The Power of Mentoring

By Chilkuri Maheshwar

A mentor is required at every stage of a budding enterprise. Likewise, a mentor is essential for every entrepreneur and professional, says C. Maheshwar.

The word Mentoring has been described in the Dictionary as: A trusted friend, counsellor, teacher, usually more experienced person. It originated from Greek mythology in which Mentor was the son of Alcumus, and in his old age, friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus left for Trojan War, he placed Mentor in charge of his son Telemacus and of his palace. When Athena visited Telemacus, she took Mentor’s form to evade being spotted by the suitors of Telemacus’ mother, Penelope. As Mentor, the Goddess encourages Telemacus to go abroad and stand up to himself and find out about his Dad.

In the Indian context some of the most popular mentors were Chanakya who mentored Chandragupta Maurya, Lord Krishna who mentored Arjuna and Guru Vasistha who mentored Lord Rama.

In the contemporary context, Bill Gates and Narayana Murthy recently had announced their retirement and became Chief Mentors of their respective organizations, Microsoft and Infosys respectively. Prof. Rajiv Motwani, who passed away recently (10 June 2009), had mentored Sergey Brin and Larry Page of Stanford University to the research which finally led to the development of Google.

A mentor is required at every stage of a budding enterprise. Likewise, a mentor is essential for every entrepreneur and professional.

The challenge of mentoring is in convincing the mentees to unlearn the past and accept new advice. The past baggage has to be got rid of and new skills are to be learnt.

In non-shipping industry, mentoring is generally referred to for starting up and upcoming enterprises. Innovation and new ideas are encouraged through organized
on with the concept of Mentoring. Many shipping companies have in place mentoring programs to groom young cadets and officers. The newcomers are placed under the mentorship of senior officers either ashore or sailing. The mentors closely supervise the training of the newcomers continuously, monitoring the progress of the mentee in all aspects through appraisals, and feedbacks from the ships in which the newcomers are placed. It involves a one-to-one personal coaching and guidance from the mentor. The mentors are usually, senior sailing Masters or Chief Engineers or Superintendents ashore. Even after signing off from a particular ship, the mentees are continuously in touch with the mentors for guidance, motivation and coaching.

Often, shipping companies use Mentoring Programs as a tool to inspire confidence in staff before promoting them. A set of tasks are needed to be completed by an individual before he becomes ready for promotion to the next rank. These tasks are laid down by the company and they are carried out on the vessels under the supervision of the senior officers. These tasks are usually based on the duties and responsibilities at the senior rank. A continuous record is maintained electronically through the manning software systems or physically through a record book.

Of late, Shipping Industry has also caught

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**Famous Mentors**

Freddie Laker mentored Richard Branson  
Aristotle mentored Alexander the Great  
Martin Scorcese mentored Oliver Stone  
Eddie Mercks mentored Lance Armstrong  
Bobby Charlton mentored David Beckham  
Mel Gibson mentored Heath Ledger

**How a Mentor should be:**

- Willingness to share knowledge and experience  
- Deeply knowledgeable in his field of expertise.  
- Should not suffer from a sense of Insecurity that one day the Mentee will overtake him.  
- Should be rich in experience of setting up new businesses

**How a Mentee should be:**

- Willing to listen and learn  
- Flexible to alter the business plan to make it practical and workable.  
- Should be patient, persistent and perseverant to see his business plan through.  
- Should be humble and ego less with respect to the Mentor.