

The Spirit of Developmental Mentoring in Entrepreneurship Mentoring

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu

"A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Professor David Clutterbuck challenges mentors to cast their horizons wider than the workplace. "Effective, experienced mentors have a privileged position. They have an understanding and skills to build bridges of understanding - to replace argument and conflict with dialogue and harmony. They apply those skills to working with individuals, helping them to bring internal conversations into the open, resolving conflicts between needs within the client and between the client and the external world.

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So let us explore " **Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu**" using feedback from both Mentors and Mentees on what their mentoring relationship has achieved for them:

Mentee

- I have been should I say "confused". My meetings have put a few things in perspective.
- The ability to get a completely different view on things.
- For me the biggest positive factor has been -knowing that I can bounce anything to someone that has been through what I am going through
- I have learnt that I underestimate myself and I feel that this has opened up many new possibilities in my own mind
- Getting experience and alternative perspectives
- Thinking about what I want from life
- My future and learning can only be driven by me
- Striking a balance with having a friend and having an objective opinion

Mentor

- It is a humbling experience
- As a mentor not giving the answer and asking lateral questions to get the mentee to think
- The question is more important than the answer
- Improve understanding of mentees' issues, improve empathy and listening ability
- The way I relate to my son is different-he is taking responsibility
- Asking more questions and doing less telling

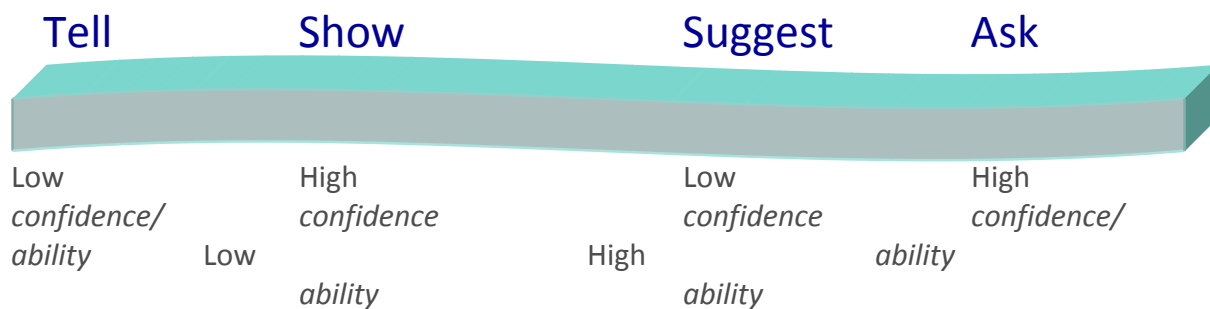
The essential foundation to achieve these sorts of results is the environment created by both mentor and mentee – the relationship of mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual open communication. This relationship gives the opportunity to step into reflective space and to use the tools of learning Dialogue. It is important to note that Mentors are challenged to do more

questioning than telling, to find the best questions to help the mentee to stop and think - this is what will lead to the improvement in quality of thinking that will enable the mentee eventually to fly free. For the mentee, developmental mentoring is more about thinking and challenging your perspectives and doing it for yourself than being spoon fed and becoming dependent on the mentor.

"Confidence, innovation, creativity, networking, role modelling and trust are important elements that determine the likelihood of an entrepreneur's success It has been established that entrepreneurs learn from experience, actions, critical incidents and themes and that the ability to learn contributes to success." G Watson, 2003, M Comm dissertation, UNISA

*Mentors should enable mentees to learn from their past successes & failures & encourage them to engage in self determined learning & to find their own solutions-mentors unleash mentee's capacity to solve problems & arrive at high quality decisions by being supportive, challenging & above all helping them reflect on events
Nadine Klasen with David Clutterbuck*

Adopting the appropriate style is a key skill for the mentor – when is the right time to be more directive, or less directive. The Learning Spectrum is a useful concept to bear in mind – this proposes, as shown below, that when the mentee is low in ability **and** self confidence (as at the beginning of learning something), effective learning is created by telling the mentee how to do it. As the mentee grows in knowledge/ability and also in self-confidence, effective learning is created successively by showing, suggesting and asking. With the highly confident mentee who already has the ability, it is very stifling to try to tell or show them something – it is much more productive to ask them to think through alternative ways or new options or to “devils advocate” their thinking.



As the field of entrepreneurship mentoring grows worldwide and especially in South Africa, it is becoming increasingly clear that the task of an entrepreneurship mentor is not simply to pass on business-related skills, but also to work with those important factors that predict success for the mentee – as mentioned above: the confidence, innovation, creativity, networking and role-modelling. To work on these factors requires a strong and healthy mentoring relationship, so both mentors and mentees must constantly develop and refresh their relationship building skills.

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