life. In my life, even when-- I suppose in the hierarchy of our company, Vince, or Brittany, or Taylor are newer employees, but certainly from my perspective, I've never viewed it as I'm sitting on top of the mountain trying to get them up the mountain. It's been more relational, and maybe that's why it's felt more authentic.

Gotcha. Looking at an organization, in your experience, whether-- I don't know kind of what's been going on with Phired Up, but even in fraternity/sorority life, or student groups, or anything, one thing that sparks to mind - this is something I'm looking to try and determine with my research - is does mentorship and having a mentor in an organization affect attrition? Are people more inclined to stick around if there's someone who's really taken an interest in them, and are helping them, and maybe not necessarily, "Okay. Let's go over your work for the week," but someone who's there, door's always open. Or even in a more informal setting, like someone to grab a drink with and talk to who you work with, in the kind of taking it situational to relational. Do you feel like that's something that's going on in the workplace? Do you think that it's something that would change a lot of things in the workplace? Kind of what is your take on that?

Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of data out there. I mean, you can do it-- even if [you see?] people's work here. I mean, the data has a clear answer that yes, people who have a best friend at work tend to stay at work and be happier and more productive. Relationships matter and they work. The same thing is true of incoming students. We know that if you have a-- if you have best friends, a social group, if you feel involved and you identify as having a sense of belonging, if you have an affinity to something-- I mean, those are all key-- those are all buzzwords to say that you feel connection and belonging. And so yes. Yeah, absolutely, it impacts retention in a very direct and measurable way. And I think you can put mentorship in that bucket and if you have a good relationship with somebody you consider to be your mentor, who you think cares for you, right? And yes, all day long. I think it feels a little too narrow of a scope to say that mentorship is the only thing that does that, right? Because that wouldn't be accurate. But as long as you take in the broader scope to say that this belonging, and relationships, and having best friends who cares for me, it keeps
people happy in the workplace and makes them more effective? Yes. Yeah, absolutely.

S1 25:57 So just kind of one of those--- as a question for you rather than just kind of sparking more of a discussion, but how is your experience of being mentored-- how has that affected both positively and negatively your approach to being a mentor?

S2 26:15 Yeah, I think having some people early in my life that I considered a mentor makes me feel a sense of-- I almost used the word obligation, but I don't really like the way that sounds. Gives me a sense of responsibility or a sense of an honor is maybe a better way to put it. I feel honored to want to find other people who I can pay it forward and help them in the same or similar way. I mean, I think that's definitely the pro. And there have been some wonderful mentors who have modeled the way for me about what that relation could look like. The things they did really well, I find myself wanting to replicate, and the things they did poorly, I find myself wanting to make sure I don't replicate. In either case, it's really helpful. And then I'd say there's maybe-- I'm trying to think what the downside of that might be. Yeah, I don't know. I'll tell you one of the weird downsides when-- it just comes to mind for me is I feel like mentorship is a [hot?]-- it's a buzzword or it has been recently within the next last 5 or 10 years. And so it sort of feels, personally, like I'm supposed to have a mentor, or I'm supposed to have somebody I'm mentoring. And it's because I don't have a traditional business structure, right, where there's somebody that rotates into a role that I played at-- into a position that I play that role in, right? That's just not how our company works, and I'm not part of an organization where I rotate into a volunteer role where that happens. It just happens to be more organic. And so sometimes I feel again, guilt is too strong of a word because I only think of it now. But I'd feel a little bit like, "Oh, damn. I probably was supposed to be doing that, or, "I should have given that more attention," or, "Am I doing something wrong because I'm not mentoring or being mentored at the moment?" And the place where I find a little bit of comfort is, again, just if it's situational, and relational, and it's more organic, then I can give myself-- I can give myself a pass and realize there will probably be a time, sooner than later, that it reappears in my life.

S2 28:36 And here's some more baggage that I've got. I think about mentorship as being a longer view or a lasting-- situational mentorship is like I'm almost finding a reason to use the word mentor because mentor for me feels like more of a longer term ask. But the truth is, I get great value out of what other people might call networking. Almost every time I meet somebody in town, I ask them, "Here's what I'm working
on. Here's a problem I have. Here's something I'm battling through. Who are two or three people you know that have done something like this? Who's somebody in my age group in a similar scenario?", those type of questions. And my inbox is full of great recommendations of people in and around Indy or in the industry that I should connect with. And so I try to do that two or three times a month, and the truth is, those people play a mentorship role in my life. It rarely turns into a long-term, structured mentorship, and it rarely turns into a-- and even then, it rarely turns into a long-term meaningful relationship where they're in the inner circle of my life. But that doesn't make it less valuable. It's just more situational.

S1 29:47 It sounds like you're not saying you're drawing a line in the sand but it's like we're using the term mentorship in a lot of different contexts. It sounds like that your personal belief is that there's a difference between advising and advisor relationship and a mentor relationship.

S2 30:01 I agree with that.

S1 30:01 Maybe that's a better way to look at it so [crosstalk]--

S2 30:06 There's a third word I'd love to throw in there, and I'd actually like to ask you for some clarification around how you want to define mentorship. And the other word that-- the other buzzword for me is coaching. So I've got some wonderful coaches. I think about advisors in a different way. I think about the word mentorship as a broad term. So if you could narrow down for me how you want to define mentorship, I'd love to give you more direction.

S1 30:32 That's great. One of the reasons I'm keeping this broad is because there are lots of different ways to define and look at mentorship as we're talking about. And for me personally - and this isn't necessarily how the paper is going to be written or things like that when definitely what your insights are providing are going to kind of relate to that and tie to that - is I really look at mentorship as a two-way street. That when you're coaching somebody or you're advising somebody, you're really trying to impart things in a one direction. This is me personally. This is my own personal baggage. But you're really trying to go one direction with the information, with all of the content, with everything that's going on. You're sending it down, or you're sending it across, or whatever that structure looks like. Whereas one thing that I've seen with anybody who I've considered a mentor is that the only people I've ever been able to have a conversation with where I think both people walk away from the conversation feeling like they took something out of that, and walked away in a different place, and that one side was clearly looking for information but were able to give their own things,
and put it out there, and to have difficult conversations or philosophical conversations, and to do all that I feel like mentorship kind of works in more of a two-way fashion where there is a mentor and a mentee, but there’s enough things happening in that relationship where both sides benefit directly from the other person you’re coaching or you’re advising.

S1 32:08

One thing that I've seen in the work that I'm doing is I benefit in the results of the endeavor. So I'm currently an advisor for a teen group, and I have meetings with my teens. And what I take away from it are the results of I got better at coaching, I got better at teaching, and I got better at understanding, so to speak. But when I talked to one of my friends who is a mentor of mine, when we're having deep conversations or philosophical conversations, I walk away with something that is directly from the other person, if that makes sense. That's just kind of my own personal baggage and way of defining it, but I'd love to kind of hear if you look at mentorship as an umbrella that encompasses coaching, and advising, and teaching, or if they're three different buckets, or whatever you're looking at the vernacular with.

S2 33:08

Yeah. Yeah. I feel like I probably should put more thought into it before talking today, to be honest, because I guess I use them all— they're not synonyms, but they're pretty darn close, and I kind of use them interchangeably. I would say if I'm looking for a way to differentiate them, the mentorship role, again, feels more— there's more of a hierarchy. It feels like there's somebody who is being designated as mentor and somebody as mentee. And therefore, somebody is pursuing knowledge, wisdom, information of some kind from the other person, right? Advising and coaching are similar, right. Somebody is coaching and being coached and advising and being advised. There's not a clear— there is not a clear differentiation for me that I have between all those words.

S1 34:05

And that's fair, and that's a part of what my research is going into is a lot of times I feel organizations will say, "Oh, we mentor our workers," and, "We mentor our subordinates." And you and I have had several conversations when I was working for Sigma Alpha Mu of a supervisor thinks that they're mentoring me, but really they're not because it's set up hierarchical. But I think that inherently when it's set up hierarchical, people assume there is mentorship happening and that's kind of where you get from being supervised and supervisory role into a different title role. And that kind of ties back into what we started talking about in the beginning is there really is a relational component, I think. From kind of taking everything you've been talking about, there is a key relational piece to mentorship, and coaching, and advising that just a
normal business relationship doesn't have. And that's maybe where some organizations miss the mark of you think you're actually mentoring someone, but you're not forming a real relationship with them to kinda build that bridge.

S2 35:17 Yes, which is also why I think it's an oxymoron for companies and organizations to say they have a mentorship program. The idea of I'm going to manufacture a relationship for you to have with somebody else, it just seems odd to me. We can certainly create an environment where that's likely to happen or it can flourish. We can create introductions, right? But manufacturing a quality mentor relationship - I don't know - that's a strange thought for me.

S1 35:52 So my last question is since you kind of came into the business world from this consulting angle is where you kind of started with, I want to ask you a question as a consultant just to kind of hear a little bit more of your thoughts on this topic of I'm the CEO or Executive Director of a non-profit, and I come to you asking about we're having a tough time with people feeling that they're-- we're lacking that direction of coaching or that mentorship or advising in our organization. And we've tried to implement things, and we've tried to do things, but we're just not being successful. Is that something that you've heard from organizations? And kind of what are your thoughts as far as instilling those teachings? Is it a culture thing? It doesn't sound like it should be a program, but maybe it's a cultural philosophy, so to speak, of an organization. And here's how we build up everybody else around us.

S2 36:47 Yeah, my first thought is I think it's way easier for people to try to find a program that's going to fix a problem. But when you're talking about human beings interacting, it is rare that a singular program fixes the problem. In a company, constructs, or an organizational constructs, my first thought is that this is about culture. This is about understanding how humans interact, how people-- people want a friend. They want to feel-- they want belonging. They want purpose. They want to know that they're in a trusted environment where they can be themselves, where they can be expressive, where they can-- in some ways, I think I've taken for granted what we've created in the company, where you almost never hear anybody on our staff use the word employee. That almost feels dirty for me to call my friend my employee, right? You've heard us call-- we call each other [phamily?], with a P-H. So this is our [phamily?]. This isn't some weird nine-to-five, punch-in, punch-out. And because we have that-- because we have that deep inherent relational component from day one and that expectation that we have a-- that there's a family environment, we just don't run into a lot of what I see my other friends who work in a more traditional
company run into where their need for let's insert mentorship program here. I'm probably a weird person to interview in that I just come from a very different perspective, a very different environment.

S1 38:41

Well, I look at it as something that it's not about the-- it's that you've created a culture in your organization that is inherently one for a mentor relationship to thrive. So it's not like you're coming-- I've already interviewed someone who works at a large law firm who has a mentorship program that they established for young lawyers coming in to learn and do all these different things, and they've been administering this for a while. So I've gotten the perspective of, not the cookie-cutter mentorship, but that situational business mentorship. But the reason I reached out to you, Josh, inherently was this is about relationship building, and there's no one on the planet that knows relationship building better than you do. And I think that it's uncomfortable because what you've done has been really build that into the core of your organization. And for me in the non-profit world, one thing that the non-profit world struggles with-- I don't know [inaudible] much in Greek life, but professional non-profit world struggles with all the time is turnover, and attrition, and people leaving because they don't feel really attached to the core of the organization. And you've been able to change that narrative through the way that you've built Phired Up. And I think that's important for a lot of small non-profits to be able to see and to hear about is that this mentorship, and building people up, and making people feel like they belong, it's relational and it's at the core of your work and the core of the organization, not just one person doing it. But it has to be built into the framework of what you do. And I think that's where that mentorship, relational mentorship, is able to thrive in to be organic rather than having to be manufactured.

S2 40:30

Yeah. You know when you asked me to tell you a story to kickoff, I shared with you that Vince is leaving after seven years. And we've been doing this 15 years, and I don't think we've had 10 people leave the company. And when people do, it's sad and we celebrate it. Last night there were 20 of us huddled around him, and watched him cry, and watched him laugh, and hugged on him. And this wasn't like, "Let's go have a company dinner and say good bye to Vince." Man, it was emotional, and gut-wrenching, and celebratory, and it was like watching a-- the word he used was a graduation. He related it to when he graduated from college and all those amazing feelings, right? Moving on but not wanting to leave the great memories that you've built, right? And that was just such a strong indicator of the culture that I take so much pride in, the family that we have. And he stayed with me last night in my house, and we stayed up until 1:00 in the
morning reminiscing and doing what you do with your family. And I don't know. I'm not suggesting that every company and every organization should have their staff members sleeping in their home, you know what I mean [laughter], crying and group huddles. That's not my point. But I think if more people put relationships and people first, the idea of coaching, and advising, and mentorship would just seem so obvious and organic that it probably wouldn't be the hot topic it is today. To a large degree, it would probably take care of itselfs.

That's perfect. That is exactly what I was looking for. So I know it's getting late. It's three hours over there, so it's almost lunch time. But Josh, this was amazing. Hearing you talk out this and talk about your experiences, this is exactly what I was hoping for. So I appreciate you taking some time. If you don't mind, when I get kind of really into the weeds of writing this, might have a 35, 50-page paper a head of me to put together, but it's possible I'll have some follow-up questions. But I'll just shoot those over to you in an email. Maybe one or two follow ups just as points of clarification or anything like that. But I'm excited to write this and kind of analyze this. And I think that what you've been able to do is Phired Up speaks to, not necessarily like what you said about people should be staying over at your house and crying until 1:00 in the morning, but definitely creating a core culture of you're not just a number here, but you matter, you're important, and the relationship that each person has with everybody in the organization is important. And I think in the non-profit world, seeing that most non-profits aren't rolling in dough, that's an important one for me, people happy making sure that they feel loved, and important, and belonging, which would help the sector immensely. So I do appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. And if you have any other thoughts or questions, feel free to just shoot me an email or give me a call. You have my cell number. And I appreciate you being flexible with me on rescheduling and moving some things around.

Not a problem. My pleasure, [Ted?]. Thanks for asking.

Absolutely, Josh. Have a great rest of your day, and I will talk to you soon. And thank you so much for everything you do.


Appendix C: Interview with Erin René Nelson

S1 00:01 You still there?

S2 00:02 Yep. And it said it started, so sounds good.

S1 00:05 Awesome. Perfect. So yeah, I'm right in the thick of things. It's a pain, and I was thinking about it of-- we had class Friday, Saturday-- or Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at the beginning of June, eight hours each day, and then nothing. And it's like online stuff, but the amount of time that we have to write our capstone, do the whole project is like half the time that the rest of the cohort, our cohort had. So it's starting to become a little bit more stressful.

S2 00:35 I bet. I bet. It almost killed me. The timing of it was just insane, and I had to kind of back off and not let it be perfect [laughter], so.

S1 00:46 Absolutely, yeah.

S2 00:48 Good but not perfect, you know?

S1 00:50 Yeah, no. I thought what your research did was amazing, and what you presented in the capstone presentation was very fascinating. And actually sitting in that room listening to you talk, it did inspire me to do the capstone that I'm doing. So it definitely--

S2 01:08 Oh, well, that's good to know because I felt awful about that presentation when the slides were messing up, so. Oh, good, good.

S1 01:16 It definitely impacted me and kind of what I wanted to do with my capstone presentation and project.

S2 01:21 Good.

S1 01:21 But now I'm, "Well, crap. How the hell am I going to get this thing done in less than a month?" So I'm kind of at that point [laughter].

S2 01:28 Yeah.

S1 01:29 But it'll be fine. It'll be good. And it's just a lot of work that I still have to do. But I'm focusing--

S2 01:35 Right. My biggest advice to you is the transcribing takes so much longer than you ever think it will.

S1 01:41 Yeah?

S2 01:42 Yep. So--

S1 01:45 Oh boy. Okay, well that's good to know.
S2 01:46 Just to give you a heads up on that [laughter].

S1 01:48 Thank you.

S2 01:49 Yeah.

S1 01:49 Well, I'm so thankful that you can take a little bit of time. I don't want to take up too much of your time because I know it's during lunch. So just to kind of give you a little bit of background, I've had two other expert interviews, and I try not to give too much context because one thing I'm trying to prove is that this kind of a conversation, this what I'm looking for in mentorship and how that plays into organizations, needs to be much more relational and almost-- I don't know if organic's a good word, but in the context of what I'm looking at, is not something that's literally thought out, and scieneced out, and organized and planned, but more of a cultural thing. So rather than having my expert interviewers talk about-- give them time to prepare, and look at all the stuff to do with their companies, it's more of like, "Well, how do you feel about this sort of a practice?" And I thought that--

S2 02:49 I did something similar on some of my interviews, yeah.

S1 02:52 Absolutely. So I found that I get a little bit of a different kind of feel. And I just kind of want to-- I love stories. I love storytelling and hearing all that. And really what I'm after with-- why I reached out to you - and I think told you this in my emails - is that where your research picks up in the importance of succession planning, and looking to the future in building your organization internally, and making sure that when one person's leaving you have someone ready to take their place and all that, that it can be much more of a cultural paradigm of building in opportunities for people to be mentored. Whether it's an actual organized practice, or if it's just the culture of your organization. And how that those two things, mentoring, mentorship relationships, that two-way street of a mentor-mentee relationship, really lends itself to succession planning. So I kind of want mine to kind of link into yours in a kind of a puzzle pieces sort of a way, in that there's a lot that you talk about, and then it's almost like what you were talking about was like the science behind succession planning, and then I want mine to be more about the art of mentorship and how they kind of work together, if that makes sense.

S2 04:08 Yeah, yeah, and they do. So, yeah.

S1 04:10 Perfect. So I just kind of want to hear from you before we kind of get into your research and your thought process and everything with your project, was who's one person, whether it was career in a specific organization or whatever, who was a mentor for you? And kind of what
did that relationship look like?

S2 04:30 Wow. I have not had somebody that I would fully say was a mentor. I briefly had a few people that were in higher positions that would kind of guide me, but that mentorship was incredibly lacking in my career. I have tried to mentor others always because of that. And totally not formal, just anytime new people, or even if I meet peers, things like that. Just encouragement and keeping people on top of all the latest trends and things like that.

S1 05:18 For sure. So looking at those relationships that you’ve been building, kind of how did those start, and how do those relationships look from your relationship as a mentor? Or how do you feel? What is your style? What do you like to do as a mentor? Is it more of just, "Hey, you’re using the photocopier wrong?" Or is it, "Let's actually talk about the inner workings of our organization, what we could we do for the next five years to help make it better," kind of conversations?

S2 05:46 That’s actually what I’m trying to create right now, is that as a staff we should look at that more. Like the five year, kind of what do each of us individually want to be, and what do we want to be as a whole? And working on building those relationships with all the current staff, which is very kind of mentoring-like. But normally, it would be if I’m training new staff, certainly, my daughter has a lot of friends that I know, and they kind of call me a lot for advice. So sometimes it’s informal conversations, like maybe a specific question or helping people with resumes. The other thing that’s interesting that’s happened is here at the Haas Business School, they have started this coffee chat thing where, because the Haas school is so big, not all of us know each other. And what that has turned into almost every single time, because it’s randomly pairing you up with people in the school, and you’re supposed to just go out for coffee. And most of those people end up being younger than me and new in their career or just kind of getting towards mid-career, and it ends up being a mentor session [laughter]. Like, "How did you get where you are?" And, "Did you think you were going to go down that path?" In particular, for people in events because my path started in events. So most of it has been organic. That was a formal process of meeting people, but it turning into a mentoring session was very organic. And now they call me for advice and stuff. So I haven’t done the more traditional, have a mentee, a specific person, and guide them through over the years. However, I volunteer at another nonprofit, as you know, Spirit Horse, and I am very much in a mentor relationship with everyone there. I’ve pulled out of the board, and I’m considered a board advisor. And so I’m working with the new board members, and just trying to answer their questions, and kind of
tell them what expectations are, and being there, not as a crutch, but as something that they can lean on if they need to.

S1 08:17 Awesome. That sounds like a really awesome kind of blend of your talents in that role, kind of as someone who really knows the inner workings of an organization but helping people grow their own strengths rather than doing it for them. And--

S2 08:34 Oh, exactly. Yes.

S1 08:35 That’s kind of what I look at as a mentor, part of mentorship. One of the parts of my project that I’m trying to get to is a model of how to be a mentor. Not a one-size-fits-all, but kind of like a, "Throw everything away. Here's some basic mentorship principles." And that [crosstalk]--

S2 08:56 Well, and I found-- like what you were saying, is there’s kind of two categories for that. So I have someone who used to be executive vice president at Ernst & Young and so very high level. And she considers herself my mentor. Now, we probably talk maybe twice a year. But she knows when I email her, I need her. So it’s set up as a very respectful relationship that she will be there for me in a limited amount of time. And the higher level you get, of course, that’s going to happen a lot. But I need her in that way. And then there’s other mentors that I need that are more like building the relationship almost, not daily, but you know what I mean, and just more about the details than something-- or not the details. Instead of it being something specific to address as with my mentor-- her name’s Linda. Instead of that, it’s more of like, like you said, kind of building the relationship and encouraging each other to be the best is basically what it is. Because when you’re the teacher, you’re learning. And when you’re the learner you’re, yeah. So, yeah.

S1 10:12 So that kind of brings me to this next question because you brought in some words. And I’ve been struggling with this since my last expert interview, and I think it’s going to be a critical pivot point in my paper and in my project. And I just want you to kind of take a stab at it, and using your experience, your wealth of knowledge, and the work you did in your capstone to try and guide this sort of answer here. I want to throw this kind of 30,000-foot question up that really is one of those stupid questions that they ask us in graduate school and expect us to have an amazing answer for it. And of course, it’s a discussion point. So the question I have been wrestling with myself and I want to kind of get your two cents on it are, there are three words that everyone uses so interchangeably to mean the same thing, but I think they need to be in their own different buckets or different boxes, and I’m trying to come up with definitions for them to kind of guide my paper here. And those words are advisor, teacher or coach, and mentor. So--
S2 11:12  Well, and I can even add another word for that. But can you give me those four again? You said mentor, advisor, teacher, and coach?

S1 11:19  Yeah.

S2 11:20  Okay.

S1 11:20  And if you want to put in another one there, just throw in another one. But what do you see as the defining features? If it's like one or two things that differ between those different words, those different meanings or definitions? If you do have any, or if they're synonymous.

S2 11:34  I would say that advisor is kind of what I was describing with Linda. She's very high level, but she's definitely someone who can advise me in my career. Mentor, to me, is more about developing a longer, closer relationship. It's someone that you look up to for some reason and that could be professionally or it could be personally too. It could just be somebody who's 30 years older than you. A mentor can even be a family member, but you know? So mentor is more, to me, about a very solid relationship no matter where you are in your career and that. Coach, for me, implies much more hands-on training. You know what I mean? Much more coaching, you know?

S1 12:32  Yeah.

S2 12:32  It's still part of mentoring, but to me, it's also much more hands on. Like, "You have this problem, so why don't you try this exercise or try this article, or whatever. And come back to me and let's discuss it." You know what I mean?

S1 12:48  Mm-hmm.

S2 12:49  And then teacher, that's hard for me because I'm in a university, I see the term teacher as a very formal role. But I have always said that in my-- anything I have ever done, I am teaching. But that's because that is a value of mine, a personal value to always teach. So for me, I see a teacher as it's very formal, you're going to be with that person at very specific times and learn specific outputs.

S1 13:23  Great. So I think what you described for all of those kind of lends back to what I'm looking for, in that mentorship, it is of itself, it has to be a cultural design. Like because you're saying - and I agree with you 100% - that mentorship is really relational. It's not something that you can just jump into or do for a little bit and that's it. It's really relational. Then that has to be much more of an organizational value. So my last expert interview, he started his own company. It was a student life organization that was about-- focused on recruiting and training for
college students. And it's a fantastic organization. They've grown since he started the company to now 15 years later there are like 50-something people, and speaking all over the country. He's had great success. But one thing that he described to me was is he had one of his-- one of the people that he mentored for the past seven, eight years, he was moving on to his next opportunity, and everybody from their company huddled around him, were crying, were sharing their fondest memories from the last seven years. And then he ended up crashing at their house and stayed up all night talking and having that. And that, to me, sparked in my head about this idea of it's a real cultural thing. So it's not something that you can just kind of throw together in some sort of mentorship program, which is much more, sounds to me with your descriptions of like, that's more of an advising, or your advisor.

S2 14:57 Yeah, coaching, advising. And I can go back to the USD mentorship program. It was kind of formal and it didn't really work, in my opinion, because they didn't help foster that relationship from the beginning. I mean, they tried. They had a dinner which was really good because I probably never would have called or met with my mentor because of his position. But because I got to meet him and he was so personable and things like that. Our schedules never worked out where we could meet. I feel like if they had had-- I think it's easier within a company because you're there. You're stuck together, right? You're stuck. So you're going to see each other every day. But formal mentorship programs outside of people you're going to see every day have to have-- they have to build in relationship building. I know that's weird, but they do. Or like you said, it's organic. It's something that kind of starts because of how people feel about it in the company.

S1 16:07 So, kind of looking at-- because I know when you did your project, your capstone, it was looking at your own organization and that kind of inspired you with the succession planning. If we're talking about how to build mentorship as a cultural adaptation of an organization, kind of building it into the framework of what an organization is doing, as an expert and a consultant in the field where do you start with that sort of a thing? Is that something from the top down? Is that something that you're working with as a consultant? Where do you kind of look at an organization and start that building process?

S2 16:48 Well, my personal opinion and somewhat from research is that culture does start top down. Because I am constantly fighting to change our culture here. But our top does not have it, and it's very, very difficult. If whatever leadership is in place doesn't have the same value and really understand, especially mentoring being a long-term kind of
relationship thing, it's really difficult to do because if they see it as a waste of time, then you're constantly battling it. But I do think it comes from the top and the bottom. In the sense that I think it's best for the leadership to identify someone first within-- and I hate to say top and bottom but that's the easiest right now for our conversation. But within the bottom rank, so to speak, to identify someone who's very warm, who's very friendly, who is comfortable talking to other people and to start planning ideas and things so it's kind of coming from the bottom up and the top down.

S1 18:02
I see. So it's kind of like almost inseminating this culture into-- the leadership has to understand that we're going to build a culture within our organization, that we're going to be a place where mentorship actually happens, and kind of that laboratory for helping each other grow. But then you have to go down to people who are in regular management levels or even entry-level roles and people to be like, "You need to be seeking this out." So it sounds like it has to be a two-way street of [crosstalk]--

S2 18:32
It definitely does. And it's really tricky because it's based on a lot on personalities. My leadership basically thought succession planning was not needed. My leadership thought mentoring's kind of a waste of time. It's like a perk for their employees. It's a pleasantry. And, to me, that really backfired on them because instead of having this culture of building leaders so that when you get to the time you need leaders [laughter]. And, yeah. And so it's interesting because we have new staff here. People consider me the kind of warm, outgoing person. So even some of my leadership-- because I have five co-chairs. So that's another interesting thing. But one co-chair was like, "Hey, Erin, will you take them out to lunch and make sure they feel welcome?" And I'm like, "Well I'm already on that. I've already thought of that." But you see what I mean?

S1 19:30
Yeah.

S2 19:31
And so starting right from the get-go with a new person. Now if I had had somebody like that person-- unfortunately, Linda who I was telling you about was only here for about six months. But if she had been here longer, she totally believed in-- and I wanted to bring another word to you, but she completely believed, in particular for women, that women need to mentor women. And so she had that relationship with all her staff. She built it and started it and made it easier for us to kind of do it with each other. And then she just wasn't here long enough to kind of really convince those chairs of this kind of need, so. But it did backfire on them.
Absolutely. And you brought up something else where your mentor at the time, or your advisor, whatever we want to describe it as-- I think it sounds much more like a mentor relationship so I'll use the word mentor. Your mentor wasn't around for very long, but do you think that this type of a relationship, going from mentor to mentee, and then even still mentee to mentor, if that's clear and it's felt on both sides, do you think that is a key to helping with maybe some retention issues in nonprofits? Especially if it's a cultural thing? Where people feel

crosstalk--

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Because here's something that never happens - I don't understand why - in particular in universities, people have so many different strengths, right? And we learn about-- there's just so many either values and strengths that each people have and they come into a position that's like a little can that they're trying to put usually a round hole into square peg, instead of figuring out everybody's strengths and rising, increasing those and building on those. I mean, it doesn't mean that we don't all have to go and do all the everyday tasks and all that. But if just when mentoring you recognize different peoples strengths, oh my gosh, retention level, yeah, hits higher and higher. Like I even think nonprofits who are friendly with each other should talk about this kind of stuff because we talk about the only place in a small nonprofit to go, to get either other qualifications, other experience, or be able to get next step in your career, raises is out-- you have to leave the nonprofit. And so we have these nonprofits that have really high turnover, especially the medium to small ones. And so I just kind of feel like if there were a way that across nonprofits there was this culture for, "We're going to build leaders. They may leave us and lead somebody else, but their leader may lead us." Right? You know what I mean? That if, culturally, definitely, within the nonprofit, but even bigger that it's within all the organizations. That's how nonprofits can support each other.

Yeah. Well, that's an amazing point that I hadn't even thought about with this whole idea of mentorship, is looking for nonprofits to-- instead of thinking about-- we're going to mentor and train our own leaders and hopefully we can keep them to stick around rather than spend-- instead of doing that and saying we're only focusing on training them for our purposes, is we're going to train better leaders so that when they inevitably do leave for another nonprofit, that nonprofit's still in good hands. And if you get enough nonprofits thinking that way, then you know that the people [crosstalk] internal. Okay.

Exactly. And so thinking that we want the best leaders possible, and not only leaders but also the best people possible for any position in
the nonprofits. And we can protect that through mentor relationships.

S1 23:34

So one last thing that I've been thinking about with this project and something I'm going explore a little bit more through research and everything else is, going back to those definitions, I look at mentorship as a real two-way street. And I kind of want to hear your reaction to this. But when I look at a mentor-- the difference between an advisor, and like a coach, or a teacher, and a mentor, is that in a mentor relationship, both sides walk away from conversations or come away from interactions feeling they both took something out of it. It's not just one side dumping information on the other or the other side dumping information to the other, or venting, or whatever. It's a real, kind of a passing of information back and forth. Not necessarily someone being a superior, but listening, and conversating, and having high-level conversations that benefit both sides. And I think that's where mentor-mentee relationships take that next step. And I think that comes back to the relational conversation about if you're not comfortable, in a comfortable relationship with the other person, you're not going to be able to have those interactions and you're going to be stuck in this one-sided relationship, where it's just like, "Here I'm going to teach you all of this stuff and then that's going to be it." So looking at your organization and the work you've been doing, have you seen those types of relationships develop, either personally or other people where it's that two-way street of relationships there? Or has it generally been the mentor passing information down and the mentee absorbing it all, and that's where it ends?

S2 25:03

For me, it's been about the personality of the mentor. Some mentors, that's all they want to do is impart their wisdom. That's just who they are, and that's why they're doing it, is it makes them feel good that they get to impart their wisdom. And that can be really helpful depending who it is. But like you said, and I also agree, the best long-term that help in a lifetime, and actually end up helping both sides, are exactly what you said. The inter-relational, the mentor will-- and some of that is setting up the expectation of the mentor. But the mentor ends up learning either new ideas or just sometimes feeling refreshed about what they did. I mean, it's definitely a two-way street.

S1 25:56

Okay. I think that when we're-- that's a tough one that I'm trying to figure out because I feel like when we use the phrase, "setting expectations," it takes away from that organic feel of-- I've had mentors where it's not like I sit them down and say, "I want to be your mentee." I've sought that out with that expectation of, "I want this person to mentor me." But it's been probing and asking questions and getting to know them, but not setting expectations. So that's kind of
been a challenge I've been wrestling with, of how do I create this model of mentorship without, "All right, here's where our intended outcomes are going to be. Here's--"

S2 26:38 Well maybe it's about identifying. So there's some sort of identifying. It's both on the mentee, like, "What kind of mentor is important to you right now?" They may need somebody, especially like, let's say someone's going to cross over into a different career, right? Like, completely change their career. They could find it very useful for having the kind of mentor that just dumps, downloads information, right? Gives you all the nitty-gritty and the inside scoop. So that mentee could identify, "What I really need is information." Or the mentor could say, "You know, I identify myself as a conversationalist," or whatever, you know? It's almost identifying on-- that's the tricky part about relationship building is you have to know who's in the relationship [laughter] and how that connection happens.

S1 27:32 Ok. Well--

S2 27:33 And so, like I know with my staff here, I have someone who is-- freaks out if anything is close to being touchy-feely. It makes them uncomfortable and actually anxious. Without knowing it, she has been mentored. Okay? Right? But it's not like it's a formal process, you know? It's lunches. It's kind of guiding. It's kind of listening, hearing their frustrations, kind of thinking, "Oh, well let me give you example of this or that," and trying to let them see the other side. So sometimes somebody doesn't even know they're being mentored.

S1 28:17 Absolutely. And so the two other people I've interviewed, one's been in the nonprofit world, one's been in the legal world, the for-profit world. And both have very different opinions on mentorship and kind of where it builds from. The one from the nonprofit that I told you, it was that relational, it was that kind of feeling each other out and building and building over time, that kind of art of it. And then my expert interview from the legal world, they have in their large law firm, they have a mentorship program, and they have awards, and they have, not curriculum, but they have things that you're supposed to be talking about, and building, and doing all of this sort of thing. So it was almost like there is an art and science of it. But they both at the end at the same place.

S2 29:01 True. I would agree. And I think it'd have to be a blend of art and science.

S1 29:06 Which just makes my research a little bit more interesting, and I think that it ties nicely into planning for the future. I mean, we've talked
about it several times when we were in class together, about nonprofits where they have this executive director who's not teaching anybody, or working with anybody, or developing anybody, and then they leave, and the nonprofit's hosed. And you've even [inaudible] that first hand. But rather than having it be a formal passing of the torch, it's almost like building into your organization the culture of developing each other and having the relationship so that people can develop themselves almost. This person didn't realize she was being mentored, but it's like that cultural paradigm of, "We're going to do this. It's going to be a part of the fabric of who we are," rather than saying, "I'm picking you to be my successor. Let's learn everything in six months." Which is kind of interesting to think about. Okay. Well--

S2 29:59 Now one of the things that I wanted to add to all of this conversation as far as different words and expectations, is have you come across the word sponsor? Especially in the corporate world.

S1 30:08 [crosstalk] I haven't come across the word sponsor in my conversations, but it is one of the words I'm kind of looking to identify with.

S2 30:14 Okay. Because I've read a couple articles-- and I'm so sorry, I don't know where they were. So maybe just kind of google it. But it's always been around in corporations. But it's becoming more of a thing especially with women leaders and women minority leaders because the bottom line is, especially for nonprofits but even for corporations, there's a leadership void coming. It's happening now and coming more so. And what a sponsor-- the difference between a sponsor, from my understanding from these articles, is you are specifically mentoring that person to have a future role. You're hoping that future leadership role will be with you. That person is literally out there making sure you take the right projects, making sure they talk about you, that sort of thing. And that's a whole different level.

S1 31:10 I've heard something similar. I've heard the word champion. You're championing someone to move up. And it's that higher level person putting themselves out there on the line to support someone who they're putting up for the-- and that's an interesting other way to look at things. I think that's like a next level of mentorship of--

S2 31:33 Exactly. Because obviously that person somehow built a relationship enough to trust that they could sponsor or champion them, right, into higher level leadership. And that's where I think more the informal, organic mentorship was probably happening and then this person in a leadership realized, "Wow. This is a winner. We can't lose them."
Right? And so they say, "I'm going to be your sponsor." And that creates this really tight bond. And both can benefit really well. But you have to have a lot of trust in that one.

Absolutely. Okay. I like this because now in my head I'm formulating a new way to kind of open up the conversation in this paper and looking at this as like, let's lay out all of the different terms that people lump together and dissect them all and then from there we'll truncate out into why mentorships actually are important to organizations rather than looking at just advising, or teaching, or things like that and kind of segment those out. I like all of these terms and they are used so interchangeably, especially [inaudible] and development and things like that. But having real, defined features to separate them out I think lends to the arguments that are being made of just teaching someone isn't the way to succession planning, or--

Oh God no, trust me on that. That doesn't work [laughter].

Just like hand-picking someone and being at that, no, that's not enough. It's like you have to, you really have to develop, and it starts from day one when that person walks into the room, of what's the culture that they're going to see in this organization and how does that culture affect their relationship with others around them?

And leadership I think just now is starting to kind of understand that. And I think it's really hard for nonprofits because they're smaller. Or there's more smaller ones, right? But corporations are starting to understand that they're losing their talent and how to get the highest talent. And that the building of relationships is the bottom line. That's how to get the highest talent.

Absolutely. Well, this has been fantastic, Erin. I know that when I reached out you were like, "I don't know if I would be much help." But Erin, this conversation was fantastic.

Oh good. I'm glad I helped. And feel free to call me for any questions. Text first so we can arrange things. So if you have questions, even capstone-particular logistic questions or whatever, so.

Absolutely. I plan on actually asking about capstone stuff when I get there because I'm a little lost and confused as it is. But I will text you first. But this was absolutely helpful. This is going to be great for my paper and I'm really excited to get this transcribed and start writing it up and doing all that. But this was fantastic.

Well, and this might help your paper because this is an example here. By the time my chair of this whole unit realized that what he really
needs to do is build a relationship with somebody who could fill his shoes, it was too late. Had he been doing that 10 years ago it would have been the simplest-- and this person was here for 10 years, right? It would have been just so smooth, simple. He would have felt good that he handed his baby over because he's a founder. But because how it is, people don't think about it till the very end and stuff. You can't, as he's trying to put a foot out the door, try to build that kind of relationship. You just, you can't. And then that person, the one person that he was counting on, got a different position. Had they been building the relationship over the years, I seriously doubt he would have taken that position because the heart would have been attached here. So anyways. So that was just the final thought I wanted to share, so.

S1 35:31  No that's amazing. And I think that's really important for everybody to know when it comes to mentoring, is that it's never too early to build those relationships but it can definitely be too late. And knowing that there is a finite amount of time you have to build those because life moves pretty quickly. Fantastic. Well, thank you so much, Erin. I appreciate you taking time out of your lunch--

S2 35:55  All right, take care and good luck.

S1 35:57  Thanks, Erin. Bye.

S2 35:58  All righty, bye-bye.
Author’s Bio

As a hardworking nonprofit professional, Ian currently focuses on leadership development, program development, and logistics management. Serving as the Temple Isaiah Youth Director, Ian wears many hats: he serves as an adviser to the leadership group of the high school program, the camp director of Temple Isaiah’s summer camp, Camp Kefli, the lead teacher and coordinator of the 7th Grade Program, the head of the 7th Grade Fund, a nonprofit foundation that provides grant funding to nonprofit organizations annually, and is a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Through his work, he has helped to build a program that holistically serves over 300 elementary, middle, and high school students and, through his work with the 7th Grade Fund, provided over $17,000 in grant funding for nonprofit organizations this year alone. For his work at Temple Isaiah, he was recommended for and accepted into the Union for Reform Judaism Youth Professional Cohort, where he will join with other leading youth professionals in America to collaborate, innovate, and learn together.

Through his Master’s program at the University of San Francisco, Ian has served as the Treasurer of the Nonprofit Student Council and participated in many other extracurricular opportunities, all while working at Temple Isaiah full-time and maintaining a successful academic track record. He provided consultative services to LIM Innovations, a Silicon Valley Start-Up in the prosthetics space, that laid out a roadmap for their launch of their social impact arm, LIM Reach. He helped to develop a marketing and awareness strategy for their social impact solution, as well as providing insights into the operations necessary for the company to find sustainability in their new venture.