



BUSINESS BOOK Summaries

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Managers as Mentors

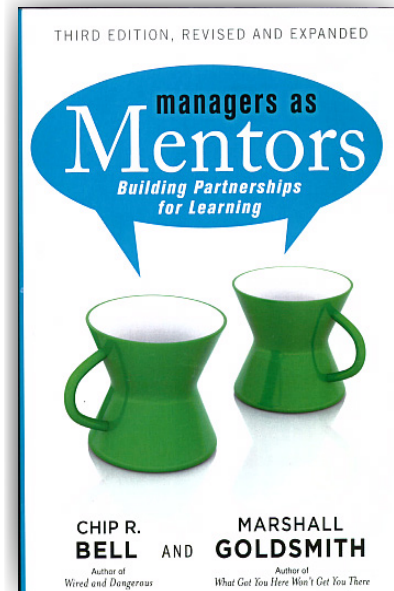
*Building Partnerships for Learning
Third Edition, Revised and Expanded*

Chip R. Bell and Marshall Goldsmith

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KEY CONCEPTS

- The best mentors recognize that their relationships are based on mutual interests, interdependence, and respect. The communication between mentor and protégé must be honest, straightforward, and open.
- Protégés learn best when they are tutored in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Some may bring anxiety to the relationship, and this is a learning barrier because it suppresses risk taking. The mentor must overcome this by building rapport to a level where the protégé is willing to take rational risks.
- A motivated protégé is one who will learn. Learners are better prepared psychologically if they accept the “why” of learning before they hear the “what” and the “how.”
- Communication without judgment is essential to mentoring. Mentors should express themselves to protégés in terms of acceptance and affirmation in order to eliminate protégé defensiveness and encourage freer expression.
- Mentors must remember that discussions are opportunities to augment their learning, not lecture. Good mentors yield the pulpit as much as possible to allow their protégés to think for themselves.
- Listening is essential to mentoring. Mentors should give undivided attention to their protégés, deny distractions, and make their protégés the absolute focus of their energies. This fosters greater understanding by ensuring that communication between the two parties becomes the foundation of intellectual linkage.
- A certain level of dependency is unavoidable in the mentor/protégé relationship, but it can be harmful if permitted to become too influential. To avoid hindering growth and development, alternative routes to learning must be explored.

INTRODUCTION

Change is endemic in the modern corporate setting, and employees who are continually learning are better equipped to evolve with this change. In **Managers as Mentors**, Chip R. Bell and Marshall Goldsmith present a mentoring guide that assists managers in taking on coaching roles to enhance the skills and abilities of associates. The authors emphasize that protégés are meant to develop into confident individuals who assume greater roles, and that the mentor/protégé connection is a partnership in which both parties gain valuable insights throughout the process. **Managers as Mentors** explores the full range of mentoring, from creating empathy, sharing knowledge, and effective listening to stimulating curiosity, assessing performance, and letting the protégé independently exercise newly-mastered skills.

PART 1: MENTORING IS ...

Leaders perform many valuable functions in their organizations, including identifying clear goals and objectives, providing guidance and assessment, and offering encouragement. They also mentor, an activity that exceeds the transfer of experienced-based knowledge and encompasses stimulating personal growth, provides inspiration, and sparks a genuine desire for discovery and learning. Not all leaders are suited for mentoring, however, and potential mentors should consider their motives for assuming the role. Individuals who perceive mentorship as a power trip should not be mentors. Those who seek recognition or feel smug satisfaction from imparting their superior knowledge are not well suited to mentoring. Those who believe the mentoring relationship should be a *quid pro quo* arrangement where the protégé owes something in exchange for mentoring are not mentor material.

Four core competencies comprise the model for successful mentoring, and they can be remembered by the acronym SAGE:

- **Surrendering:** Mentors must yield their control of the learning process so that their protégés have the freedom to discover. This also means that mentor and protégé are not fixed in unequal power positions.
- **Accepting:** Mentors must accept their protégés by creating safe emotional environments for learning. This means providing encouragement and support to foster protégé confidence throughout the process.
- **Gifting:** Mentors must generously deliver their knowledge and guidance without expectation of reciprocity.
- **Extending:** Mentors must recognize the need to eventually give up the relationship to ensure protégé growth, sometimes seeking other ways to foster learning that lead the protégé to learning independence.

The Mentor Scale is a self-assessment tool that rates one's personal characteristics in terms of mentor suitability. It identifies the assets and liabilities that one brings to the role by measuring:

- **Sociability**—relates to one's preference for being with others. Those with high sociability scores will find it easier to build rapport and engage in effective dialogue. Lower scores indicate that one may convey aloofness and may have to work harder at getting protégés to communicate freely.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about the author and subject:

managersasmentors.com

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- *Dominance*—refers to one's need to be in charge. Mentoring needs to be founded on shared power; high dominance scorers grudgingly cede it, low scorers must exert themselves to assume leadership.
- *Openness*—relates to how easily one relates to others. High scorers easily open themselves to their protégés, low scorers have to work to surmount their reluctance to reveal themselves to their protégés.

PART 2: SURRENDERING—LEVELING THE LEARNING FIELD

The successful mentor/protégé relationship is a partnership, with both parties performing in synchronization. The learning aspect comes about when the mentor surrenders any attempt to control the results. Surrendering means being sincere, authentic, and devoted to the learning process.

Effective mentoring is especially crucial in this era of rapid change and increasing organizational complexity. Employees who don't continue to grow will be unable to cope, adapt, and succeed.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chip R. Bell is a senior partner with the Chip Bell Group. He has served as consultant, trainer, or speaker to such major organizations as GE, Microsoft, and The Home Depot. He has served as an adjunct instructor at Cornell University, Manchester University (UK), and Penn State University. Chip is the author of 19 books, including *Wired and Dangerous*, *Take Their Breath Away*, and *The Handbook of Human Resource Development*.

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith was recently recognized as the #1 leadership thinker in the world and the #7 business thinker in the world at the bi-annual Thinkers50 ceremony sponsored by the *Harvard Business Review*. He is the author or editor of 31 books, including *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. Dr. Goldsmith's Ph.D. is from UCLA's Anderson School of Management. He teaches executive education at Dartmouth's Tuck School and frequently speaks at leading business schools.

To establish the protégé's comfort and trust, the mentor must build rapport. Building rapport has four components:

1. *Leveling Communications*. The mentor must overcome protégé shyness and reservation by showing warmth and receptiveness through gestures, countenance, and speech.
2. *Gifting Gestures*. Protégés respond well to gestures that signify affinity. An invitation to a cup of coffee, the provision of a useful work-related article, or a simple small gift can be effective.
3. *Receptivity for Feelings*. A mentor can create rapport by being attentive to the protégé's feelings early in their relationship, acknowledging them, and responding in a caring fashion.
4. *Reflective Responses*. Showing empathy enables a mentor to promote a sense of kinship and identification. By admitting to have experienced similar feelings or having undergone the same situation, the mentor assures the protégé that they can identify with each other.

Trust is essential throughout the mentoring relationship, and it can be supported in many ways. A friendly facial expression, a welcoming greeting, and visible enthusiasm shown for the opportunity to mentor can mean much to the hesitant protégé. Credibility is an underpinning of trust, and a protégé is likelier to trust a mentor who exudes the capability of achieving the relationship's objective. A mentor who shares a personal story relating to past expertise boosts this credibility by revealing, not boasting, of ability.

Protégés learn best when they are tutored in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Some may bring anxiety to the relationship, and this is a learning barrier because it suppresses risk taking. Some of this anxiety may be based on the protégé's fears of appearing ignorant and undermining reputation or prospects. The mentor must overcome this by build-

ing rapport to a level where the protégé is willing to take rational risks.

This is done by displaying a calm and confident attitude that assures the protégé of a secure and helpful environment in which to learn. The display of genuine interest and concern is an excellent way to make an initial connection that fosters the learning process. Where protégés display low self-esteem, mentors must use lots of positive affirmation to support feelings of worthiness and confidence.

The protégé can do little about the past. Granted, there can be lessons learned through reflection and review. But the primary focus of feedback should be on providing a keen understanding that creates insight that leads to a new future application.

PART 3: ACCEPTING—CREATING A SAFE HAVEN FOR RISK TAKING

Learning involves leaving a safe area of the familiar and entering unknown territory. Protégés who abandon the security of the known must be willing to absorb setbacks. The mentor's role is to help the protégé uncover concealed courage and support the protégé in recognizing it. Personal examples are effective here; the mentor who takes risks encourages the protégé to take them as well. Communication without judgment is also helpful. Mentors should express themselves to protégés in terms of acceptance and affirmation in order to eliminate protégé defensiveness, thereby encouraging freer expression.

Socrates grasped the essence of mentoring. He asked effective questions that induced insight, which led to curiosity that fostered wisdom. He recognized the difference between asking information-seeking questions that only invited facts and understanding-seeking questions that stimulated sagacity and discovery. Mentors engaging in insight-producing inquiry should first set up the question with an introductory statement that places both mentor and protégé on the same level so as to create identification and context. A statement such as "Bill, you've been working for five weeks on the X project..." sets the context for an insight-producing question, such as "What do you see as the key elements of....?"

Listening is essential to mentoring. Mentors should

give undivided attention to their protégés, deny distractions, and make their protégés the absolute focus of their energies. This fosters greater understanding by ensuring that communication between the two parties solidly supports intellectual linkage. Most importantly, mentors must listen intently, and show in words and actions that protégé thoughts are valued and welcomed. There may be times when mentors must ask their protégés outright if their focus appears to be total. Protégés who feel comfortable in the rela-

tionship will respond accurately, and mentors can improve their listening accordingly.

Effective dialogue requires give-and-take characteristics that reflect equal status for both participants.

Setting the tone at the start of the discussion can be done by providing the right "mind-set" that establishes that both parties are clear on the purpose of the conversation and its potential benefit.

The give and take of dialogue encompasses the following skills:

- *Initiating/Clarifying Questions.* These are open-ended questions that begin with "what," "where," "when," or "how." They direct the protégé to respond in a focused manner that emphasizes the substance of the communication.
- *Paraphrasing.* This demonstrates that the mentor is listening and understands the communication well enough to restate it in concise, accurate phraseology. This encourages protégés to express themselves more freely because they feel that they are being understood.
- *Extending.* This expands upon protégé comments by adding depth to them. It both conveys and enhances understanding by communicating the listener's comprehension and appreciation.
- *Using Gestures and Body Stance.* Nonverbal behavior can encourage discussion and foster a positive learning environment by expressing the listener's understanding. Head-nodding and murmurs of assent are examples of this.

Finally, mentors must remember that discussions are opportunities to augment their learning, not lecture.

Good mentors yield the pulpit as much as possible to allow their protégés to think for themselves.

PART 4: GIFTING—THE MAIN EVENT

One of the most difficult aspects of mentoring is giving advice to those protégés who instinctively resist authority figures. Mentors should begin by stating the performance challenge or learning objective. Then, the mentor must ensure that the protégé agrees on the focus and is genuinely interested in improvement. If this agreement cannot be obtained, it might be best to wait until the protégé indicates more interest in learning. The next step is for the mentor to ask permission to give advice by observing that protégé performance could be improved using one or more ideas. This tactfully skirts the perception of the protégé being controlled. Finally, advice should be delivered in first person singular (i.e., “This was very effective for me...”), a tactic that lowers listener resistance.

Feedback is crucial to effective mentoring but is not always easy to give, and many recipients resent it. However, there is a five-step method that can make feedback more valuable:

1. *Create a Climate of Identification.* The protégé may be embarrassed over some shortcoming, and will receive input with reluctance. The mentor can overcome this by identifying with the protégé, admitting to some similarity with the latter’s performance or situation.
2. *State the Feedback’s Rationale.* The mentor must ensure that the protégé understands the feedback’s context by presenting the reason(s) that it is being provided. The protégé should be left in no doubt as to why it is needed.
3. *Pretend to Be the Recipient.* The mentor should assume the protégé’s perspective and assess whether the feedback and its method of delivery is straightforward and honest. The Golden Rule applies here.
4. *Focus on the Future.* The protégé can do nothing about the past; therefore, the feedback’s substance should be concentrated on future performance.

Ideally, this will encourage insights leading to improvement.

5. *Ask for Feedback.* Mentoring proficiency can be improved by seeking protégé feedback. The relationship, after all, is a partnership, and reciprocal learning is an important element of it.

A motivated protégé is one who will learn. Learners are better prepared psychologically if they accept the “why” of learning before they hear the “what” and the “how.” The “why” is the rationale for education and should express both a personal reason as well as a professional reason with which the protégé can identify. Explaining the usefulness of new skills or knowledge establishes the foundation for learning. A mentor can effectively build the foundation with a simple statement that expresses the importance of the skills to be learned, as well as the value of their professional application.

Protégés benefit most from mentoring when they are most receptive to learning, or when they find themselves in “teachable moments.” The timing of these moments is crucial, and is a combination of the learner’s willingness to learn, the speed at which new learning can be applied, and special conditions that facilitate learning. Mentors should be vigilant for indications of protégé boredom or apathy, which may suggest that the protégé has reached a learning plateau.

There is a cleanness and frankness about relationships in which authenticity is valued. Great mentors care enough to be honest and forthright; they are also curious and learning-oriented enough to invite and accept candor from the protégé.

Mentors need to govern the amount of encouragement and support they provide with the understanding that too much becomes interference and too little is abandonment. Finding the right balance can be determined by analyzing one’s own motivations for offering help. Some mentors step in with support when they fear their protégés may repeat their own past mistakes. Others want to protect their protégés from embarrassment or discouragement. An ideal balance can be struck by accepting that some setbacks must be experienced in order for the protégé to learn and grow.

Stories are effective mentoring tools, often reaching protégés in ways that advice alone cannot. Mentors can use stories best by first deciding upon the key learning points to be conveyed and then crafting a story in a manner that captures the protégé's imagination. Establishing a setting for the story sets its context for the protégé and helps visualization and identification. Creating dissonance in the story builds a sense of suspense or conflict that draws in the protégé and stimulates the thought process to seek resolution. The resolution is more than the ending—it is the means by which the protégé gains insight and develops new understanding, skills, or attitudes.

Mentoring does not always happen in the secure routine of a stable work site. With the business environment becoming more chaotic, more globalized, and more dependent on technology, wise mentors learn to coach on the run, at a distance, using all the technology available to them.

PART 5: EXTENDING—NURTURING A SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER

A certain level of dependency is unavoidable in the mentor/protégé relationship, but it can be harmful if permitted to become too influential. To avoid hindering growth and development, alternative routes to learning must be explored. This means helping the protégé become self-sufficient in finding ways to competence and independence. *Extending* is the step in the relationship that will lead to the mentor's role receding as the protégé gains confidence and ability.

The objective of mentoring is to facilitate improved performance, productivity, and effectiveness. The mentoring role does not end with the transfer of knowledge, however. Fledgling protégés can benefit from some additional assistance to ensure that their initial efforts succeed. Mentors can do this by offering encouragement and following up after protégés make their first attempts at individual achievement. Mentors can function as advocates by endorsing their protégés to others and by remaining vigilant to potential obstacles that may hinder protégé success.

By working to remove barriers and augment protégé strengths, mentors can ensure that protégés avoid many of the disappointments that might otherwise

derail their sense of confidence and undermine their newly-acquired skills and competencies.

Successful mentoring involves enhancing protégé spirit, self-esteem, pride, and dedication. To foster protégé growth, mentors should encourage their charges to leave behind the safe and comfortable and begin taking risks. Even mistakes provide valuable learning experiences that can strengthen resolve and confidence. Affirmation is also a useful tool, but it must be used independently of criticism. Mixing the two is likely to make both meaningless, so it is best to give praise as praise, and criticism as criticism.

The mentoring relationship must end eventually, and it can be done in a positive, constructive fashion. Small celebrations can take the form of a drink after work, a walk together, or a meal. The end is a graduation that signifies completion of a significant phase and the start of another. The best graduation gifts that a protégé can receive are those of confidence and respect.

PART 6: SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Some mentoring relationships diverge from the standard leader/associate pairings. There are occasions when tech-savvy subordinates are required to mentor their supervisors. In other situations, peer-mentoring is required. In both of these cases, special approaches are required to achieve the partnering goal of the relationship. Mentors can succeed with their charges by showing modesty in regard to their knowledge and genuine concern for the protégé's progress. Mentors can overcome protégé resistance by asking a lot of questions at the beginning of the learning process; this reduces protégé anxiety and resentment. Finally, reciprocity is a valuable component of the nonstandard mentoring relationship because learning together emphasizes the association's partnership aspects.

Some learning relationships require greater exertion because of the context in which they occur. In situations when a protégé needs guidance quickly and the mentor has little time, speed mentoring comes into play. This involves a swift prioritization of requirements: the protégé's immediate learning needs and objectives, urgent issues that may limit how the

mentor can help, and the protégé's views on the mentor's most needed contributions.

Long-distance mentoring (like long-distance management) is becoming increasingly frequent. When the mentor cannot physically be present at the protégé's work site, it is best to appoint a knowledgeable on-site employee to fill the mentor role. This may bring up peer-mentoring resistance, but this can be overcome by clearly communicating the expectation that one shall mentor and one shall learn, and by following up to assess success. Another technique is to keep in touch with the remote protégé by sending care packages, simple work-related items that will remind protégés that they are not forgotten. Receiving useful articles, books, or links to valuable information can also remind the protégé of the mentor's beneficial, if distant, existence.

The mentor can also meet with the protégé and set up a learning plan, then check on progress at gradually increasing intervals. Eventually, the mentor will ease out of the process entirely as the protégé becomes self-sufficient.



FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Estimated Reading Time: 5–6 hours, 256 pages

Managers as Mentors by Chip R. Bell and Marshall Goldsmith would benefit managers or leaders seeking to develop subordinates' skills, abilities, and confidence. It provides guidance useful to the mentor in establishing rapport, imparting knowledge, engaging in mutual discovery, and nurturing independence. It is written in an informal style and makes seamless transitions when shifting from mentor to protégé perspectives. Mentoring case studies and CEO interviews appear throughout the book. The last section is a Mentor's Toolkit comprised of assessment tools, tips, and FAQs to assist in advancing and maintaining continuous improvement. The authors recommend that the introduction and the first three chapters be read in order, after which any section may be read for enlightenment.

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