

# Mentoring

= "Giver's Gain"

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One of the hot topics of discussion at a recent IIMS conference were initiated by the words "endangered species" used to describe a professional experienced marine Surveyor.

This regrettably is echoed by the statistics gathered by the IIMS of estimating the average age of a practicing marine surveyor to be between 55 to 60 years. The difficult question of "why so?" may have some ugly answers, best left at that. How can we undo this situation? Is the next generation of Marine Surveyors going to come from the sea, or are they going to be shore based, with little or no seagoing experience? Some think it's the latter.

## The Mentors perspective

What happened to the age old wisdom of "things that you do, come back to you" or the modern day BNI mantra of "Giver's Gain"? I personally believe "mentoring" is an age old tried, tested and acknowledged means of learning for both parties involved. More so for the mentor, as she/he is exposed to some challenging queries and a fresh eye perspective, which he may be deprived of being a lone ranger.

The question is, are you willing to tag along a junior surveyor (or a wannabe) who may one day learn the tricks and possibly argue his stand with you, become a competitor or join competitor camp, Or ask you some difficult questions at the wrong time to make you stutter and stumble or waste your time. It's a given that one or all of the above may one day come true. The beauty in this professional game is to recognize the fact that you still stand to gain by mentoring. It's about sense of pride, the satisfaction of giving, and above all being humbled that there is another perspective which inevitable comes to surface while mentoring. Not to forget that a mentor avails the ultimate benefit of having a lifelong fan club member and respect of his mentee. If the Mentee is

worth her/his salt, a possible recruitment opportunity and thus answers the awkwardness of succession planning.



## Mentee's perspective

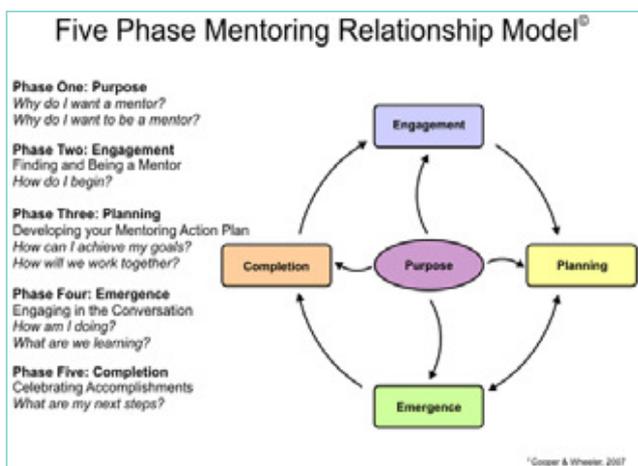
The mentee stands to get a ray of hope in the practical learning, which unfortunately is a huge entry barrier in the surveying industry. The IIMS diploma students invariably come up to the lock gates (read as "road block" to a layman) when they are left fending for Mentors. A department head of a 12 students group recently in the UAE capital asked us if we could arrange an on field training for some of the important modules of the IIMS diploma if they sign up, we affirmed. ( NB: I am proud to mention here that the IIMS working committee members here in UAE willingly volunteered to give their time and effort for the cause and contribute part proceeds to the UAE branch.)

### Another mentee this week wrote to us in his testimonial:

"The practical aspect of surveying is essential to graduates as myself who need an experienced Surveyor to mentor us and essentially show us how it is done. Being a mentee I have benefitted from observing professionals in the field and seeing how they handle themselves and what is expected from them by the client. Having a mentor who can give great pointers as to what to look for in certain surveys and what to watch out for helps us mentees avoid falling into common pot holes and other more obvious errors. Apart from having someone readily on hand

to answer questions and shadow during surveys it was also a great confidence booster for me to see how it is done rather than just read about it as a student can sometimes be overwhelmed by all the technical information delivered in modules and learning packages.'

It is obvious that mentees need us to hold their hands; they want to be confident new comers to this fraternity. If we avoid them they will still be there and possibly undercut due to their own assumptions, insecurities and shortcomings. The ill informed Insurance industry will seek to appoint motor insurance surveyors to inspect Marine cargo and issue towage approvals of project load outs (as inferred by an attendee at a recent IIMS conference).



## Concluding perspective

By actively mentoring let's join hands and raise the bar of professionalism. If we have a formal training ground and stick to professional Codes of conduct which we pass on in many ways to our mentees we shall expect the bar to be risen. It will make it easy for our clients to differentiate between the pretenders and "the professionals". We shall not be referring our kind as "endangered". A note worthy comparison can be drawn from other professionals in Law, medicine and Science. The years of apprenticeship and mentoring they have to compulsorily go through.

**A thought to ponder upon:** If IIMS member listing on the website can have a running tab against each member's name who registers her/himself as an available mentor in their region, the new comers and the students can easily identify and approach them to seek help as their Mentee. Make it transparent, and support the cause. Let's mentor and learn.

This article is dedicated to my mentor Captain Daraius Rustom Antia, a selfless giver, a practicing professional with over 25 years of surveying experience.

## The author of this article is:

- 1 an active promoter of the IIMS diploma in Middle east for the past 2 years.
- 2 In the Education subcommittee of the International Chartered shipbrokers (ICS) UAE branch and actively lectures at their training sessions on Marine Insurance and claims and liner trade.
- 3 A Participant of the Action Learning Program (ALP) of SPJCM, Dubai.

ALP is a unique, creative and concentrated research initiative under the Global MBA program, where student research teams are deployed with a few reputed organizations in UAE. These teams work competitively on the themes of Growth, Innovation and Competitive advantage as per the 'Business Challenge' defined by each organization.

### WHY BE A GOOD MENTOR?

The primary motivation to be a mentor was well understood by Homer: the natural human desire to share knowledge and experience. Some other reasons for being a good mentor:

**Achieve satisfaction.** For some mentors, having a student succeed and eventually become a friend and colleague is their greatest joy.

**Attract good students.** The best mentors are most likely to be able to recruit—and keep—students of high caliber who can help produce better research, papers, and grant proposals.

**Stay on top of your field.** There is no better way to keep sharp professionally than to coach junior colleagues.

**Develop your professional network.** In making contacts for students, you strengthen your own contacts and make new ones.

**Extend your contribution.** The results of good mentoring live after you, as former students continue to contribute even after you have retired.

FACTS