



St Clements University

**Review of Mentoring programme as an
alternative approach for personal and
professional development:**

**A case study of a private company,
Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy**

By

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ABBREVIATIONS

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Mentoree Questionnaire

Mentor Questionnaire

Facilitators Questionnaire

Supervisors of Mentoree Questionnaire

Peers of Mentorees Questionnaire

ABSTRACT

People are company assets – and if we listen seriously to the proclamations by executives in annual reports – “our most valuable asset, of course, is our people”. Certainly they are, because they are *the* vital resource, the key assets in any organisation. All assets must earn a return on investment. For a return to be assured, each asset must be managed. Since people are assets, they must be managed to maximise long-term return and to protect them from loss.

So who is managing people as *human* assets? Each manager? Careful. Some do – most do not. And they do not do so for a highly practical reason: they are paid to manage all other assets except the human one because we calculate the value and return of all other assets, except people. With people, managers have only frail clues as to optimal return and losses of human investments. Hence we had better figure out

soon, whose finger – if anyone’s – is firmly planted in the dyke of the company’s human asset drain.

If the answer to the question, “Who is managing our people, as they do our other assets?”, is unsatisfactory, a proactive programme is needed to assure maximum return and protection from loss of those valued people. One means to do so is through action mentor/mentoree networks i.e. by implementing a mentoring scheme.

However, mentoring to some is a new and highly effective means of identifying and developing high-flyers; to others it is a means of speeding and facilitating the induction of young people in general; it can also be seen as an effective door into middle and senior management for women subject to unfair discrimination; finally, to some it is viewed as a dangerous process that can amplify favouritism and exclusive networks within the organisation.

Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd (PCSB), an oil and gas company and a fully-owned subsidiary of National Petroleum Company (PETRONAS) of Malaysia firmly believes that mentoring can help to accelerate the development of individuals, especially the newly recruited graduates, and improve organisational performance and productivity. The company also believes that mentoring can foster talent within the organisation and that it should be used as an alternative method of career development of individuals.

In 1996, the company launched its mentoring programme targeted at the newly recruited young graduates. Senior officers were identified and selected as mentors to spearhead the project.

After almost four years of its implementation, the Management wanted to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme and assess the extent the programme has met its objectives. A review exercise was therefore conducted in late

1999 to assess the performance of the programme and to recommend how it can be made more effective in the future.

The study covered the review of the programme itself, the mentoring climate in the company, its infrastructure and mentoring process. It attempts to determine whether the mentoring programme has been an effective strategy in the process of staff development, with special reference to the mentorees in PCSB. Also, the study examine whether mentorship can work equally well for men and women in enhancing career/jobs of individuals regardless of their sex, age and socio-cultural background.

The results of the study support the view that mentoring can play a vital role in the development of the new entree and culture building process. Also, the results indicate that mentorship can enhance career/jobs of individuals regardless of their sex, age or socio/cultural background. Thus mentoring was found to be egalitarian in its positive effects on

individuals' job/career outcomes. However, some caution must be exercised when interpreting the results of this research. Firstly, the findings were based on self-report measures. Secondly, the results were based on data gathered from a single organisation and the size of sample was small. Given its limitations, the findings of the study suggest that in term of career/job outcomes, mentoring worked equally well for women and men.

The detail of the findings of this study and recommendations for improvement are contained in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A goal of many individuals is to be successful and satisfied in their careers and/or jobs. While there are many ways an individual can achieve this end (Schein, 1978; Hackman and Oldham, 1980) one method in particular; i.e. securing a mentor, has been receiving an increasing amount of attention in the management literature in the last decade (Kanter, 1977; Levinson, 1978; Collins and Scott, 1978; Adams, 1979; Collins, 1983; Kram, 1983, 1985; Hunt and Michael, 1983; Phillip-Jones, 1983; Kram and Isabella, 1985; Zey, 1985; Noe, 1987, 1988).

Many definitions have been proposed to describe the process of mentoring (Morris, 1969; Kanter, 1977; Levinson, 1978; Speizer, 1981; Phillip-Jones, 1982; Kram, 1983; Bowen, 1986). In general, mentoring is considered to be a

developmental relationship that enhances both an individual's growth and advancement (Kram, 1985). Research by Kram and her colleagues (Kram, 1983, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985) attempted to explain how this occurs. They did this by conducting biographical interviews with middle to upper level managers in a public utility and manufacturing firm. Content analysis of the interviews revealed that mentors provided their mentorees with career and psychosocial functions. Career functions included sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, protection and challenging assignments. The psychosocial functions included serving as role models, providing friendship, counseling, acceptance and confirmation. As a result of these activities the mentoree's sense of competence, identity and work role effectiveness augmented, the end result being career enhancement and advancement.

But is it? Only a few studies have attempted to systematically investigate the outcomes of mentoring relationships from the mentoree's

perspective (Levinson, 1978; Roche, 1979; Zey, 1985; Noe, 1987). Of those that have been conducted few have compared the perceived career/job experiences of mentorees to those of non-mentorees (Levinson, 1978; Zey, 1985; Noe, 1987). Such contrasts would allow investigators to determine how well mentorees perceive they are doing in contrast to 'those of us' without mentors. Nevertheless, research conducted thus far suggests that mentoring may enhance the careers of high level men (Levinson, 1978; Hunt and Michael, 1983; Zey, 1985). For example, Jennings (1971) found that the most successful corporate male presidents have had mentors. As reported by Roche (1979), in a study by Heidrick and Struggles, Inc., higher salaries and bonuses were awarded to male executives who had mentors than to those who did not.

Can mentors similarly enhance the careers and job situations of individuals who are in less opportune positions in organizations? Traditionally, women and individuals in lower management/supervisory levels have occupied

these slots (Kanter, 1977; Fagenson and Horowitz, 1985). If mentorship can enhance career/job situations as contended, then women and/or lower level mentorees should be able to experience the same degree of career/job success and satisfaction as men and / or high-level individuals. Alternatively, it could be argued that since women and lower level individuals have less opportunity, a mentor may be less helpful. The verdict on this issue is 'still out' as no research has been conducted to test these proposals. That is, we do not know the extent to which mentorees at the lower levels of the corporate hierarchy benefit from a mentor relationship.

Also, little is known about whether female mentorees experience the same level of benefits as male mentorees. Typically, research in this area has compared the responses of female mentorees to responses reported in the literature by male mentorees (Phillip-Jones, 1982; Collins,

1983). This procedure is problematic since different organizational structures and processes have been noted to affect the reported outcomes of mentor-mentoree relationships (Kram, 1985).

PCSB MENTORING PROGRAMME

Believing that mentoring can bring benefits to both the individuals (mentorees and mentors) on the organisation, especially in helping to accelerate the development of the young and newly recruited graduates and improve their performance, Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd (PCSB) implemented their mentoring programme in 1996.

PCSB is a wholly owned subsidiary of PETRONAS (a Malaysian national petroleum company). It is an upstream stream sector of the oil and gas business. Its operates not only in Malaysia but in Vietnam, Burma, China, Cambodia, Iran and a few other countries.

The company recruits many new and young graduates yearly for its expansion projects both

domestically and abroad. The company is well known for its commitment to Human Resource Development and firmly believes in its contributions to the business performance. Also, the company believes that mentoring process can help the new recruits understand the company's goals and objectives and challenges, and, acquire the right competence and experience quickly. The company also believes that mentors can help the mentorees (new recruits) realise their potentials and add value to the company's performance quickly and effectively. The company implement mentoring as an alternative method of career development and to foster talent within the organisation.

Against the expectations that the mentoring programme could bring all the above benefits the scheme was launched in 1996. After almost 4 years of its implementation, the Management wanted to review the programme and evaluate its effectiveness and assess the extent to which the scheme has met its objectives. Therefore, the author, together with consultants from Mehan

and Associates and J & J Associates were commissioned in late 1999 to carry out this review.

HYPOTHESIS FOR THE STUDY

Although the study was carried out on specific request by the client (PCSB) the hypothesis of the study is that mentorship works equally well for men and women and can enhance career / jobs of individuals regardless of their sex, age and socio-cultural background.

The purpose of the study was clearly defined by the client and this is as stated below.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the study is to review the performance of the programme since its inception in 1996, in particular to the extent to which the implied objectives were achieved.

OBJECTIVES

Consistent with the purpose stated above, the study has two objectives. Firstly, there is the general objective which relates to what has happened since the programme started in 1996. Secondly, there is the more specific objective on the recommendations for actions to be taken in order to enhance and improve the programme in the future.

General Objectives

The general objectives for this study are twofold:

- (a) To stock-take and quantify what has happened in the mentoring programme during the three year reference period, and**
- (b) To understand why the above happened in terms of strengths, weaknesses and discrepancies.**

Specific Objectives

The more specific objectives of the study are:

- (a) To identify common trends and patterns from the data and information collected,**
- (b) To derive findings and conclusions based on the above, and**
- (c) To make recommendations for the way forward.**

The scope of this study, sample design, interview survey and questionnaire design details are outlined in Chapter 3.

The following Chapter 2 will present the findings of literature review on mentoring – its benefits and problems associated with its implementation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade there has been an increasing awareness among many organisations, including small and medium-sized companies, of the value of mentoring and its impact on the performance of the organisation. In the some organisations, mentoring has been used as an alternative method of career development.

The concept of mentoring has become a popular and fashionable method of management development particularly in the USA since the 1970s. This has been reflected in the amount of literature produced in the USA proclaiming the

benefits of the formalised mentoring relationship for the mentor, the mentoree and the organisation, the significance of a mentoring relationship for the advancement of women and, of late, the possible shortcomings in the mentoring relationship. Interest in mentoring as a management tool recently spread to Britain, with the formal introduction of the concept in some company management development programmes. A recent publication, Networking and Mentoring – A Woman’s Guide, by Dr. Lily M Segerman Peck pronounces the virtues of mentoring for all women seeking career development.

This chapter presents the review of relevant literature on current research on mentoring. This literature review has five main objectives, namely, (i) to examine the origin and recent growth of mentoring as a training method, (ii) to identify the benefits of mentoring for the mentor, the mentoree and for the organisation, (iii) to evaluate the effects of mentoring, (iv) to examine problems faces by female in this relationship

and, (v) to provide a link to the review exercise for PCSB.

This chapter begins with the definition of mentoring and its development over the years. It then follows by examining how mentoring works, its benefits to the company, the mentor and mentoree, the female dilemma and problems in mentoring and, finally, some concluding remarks.

MENTORING: DEFINITION AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

In spite of the variety of definitions of mentoring (and the variety of names given to it, from coaching or counselling to sponsorship) all the experts and communicators appear to agree that it has its origins in the concept of apprenticeship. In the days when the guilds ruled the commercial world, the road to the top in business began in an early apprenticeship to the master craftsman, a trader, or a ship's captain. This older, more experienced individual passed down his knowledge of how the task was done and how to operate in the commercial world.

Intimate personal relationships frequently developed between the master (or mentor) and the apprentice (or mentoree), especially as the apprentice acquired skills and began to substitute for his mentor. Marrying the master's daughter became an accepted means of providing career progression and retaining key skills with the firm.

The Industrial Revolution altered this emphasis, demanding large numbers of recruits which swamped personalised attention. Apprenticeship often degenerated to the stage where it involved depersonalised mass training in technical areas. Within the large corporation there grew up informal, often hidden methods of passing on the experience of old timers to young recruits. At the lower levels, a supervisor might 'keep an eye on' a promising employee. Senior managers might identify a potential high-flyer and provide him with confidential advice and encouragement. Therefore, although the term may not have had currency, mentoring was nonetheless at work.

The problem with this informal arrangement, which is now commonplace throughout the business world, is that it can be highly arbitrary. The mentor may choose a mentoree because he is related, because he reminds him of himself 20 years before, or for any other of a dozen reasons that have no relationship to actual or potential performance. Promotion often becomes unduly influenced by 'old boy' networks that operate by invitation only. Sometimes referred to derisively and with some truth as a corporate godfather, the mentor may exert a power of suffrage and extract fealty.

Discussion of the pros and cons of the mentoring relationship began with one Ralph M Stodgill who referred to the mentor in the late 1960s as 'an ambiguous authority figure'. Daniel Levinson, 10 years later, in a study of 40 mentoring relationships, described him as 'a mixture of parent and peer. His primary function is to be a transitional figure in a man's development'. He calls mentoring 'one of the most complex and

developmentally important relationships a man can have in early adulthood. Other communicators refer to the mentor as ‘a role model ... a guide, a tutor, a coach and a confidant’.

Aware that the mentoring relationship can be highly beneficial for those who participate, various companies on both sides of the Atlantic have sought to formalise it. Their objective is to ensure that this valuable developmental tool is used for the good of the company as a whole, rather than for a small number of favourites.

Most of these companies have focussed their schemes on potential high-flyers. Other have tried to give all new entrants at certain levels a helping hand from above. All would agree with this description of the mentoring process contained in a *Harvard Business Review* article in 1978: *Young people shall be given their heads, to challenge the organisation to grow. These young people will also have an older person in the organisation to look after them in their early years to*

ensure that their careers get off to a good start. Out of these relationships it is hoped that the young people learn to take risks, accept a philosophical commitment to sharing and learn to relate to people in an intuitive, empathetic way.

These companies have realised that employee development and career progression, particularly at management levels, can be faster and more beneficial to both the individual and the company if a more senior manager spares the time to tutor his/her juniors.

Many senior executives of very large firms make a practice of being present for a few hours at junior management training courses. They recognise that close encounters with top management are an important part of induction to the management hierarchy. Mentoring, however, goes far beyond this fleeting presence. It involves an intense commitment, by both mentor and mentoree, to active career development. It is demanding in time and in emotional resources. It requires exceptional and sustained effort not for

a few weeks, but for a minimum of a year and on average two or three years. It is, in short, to the normal management methods what Cayenne pepper is to mixed spice.

Mentoring has undergone a rapid expansion in the United States over the past seven years. The handful of companies with longstanding regular mentoring programs have been subjected to frequent and detailed scrutiny and their approaches copied by numerous other firms. Part of the appeal of the concept is that it makes use of networks and resources that already exist and operate within the firm. Part is also that, in a time of increasing strain on training and development resources, anything that pushes the burden of developing managerial talent back onto the more experienced managers and away from the training department is seen as a good thing.

It is also asserted (if unproven) that mentoring is a more efficient form of developing talent. One piece of supporting evidence for this is that in many cases the relationship forces the mentor to

develop as well, so in effect the company is training two people for the price of one. It is also widely claimed that people who have been mentored reach senior positions, on average, two years ahead of those who have not.

The price, however, should not be underestimated. The time investment by all parties involved, including the personnel department, is substantial. Once started, the process cannot be easily stopped without bringing into question the genuineness of the company's commitment to developing managerial talent. It therefore pays to prepare even a pilot mentoring scheme with great thoroughness, and to think through the degree of commitment the company the individuals likely to be involved can actually afford to give.

It also pays to consider at whom a mentoring scheme is aimed. Most schemes have as their primary aim the provision of a steady supply of broadly experienced, capable middle and senior managers. Putting people through such a

scheme who do not have the ability to scale the corporate heights can be a recipe for creating frustrated ambition.

On the other hand, people who do not have the ability to reach middle and senior management can still benefit greatly from mentoring. A good mentoring programme should help people recognise their abilities and limitations, help them seize opportunities and come to terms with the reality of their career potential. Indeed the person destined to remain in a supervisory or junior management role may well need more personalised attention, encouragement and advice than the person who sees a clear career progression ahead of him/her. A handful of companies have therefore adopted dual mentoring programmes that cater for both kinds of employee.

A good mentoring relationship is one where mentor and mentoree have mutual respect, recognise their need for personal development and have at least some idea of where they both

want to go. Most successful mentoring relationships blossom into friendships that continue long after the need for tutoring has passed. Tony Milne of CEPEC at Sundridge Park Management Centre goes so far as to describe mentoring as 'best understood as a form of love relationship ... it can offer great satisfactions to mentor and mentoree alike'. At the same time, because it is such a personal relationship and because many people still feel it has conferred upon them special advantages, there is often considerable reluctance to be identified as a mentoree. For this reason, many of examples quoted in the following chapters, though real, are anonymous.

In most cases, there will be 8 to 15 years between the mentor and his mentoree(s). The most common arrangement will be between a junior manager, supervisor or raw business school recruit and a middle manager. However, mentoring does occur between top management (IBM and Sainsbury are just two of many companies where the chief executive attaches a

very junior manager to his office to learn the ropes of corporate governance). Mentoring may also occur between top management and middle management, particularly where promising people have risen up the hierarchy in only one function or one division of the company.

Moreover, mentoring need not be a once in a lifetime occurrence. Many people experience a succession of mentoring relationships as they pass through different stages in their careers. It seems that the determined individual, who chooses his/her employers carefully and recognises the value of a friend at the right court can usually find a mentor whether under a formal or an informal scheme. That mentor may be his/her immediate boss but as we shall discuss in chapter 4 and in the conclusion, mentoring frequently works better if the roles of mentor and boss are not confused, not least because the two roles can on occasion be contradictory. Hence most formal mentoring schemes, and those upon which this review is focused, concentrate on the relationship between junior employee and a more

senior individual above and usually to the side of his/her boss.

MENTORS AND THE MENTORING

Mentors have been defined as higher ranking, influential, senior organisational members with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to a mentoree's professional career (Collins, 1983; Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979). Mentoring relationships are generally long term, and are characterised by substantial emotional commitment by both parties (Shapiro et al, 1978).

Mentoring relationships may serve a number of functions (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram, 1983, 1985; Zey, 1984). First, mentors may provide training and inside information on the organisation and its political functions. Second, they may serve as a buffer between the organisation and the individual by running interference for the mentoree and providing special access to information, contacts, and

resources. In short, mentors may serve to provide for the mentoree's upward mobility in the organisation by providing support, visibility, resources, and direction.

Mentoring relationships have been found to be significant factors in career development (Kram, 1983; Reich, 1985; Philip-Jones, 1982), organisational success (Bolton & Humphreys, 1977; Lunding, Clements, & Perkins, 1978), and career satisfaction (Riley & Wrench, 1985; Roche, 1979). This line of research suggests that advancement to powerful positions in organisations may be partially based upon the successful development of mentoring relationships.

THE NEED FOR A MENTOR AND MENTORING

The need for a mentor is greatest early in a career, when limited experience most benefits from wise counsel. As Robert Conray (Chairman

of Goldman, Sachs International) observed (Wilens, M, 1989).

Mentoring is a critical part of our business ... Most people come here right out of school, and they really learn the investment banking business by being put together with senior professionals.

Ironically, junior employees often fail to see the need to cultivate a mentor, for many young workers are in a process of establishing their own identity independently from their parents. Having recently moved out of their parents' home – physically and psychologically – and cut the strings of dependence, they are striving to be masters of their own destiny. Suggesting the need for a mentor implies another dependence relationship, where one's wishes are at risk of being subordinated to another's again.

Nevertheless, the need for a mentor to guide, enrich and, perhaps, expedite career progress remains. The mentor offers not only the wisdom of experience but also another perspective and a sounding-board. The inexperience and impetuosity of youth may lock on to a “good idea”, not realising the downside risks or wider

ramifications. Haste and the desire for rapid advancement may need to be tempered. Assistance with work – from ideas to the availability of resources – is a more traditionally recognised benefit of a mentor relationship. And the possibility that the mentor may become a nominator or even a sponsor of career opportunities may be a fortuitous pay-back for the mentor/mentoree.

Indeed, both must gain from the relationship if it is to be sustained. The mentor may benefit by using idle resources, ideas and energies. The act of nurturing the mentor/mentoree may become a new source of pride, accomplishment and positive feedback. Sometimes the mentor's otherwise lacklustre career prospects may have discouraged effort. The eagerness and appreciation of the understudy may renew and revitalise the mentor's contribution in other career aspects.

BENEFITS OF MENTORING TO THE ORGANISATION

The organisation gains by having the efforts of employees guided by more seasoned judgement, leading to more effective use of human resources. Moreover, the coaching inherent in mentor/mentoree relationship offers a powerful training and development tool. As a result, companies such as AT & T, Federal Express, Honeywell, Johnson and Johnson, Merrill Lynch and others have introduced formal mentoring programmes (Tey, M.G, 1985).

Honeywell offers a current example. It has created the Lund Award to encourage managers to serve as mentors. Named after a now-retired executive who coached several of Honeywell's key executives during his career, the award is given annually to one manager from each division (or one award per 1,500 employees in large divisions). The award includes \$3,000 and an invitation to attend a three-day discussion with executives to share ideas.

Because of the obvious benefits to mentors and mentorees, programmes such as Honeywell's are likely to become more common elsewhere. Driving in-house mentoring programmes will be the need to groom talent as actual retirement ages continue to trend downwards and available young talent becomes more difficult to find in the 1990s, as a result of demographic and educational trends, which point to much slower growth among educated workers. These trends, combined with the broad spans of control inherent in "flat organisations", suggest a strong demand for qualified management talent.

Formal mentoring programmes to develop talent are increasingly expected, even demanded, by new workers. Where their parents often saw jobs that became careers, many new workers expect careers complete with formal and informal assistance. Mentor programmes are one way of offering this career assistance on a personalised basis that bonds the newcomer to the firm and helps ensure talent development.

Although Honeywell is joined by AT & T, Motorola and other leading corporations, formal mentoring programmes, of course, run a calculated risk (Willens, M, 1989). Not only is it difficult formally to “appoint” someone to be another’s mentor, but also such attempts may become outright failures, because of the favourable “chemistry” needed between the mentor and the mentoree. Worse, formal mentors may create expectations of rapid career progress, leading to frustration, even restiveness and unexpected turnover. Likewise, those without a mentor may feel deprived, withdrawing their commitment to the organisation, whether they leave or stay. A strength of a programme like Honeywell’s is that the mentor/mentoree relationship is recognised and publicly rewarded (Zey, M.G, 1985). But Honeywell leaves the mentor linkage to chance.

MENTORS AT WORK

Mentors guide their mentoree. At work, mentors serve as faithful counsellors, sharing their

wisdom and experience. Although the benefits for the mentor may range from admiration to new alliances, the primary benefits are often seen as accruing to the recipient of the advice.

The understudy in this age-old drama may benefit in many ways. In an era when “success” is often equated with “career success”, the most obvious advantage may be career advancement. Access to the wisdom and insights of a mentor enhances the precision with which career efforts are directed and enterprise returns are taken. Whether dealing with the initiation issues of a new or young employee or the reappraisals of mid-career, the ability to discuss candidly work-related issues adds the confidence of another perspective (Kran, K.E, 1983). For many neophytes confidence may be the determining and often missing edge. Trust in the mentor creates a reciprocal alliance that may further sharpen the mentoree’s advantage if advice leads to action with a successful outcome.

Feedback to the mentor further solidifies the psychological alliance as the advice-trust-action-feedback cycle continues. The bond strengthens and in many cases changes. In time, mentors often go beyond mere advice giving, which may further enhance the return on human assets. A more proactive role by the mentor may include efforts as a nominator and even a champion of the ally. Since the mentor is often a senior, more established colleague, the mentor's status and contacts may be used to nominate the mentoree for greater career opportunities. In time, the nominator role may even grow into that of a sponsor, one who champions the understudy's reputation, skills and asset value.

The extension of the mentor's role into that of a nominator or sponsor depends on the mentor's ability and willingness to assume these broader responsibilities. Ability assumes that the mentor has the influence and contacts within the organisation to facilitate the opportunities for the understudy. The willingness to do so appears to emerge from a growing fondness, built upon the

neophyte's record of success and the mentor's pride in the understudy's progress. The mentoree appreciative feedback to the mentor appears essential in influencing this willingness, although the mentor may benefit directly from the increased power and status of the new-found ally. Other benefits for the mentor may come in the form of increased information. But the psychological returns of admiration, self-satisfaction, and even a legacy may be more important, especially for mentors secure enough to engage in such seemingly selfless behaviours.

The understudy's success may even rejuvenate the mentor, leading to attainment of higher levels of accomplishment, just as many parents are stimulated to perform better for the benefit of their children. The parent-like relationship between a mentor and understudy may have a parallel stimulus within the organisation. So not only is the junior member of the alliance more likely to be effective, the success may also benefit the organisation by stimulating the mentor's effectiveness, while, at the same time,

the mentor protects the human asset from career-damaging errors.

MATCHING OF MENTORS AND MENTOREES

An example of a formal linkage comes from General Alum and Chemical company in the U.S.A. The company began as a merger of two small businesses; "... the combined entity was, for all intents and purposes, a start-up – which is to say, short a cash". As the CEO/owner observed:

I wanted an organisation with a particular style and mould. The problem with hiring experienced people is that they have preconceived ideas of how things should be done. So I decided to look for people with talent, energy, and basic intelligence and interest, people who wanted to get in on the ground floor and roll up their sleeves, with the understanding that the rewards would come later.

The problem, of course, was inexperienced people. Through a network of personal and professional contacts, the owner has assembled a cadre of personal advisers from outside the firm. General Alum's mentoring programme began when they matched these outside experts with his internal, albeit neophyte, managers. A retired Fortune 500 marketing executive was

matched up with the 22-year-old owner's son, for example.

General Alum benefits in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Not only do understudies feel a greater commitment to the job through the efforts of their mentors, but also the junior partners in the alliance become more effective contributors. Under mentoring sales doubled (Zey, M.G. 1985). And in an age of limited corporate loyalty the benefits of greater commitment to the organisation may be the most noteworthy advantage when non-relatives are involved.

The match of a mentor to an understudy is often an ambiguous process. Unlike the formal assignment, as at General Alum, most linkages seem to be informal, often resulting from mere chance. For a potential mentoree to find a mentor is a cumbersome situation accompanied by understandably awkward feelings. Likewise, to offer oneself as a mentor is, at best, presumptuous and, at worst, humbling. So how do informal or unstructured match-ups occur?