

## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEADERSHIP STYLE AND THE MENTOR-MENTEE RELATIONSHIP**

Edward G. Conture, Ph.D.  
Vanderbilt University

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the process of mentoring new members of the professoriate and the interpersonal and technical skills this requires on the part of the mentor as well as on the part of the new faculty member. Much of this discussion will relate to Goleman's and colleagues' (Goleman 1995, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002) study of emotional intelligence and its impact on leadership. The central thesis will be that the mentor has to have strong self-management as well as management of relationships skills to be an effective mentor. Simply put, new faculty will find it hard to listen to, follow, and place trust in a guide who too is lost!

We will begin our discussion by examining the essential components of emotional intelligence and how such qualities may influence leadership and the mentoring process. Second, we will discuss how such qualities may influence the person being mentored. Third, and finally, we will discuss the bi-directional nature of the interaction between mentor and person being mentored, and ways to increase the chances that the mentor-mentee relationship is a win-win situation.

### **The Mentor**

#### **Leadership And Emotional Intelligence**

The cornerstone of leadership, according to Goleman and colleagues, is emotional intelligence (EI). Adapting Goleman's (1998) descriptors of the five interrelated components of emotional intelligence, the present author would describe these components as follows

- Know thyself (self-awareness)

- Control thyself (self-regulation)
- Stretch thyself (motivation)
- While knowing others (empathy)
- And realizing that nothing important gets done alone (social skill)

### **Self-Management Before Management Of Others**

For the purposes of the present discussion, the first three (know, control, and stretch thyself) self-management skills are crucial for the mentor. Again, it is difficult for the beginning teacher-scholar to put faith and trust in the advice/words of his or her academic guide, when that guide is obviously lost. The mentor him or herself must have established the kinds of skills that he or she is trying to impart to the new faculty member. Most importantly, as we will discuss subsequently, the mentor needs to be clear regarding how those skills were acquired and be able to explicate the process of skills acquisition to the beginning teacher-scholar. So *rule number one* for the mentor: Know, control and stretch thyself, if you expect your new faculty member to do the same. Let the new faculty member see the continuing challenges of leading the life of the mind, hear about the mentor's difficult decisions, both personal as well as professional. Above all, the mentor should describe his/her failures, not only the successes.

One common mistake that mentors make is to assume that merely presenting a role model of excellence as a teacher-scholar will be sufficient. Some mentors appear to make the assumption that mere exposure to the role model alone permits the new faculty member to copy, emulate, and develop as well as build the long-term capabilities of a teacher-scholar. Certainly, the mentor's having previously walked the walk of the new faculty member provides the mentor with tremendous ethos, believability, and face validity. Clearly, role models are important. However, simply having done what the mentor is asking the new professor to do is necessary but it is not sufficient for the purposes of effective mentoring.

## Talk The Talk, Not Merely Walk The Walk

What rounds the picture out, for the mentor, is not only to be able to show, but to tell. And the mentor can not tell if he or she does not clearly understand the process by which he or she accomplished his or her achievements. The person being mentored must not only see the end-product of a life of accomplishment, but he or she must be told about it, given some clues regarding the blueprints or map to the highway of accomplishments. In other words, it is all about the journey for the new faculty member. Thus, reaching the goal is much more apt to occur if the journey is well delineated by the mentor's explication of the nature of that journey. So *the second rule for the mentor*: The mentor must not only walk the walk, but talk the talk as well. The mentor needs to talk about his or her own journey. The mentor needs to demonstrate that he or she is still on this journey, that growth, learning, and development continue throughout the life of the teacher-scholar. The answers to questions lead to more questions, as one's scholarly careers evolve.

## I Have A Dream

If we assume, for the moment, that the mentor is striving towards meeting rules 1 and 2 above, then we can discuss the style or nature of the mentor's leadership. As we will discuss in more detail later in this paper, the *coaching* style (Goleman et al., 2002) would appear to be most appropriate for the academic mentor. With the coaching style, according to Goleman, the mentor attempts to connect what a person wants with the goals of the department and University. The coach attempts, through a variety of inter-related means, to assist the mentee develop long-term capabilities. No small trick, that. Typically, the coaching mentor is positive in approach. This approach is much more likely to employ the carrot than the stick. Unfortunately, too many mentors find the stick, and installation of fear of non-promotion to be more to their liking.

One way to begin minimizing this tendency is to, starting with the interview process, find out if the new faculty members have a dream. Why did they get a Ph.D.?

What did they want to do with it? What are their aspirations, hopes, dreams? What do they want to accomplish? Sounds all very spiritual and the like, but that neither means it is wrong nor inappropriate. Talk about the new faculty members' dreams with the new faculty members, help them better understand what they want to do, dream about doing. Let the faculty members know that science advances through accretion. Certainly, quantum leaps in knowledge represent an ideal to strive towards but experience indicates that this ideal is far less than likely. Yes, the dreams of our career nights are often dashed on the shores of our workaday realities, but thus is life. That is part of the fun, figuring how to make the dream a reality. No one ever said any of this was going to be easy. *So rule three for the mentor:* find out what the new faculty members' dreams are and do everything you can to help them realize that. The mentor, however, should understand and explain to the mentee that the journey towards the dream will be incremental, but nonetheless sweet when achieved.

### **Investment In Human Capital**

While literature coming from the field of business, like that of Goleman's, is quite informative, it is not always applicable to academe. First, there is a basic difference in the purpose of the University versus business. The main purpose of the University is knowledge production and dissemination. Business is all about production of profit. Second, the University deals in human capital, predominantly, while business deals in monetary capital. Not that the former eschews the latter, far from it, but ideally the University is not run to earn money. Rather, the University earns money to run, to accomplish its goals of knowledge dissemination and production. These important distinctions oftentimes get lost by both the mentor and the person being mentored. So, *rule four for the mentor:* understand that when mentoring a new faculty member, the mentor, the department, and University are investing in human capital. This investment pays off in the form of knowledge production and dissemination and the growth of future human capital, that is, students who join the work force, the academy, and so forth.

## **One Size Does Not Fit All**

Finally, mentors may think that because the end goal – promotion and tenure – is the same for each new faculty member that the journey each mentee takes is also similar. Wrong. One size journey does not fit all. For some mentees, the journey will involve a series of studies on different but related aspects of one larger topic. For others, it will be a more restricted number of carefully crafted studies within a larger programmatic investigation. For still others, a lot of “on the road” presentations will be helpful, but others will barely do more than present yearly at the annual national conference. A team, and that is what a University department is, needs players possessing various skills. Granted, all team members need to be committed to leading the life of the mind and to relish informational and theoretical achievements. They must also understand that the life of the mind is about being consequential not famous. However, that said, the way each member realizes these lofty aspirations can and must vary. Otherwise, neither students nor fellow faculty members will benefit from the diverse panoply of intellectual endeavors that is one of the hallmarks a vibrant and active department.

## **The Person Being Mentored**

It is fair to say that emotional intelligence is no less important for the person being mentored than the mentor. So, the new faculty member will also need self-management skills as well as management of relationships, particularly the former. For if new faculty members have an unclear idea of who they are (their relative strengths and weaknesses), they will find it difficult to benefit from the mentoring process, let alone advance their careers.

## **One Gets Promoted Because They Publish; They Do Not Publish To Get Promoted**

Perhaps one of the biggest deterrents to successful mentoring is fear. Fear on the part of the new faculty member in terms of not getting promoted and tenured. Quantity, not quality, of scholarly contributions are often held up as the benchmark. This is wrong both for the new faculty member, the mentor, the department, the University, and society at large. Obviously, a reasonable degree of productivity is salient; however, when *only* number rather than nature of accomplishments are stressed, the new faculty member gets the wrong message: Crank out any and everything you can, forget content or the message, merely clog up the medium with “stuff.” So, *rule one for the new faculty member*: understand that one gets promoted because he or she publishes, one does not publish to get promoted. More on this below, when we discuss the mentee’s motivation.

## **Do Not Confuse Being Consequential With Being Famous**

The new faculty member should be encouraged to express, explore, and develop his/her ideas. These are ideas that his/her curiosity encourages him/her to explore. Following the idea, the curiosity to explore same, the mentee should be encouraged to develop the ingenuity to find methods and procedures that allow him/her to explore empirically those ideas he/she is curious about. While some descriptive work will naturally be a part of any teacher-scholar’s agenda, ideas should, ideally, lead to non-trivial testing of salient concepts, ideas, and theory. Again, to live the life of the mind, the new faculty member is being encouraged to use his or hers to its fullest extent. And difficulty of the journey is no excuse for not embarking on the trip. Indeed, the more difficult the journey, oftentimes the more consequential the rewards for taking it. The new faculty member must be encouraged to keep his or her eye on the prize: being an individual whose professional accomplishments are consequential. Surely, fame can follow consequence, but fame without consequence is less than desirable for an academic. Indeed, a University’s long-range goal is not well served if the fame of many

of its faculty members exceeds their consequence. The *second rule for new faculty members*: understand the difference between being consequential and being famous, and do everything possible to engage in the former and disengage in pursuing the latter. The consequential professional strives, for the most part, to generate non-trivial ideas and develop non-trivial tests of the ideas which result in answers that push back the frontiers of knowledge. If fame and fortune follow that, great, but consequence, not fame is the driving wheel.

### **Stretch Yourself**

In the 1990s, the term *the stretch objective* was introduced into the field of business. Various defined, the stretch objective essentially means striving for accomplishments slightly beyond one's grasp. The concept is not new, of course. For example, a long time ago, a poet opined that, "a man's reach must exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for." Of course, one can always inappropriately over-reach and we have all been there. However, motivation to achieve, to accomplish, not merely for money, prestige or fame, but for the sheer love of accomplishment, should be included in any new faculty member's scholarly quiver. Certainly, the mentor will want to protect the mentee from needlessly entering areas of investigation that are either unrealistic to study in terms of time and effort and/or unlikely to bear fruit. The mentor must, however, balance these realities with the mentee's need to grow, develop, and stretch. Such stretching typically involves the mentee to enter, at least for him or her, uncharted waters. Stretching beyond the known, the safe, the new faculty member should be encouraged to study, no matter how tentative, areas of relative darkness in terms of knowledge. Based on his own personal and professional experience, the present writer can not help but agree with Goleman et al. (2002) that "...there's a special sweetness to success that pushes people beyond their abilities" (p. 61).

## The Other Half Of Inspiration Is Perspiration

Finally, all the above rather lofty ideals are, of course, just that, an ideal, if the new faculty member is reluctant to work. Or, as we have all heard, “I’m an idea person.” Translated, “I’m uncomfortable with, uninterested in the grunt work involved with empirical science.” Often, after the good idea, and the good proposal, comes a good amount of work. Those who are reluctant to get their hands dirty in the ooze and the slime of messy methodology, running participants, and so forth really have no business, themselves, asking their own students to do the same. Again, if this were easy, it would have been done long before.

So, the final rule for the new faculty member, the crucible that forges together the ideas, the curiosity and the ingenuity, is this: the other half of inspiration is perspiration. A philosopher once noted that advances in his field were accomplished by those who went to work “everyday like a green grocer.” Translated, in the immortal words of Bullwinkle T. Moose, “it takes more than wishes to wash the dishes.” So, the *fourth rule for new faculty members*: the other half of inspiration is perspiration. The new faculty member must understand that anything worth having is worth working towards. Too often, however, one will hear new faculty members say, that or that is too hard, it will take too much time. Read rule three above, about “stretching” oneself. Or as an old professor of mine, Harold Westlake once told me when I opined that thus and so was “too hard,” “Ed, one has to do more than enough before one learns what enough is.” None of our abstract thoughts will ever bear concrete fruit if we fail to stay the course, fight the good fight, and persevere. None.

## **The Bi-directional Nature Of The Relationship Between Mentor And The Person Being Mentored**

### **The Coach**

As mentioned above, the present author believes that the *coaching style* (Goleman et al, 2002, pp. 59-63) of leadership is most suited to the mentoring of new faculty. To begin, coaches have frequent and non-trivial conversations with new faculty members about their life, their life goals, dreams, and hopes. Many of us present or potential mentors might say, "I don't have time" for coaching. Or, "I can't be their research coach." Some might even say, "if the new faculty member doesn't have it in them by now, they never will."

Such fatalistic, and, in my opinion, short-sighted, opinions are non-productive. Both mentors and the people they mentor are made not born. Otherwise, what is the purpose of mentoring? Why bother mentoring if we believe that the new faculty, to be successful, are born that way, either they will or they will not be successful. Within this style, the coach focuses on personal development, rather than solely accomplishing tasks, making deadlines. The person who is mentored by such an individual feels that he or she matters to the mentor, to the department and is less apt to feel he or she is just a tool to get the job done. This style enables the new faculty member to better listen and respond to performance evaluations, understanding that such feedback will further his or her aspirations not merely the mentor's or department's interest.

The coaching style helps new faculty members identify their own strengths and weaknesses. The coaching mentor helps the faculty member establish long-term goals, conceptualize a plan to reach these goals, but all the while clearly distinguishing between the mentor's responsibilities and those of the person being mentored. The coach helps the new faculty member tie their daily activities to their own and in the department's long-term goals, something that can really help motivate the new faculty member. The coach also can effectively employ the stretch objective with new faculty

member, and rejoice in their successes along the way, but tolerate their failures as well, understanding that one may learn more, much more, from one failure than many successes.

Obviously, as Goleman et al. (2002) point out, coaching works best with those new faculty members who show initiative and desire professional growth, and is less successful with those faculty who lack motivation and require excessive personal direction and feedback. Further, as Goleman notes, when inappropriately applied, such a style can resemble micromanaging or excessive control of the person being mentored. This is particularly problematic during performance feedback that should be building motivation rather than fear or apathy within the new teacher-scholar.

Where this writer sees mentoring going frequently awry is concentrating on short-term goals, rather than long-term achievements, aspirations, and goals. Too much focus on the solution without any real understanding of the problem, from the new faculty member's perspective, tends to make the new faculty feel less appreciated than more motivated. Rather than focus on what must be or what has not been accomplished, the good coach demonstrates a belief in a person's potential and an expectation that he or she can and will do his or her best. Such demonstrations, according to Goleman, and this present writer's experience, is most apt to lead to the new faculty member having positive, meaningful developmental experiences and lead to the creation of more loyal members of the departmental team.

Whatever the style, the mentor must strive to drive the new faculty member's emotions positively (resonance) rather than negatively (dissonance.) The former leads to enthusiasm, to conditions under which people rise to the occasion, the latter leads to conditions under which anxiety, lack of productivity, and the like are more apt to occur. Being out of touch with the feelings of the new faculty member, in essence, may mean that the mentor is out of touch with the new faculty member and unable reach the new faculty member.

Certainly, other mentors can and will select other leadership styles than the coaching one described above. For example, the *pace-setting* style of mentoring/leadership is frequently seen in business and academic circles. In our opinion, at least in terms of mentoring new faculty members in higher education, solely relying on a pace-setting mentoring styles (e.g., holding him/herself and all fellow faculty members to high standards, an agenda marked by constantly doing things better and faster, quickly pinpointing poor performance, etc.) does not seem likely to get the job done with most new faculty members. Rather, the relentless, vague demands of the pace-setting mentor leaves the new faculty member feeling pushed too hard and having to guess what the mentor and/or system want. We agree with Goleman that such styles of leadership/mentoring are fairly dissonant, leading to emotions within the new faculty member that are seemingly contradictory to successful progress. Conversely, if the mentor wants the new faculty member to commit to the department, the University, and his/her profession, the mentor must attempt to maximize positive emotions felt by the new faculty member.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, this brief paper has come full circle. If mentors want new faculty members to know themselves and control themselves, to stretch themselves towards desired personal, professional, departmental and University goals, mentors must first do the same. That is, knowledge of others is importantly related to knowledge of oneself. The latter, while not sufficient to fully understand the former, is clearly necessary.

We have tried to make the case that the more successful mentors will be individuals who

- (1) know, control and stretches themselves,
- (2) not only walk the walk of the life of the mind but also talk the talk about the process involved with their particularly scholarly journey,
- (3) understand the new faculty member's dream, aspirations, and goals,

- (4) realize that the mentor's job is an investment in human not monetary capital, and
- 5) know that one size does not fit all in terms of the nature of the journey each new faculty member will travel to reach their goals.

The most successful new faculty member, will be, in our opinion, the individual who understands the difference between

- (1) quality and quantity of scholarly work;
- (2) consequence and fame;
- (3) achievement for achievement sake rather than achievement for money, prestige, and fame; and
- (4) perseverance, perspiration, and inspiration.

Also, he or she will actively engage in career planning and exhibit strong degrees of job involvement (Noe, 1988).

Bringing together the aforementioned attitudes, beliefs and skills, on both the part of the mentor and the person being mentored, along with the mentor's coaching leadership style (i.e., one that focuses on development of long-term capabilities), should increase the chances that a resonance will to occur between the two parties. And once achieved, we would like to suggest, that this resonance, has the greatest potential for successfully driving a positive mentoring experience for both the mentor and the new faculty member.

## REFERENCES

- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Goleman, D., (1998). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, November-December, 93-104.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Noe, R. (1988). An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 457-479.