

THE PERSONAL SIDE OF MENTORING

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The utility industry is facing a major generational change in the next five years as the Baby Boomers retire. To compound matters, the remaining staff is made up of a significantly smaller workforce. Utilities that are successful with these issues are those organizations that have created an Employer of Choice culture – one where people want to be a part of, and are actively engaged in, the organization’s purpose.

An important component of being an Employer of Choice is a comprehensive succession planning program; a program that builds on all employees’ strengths and passions. And fully utilizing the talents, knowledge and expertise of the retiring work force is a necessary and smart component in order to bridge the gap left by their absence. This wealth of information is meant to be tapped and shared with younger staff. There is a moral requirement of anyone holding the knowledge to pass it on....to be a mentor.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines *mentor* as “a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” No matter your age, do you see yourself this way? All too often I hear veteran employees say, “What difference does it make what I do?” It is time to realize how valuable we are as human beings, and therefore, acknowledge that each of us makes the difference; that we all have a lot to offer whether we are of the Baby Boomer era or the remaining staff. Consider that it is part of your legacy to pass on what you know. In fact, it is unconscionable not to. It is our duty to be honest about our motives and intentions for holding back knowledge and vital expertise. It does not serve us psychologically to be possessive, jealous, or overly competitive, and it stops the flow of information and learning in the workplace. It creates a self-fulfilling prophesy and limits the joy we are meant to experience in life no matter what age we are.

If we individually see ourselves as having something important to offer, then a more collaborative and cooperative environment can be created as the necessity for succession planning unfolds. A wise and trusted counselor or teacher knows when to let go with grace and dignity. When we acknowledge and celebrate how wise we are, we willingly want to share it with those who are chosen to replace us. It’s an honor to pass the baton.

An Employer of Choice culture accepts and values its body of people. In order to be successful in this culture, each person must value themselves and honor what we have to offer to the whole. Then, willingly share that knowledge and wisdom with others.

Know that you are the master of your destiny, that you are the leader in your life. See yourself as youthful, even if you are not so young. Allow your mind and heart to be open, yielding to the purpose for which you are here. And remember, your life is a reflection of what you think. Look in the mirror. Who do you see? Because you are a unique, one-of-a-kind human being, you have reason to be proud of that reflection. Then turn around and notice who is following in your foot steps. It’s likely you are a great mentor and are leaving a vital imprint for others to follow.



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“There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.”

*Martha Graham
Modern Dance Choreographer
1894—1991*