



Management and Performance Associates – July 2012

Preparing Heroes

Mentoring has become a hot topic lately, but, what exactly is the role of a mentor?

Mentor comes from Greek mythology. In his old age, Mentor was a loyal friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus left for the Trojan War he placed Mentor in charge of educating his son Telemachus.

The concept was rescued by Joseph Campbell (1904 – 1987), an American professor, best known for his work in comparative mythology and comparative religion and the author of classics such as *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Hero's Journey*, among others.

Campbell observed that all stories consist of some common structural elements, which are universally found in myths, fairy tales, dreams and movies. These are known as “The Hero’s Journey.”

“Hero,” is anybody who learns and grows with experience, overcoming obstacles to reach goals. To do so, they need to acquire more knowledge, more skills and wisdom. That’s when the mentor becomes a key character.

The mentor is one of several present archetypes in these stories, representing the hero’s highest aspirations. According to Campbell, it is the essence of what the hero can become when persevering on the journey.

What does the mentor do?

- 1) Shares experiences to leverage the hero’s knowledge;
- 2) Offers a broader vision, not only for the future, but for the current situation as well, as a way to prepare the hero to deal with difficult and challenging situations;
- 3) Offers advice that is relevant to the journey;
- 4) Performs a special role, like the hero’s conscience, to keep alive the moral and ethical code;

- 5) Motivates the hero to keep going, even when facing obstacles which seem insurmountable.

The following are some examples of mentors preparing their heroes:

- Q, the Quartermaster, or M, the head of the MI6, delegating tasks, providing advice and warning to James Bond;
- Jiminy Cricket becoming Pinocchio’s conscience;
- Obi Wan Kenobi, providing the lightsaber to Luke Skywalker
- and Daedalus, building wings from feathers and wax allowing him and his son, Icarus, to escape from the Labyrinth.

In summary, the mentor prepares the hero to become successful in his journey.

With that in mind, what is the difference between these principles and our continuous search for a place in the sun? None!

A formal mentoring program identifies and maps those professionals who have been successful in many journeys and are ready to create the successful conditions for those who are beginning or preparing for a new path. In addition to experience, a mentor must have a professional biography that provides strong credentials and reputation in credibility, ethics, inspiration and competence.

The program also identifies the heroes, the privileged talents who receive the true mentoring gifts. These gifts are shaped not only as experience sharing and valuable advice, but, mostly, they are shaped by inspiration and engagement for the journey. It is truly a unique experience and a privilege for both parties.

In case you are interested in knowing a bit more about Joseph Campbell’s “Hero’s Journey,” click on the link on the left column and watch this seven minute video.



The video summarizes and illustrates the Hero's Journey through a series of classical movie scenes. You will never experience a movie, a play or a book the same way. Believe us!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGV1BvnyvGo&feature=related>

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

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