

Mentoring – Enhancing Your Career

by Deborah J. Hodges

This article is the first in the series of seven articles on the value of mentoring and its relationship to a successful career. This article introduces the current year's goals of the National Mentoring Committee and the upcoming articles and initiatives.

In the last few years, the National Mentoring Committee has been working to develop the best mentoring program for SMPS members. Your best interest has been our highest priority. Our commitment remains strong to provide you with a great program. We have an official name for the mentoring program- Mentoring Pathways. You will see this name throughout the series of articles.

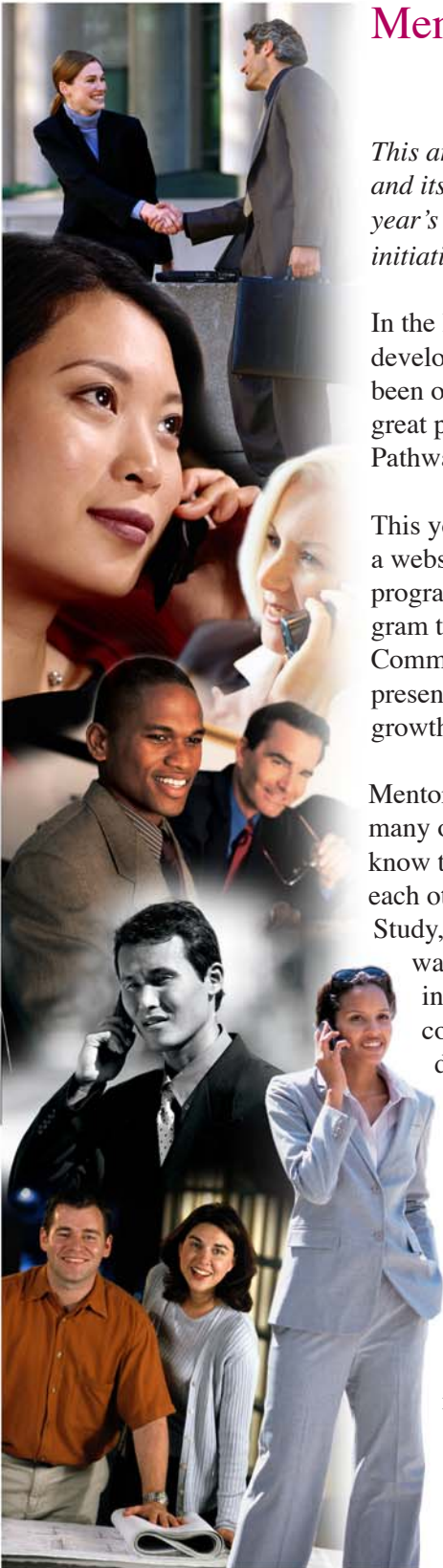
This year's goals are to provide you with a series of articles on mentoring, begin a website page with informational resources for you, research other mentoring programs and make a formal recommendation on the type of mentoring program to the SMPS National Board of Directors. The SMPS National Mentoring Committee's focus is to provide you with a mentoring program that meets your present needs, promotes career development, and provides for your continued growth.

Mentoring is a readily accepted concept that is prevalent today in many organizations like the AIA and in many companies. We do know that career success and mentoring are interconnected with each other. In 2001-2002, I conducted the SMPS Foundation Study," The Role of Empowering Marketing Professionals." It was found that mentors and mentees benefited from exchanging ideas, gained confidence, and became more interested in continuing education. Likewise in other research, it is well documented that leading professionals have greatly benefited and attributed much of their success to mentoring at some point in their careers.

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In the book Quotations on Education by educator Margaret Mead, she wrote "Man's most human characteristic is not his ability to learn, which he shares with many other species, but his ability to teach and store what others have developed and taught him." What you learn today will provide you with that "epiphany" or "ah hah moment" later! Whether you are early in your career, a mid-level manager or a senior-level executive, mentoring is critical to developing talented people at every level. Being mentored or mentoring another person enhances career success.

Here is a brief snapshot of the articles that are coming to you in the next few months.



“Mentoring- Help in Finding My Way in the Work World “ is the second article which focuses on how to select a mentoring relationship, what issues are involved, how personality considerations are an important part of the process, and what type of mentor is right for you. As an example, do I want a structured or informal relationship? Do I need someone to help me define goals or do I need a mentor who will harness my ideas and help me give form to them? This article provides suggestions for you to consider when selecting a mentoring relationship.

The third article is “The Mentoring Relationship- You Have to Want It!” This article defines techniques of how to establish and maintain a good mentoring relationship. The techniques discussed include how to develop trust, what it takes to establish commitment, and the willingness to share and try new things. The focus is the “two-way street” of the mentoring relationship.

Do I want a mentor to help me define professional goals or do I need a mentor who will harness my ideas and help me give form to them?

The fourth article is “Overcoming Stumbling Blocks in a Mentoring Program.” The main focus is how to engage in mentoring, the potential stumbling blocks to be aware of in relationships, and provides suggestions of how to overcome some of the problems that can occur when building a solid mentoring relationship. Some of the stumbling blocks discussed are fear, distance, lack of time, incompatibility and the courage to ask someone to be your mentor.

The fifth and six articles “Interviews with Mentors” and “Interviews with Mentees.” are a broad overview of mentors and mentees who have been involved in mentoring. They share their key reasons for participating and the benefits they received from mentoring. These articles will discuss the objectives in the mentoring relationships such as selecting a career track, where to find marketing resources and how often to meet with each other.

The seventh article is “Developing Leaders through Mentoring.” This article defines leadership and describes how leadership development occurs through the mentoring relationship. The ingredients for success in a mentoring experience are shared from interviews with several leaders.

The overall objective is to provide you with insight into the benefits of career planning, the value that mentoring plays in the development of your career, and to accelerate your leadership potential. We hope that these articles will be the building blocks to the actual program. The website page will provide you with copies of the articles and also will provide you with links to other informational resources.

The overall objectives of this series are to provide you with insight into the benefits of career planning and the value mentoring can play in developing your career and accelerating your leadership potential.



If somehow you knew that you could not fail, then what would you do or what would you want to be? Our hope is that you pursue a mentoring relationship and that it can help you reach for your dreams and inspire you to elevate your professionalism in the industry more quickly than you would imagine. If your career is important to you and it is to most of us, then go for the gold -- pursue the benefits of mentoring.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Deborah J. Hodges is Past Chair of the SMPS National Mentoring Committee. She is Director of Business Development at Bovis Lend Lease in Chicago and can be reached @ djhgoldensquare@aol.com.

99 Canal Center Plaza
Suite 330
Alexandria, VA 22314

PH 703.684.2263
TF 800.292.7677, x224
FX 703.549.2498

www.smps.org

