

Mentoring – a new-fangled fad or really useful intervention?

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The Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Cass Business School (Cass CCE), the manifestation of the vision of its founder and Director Professor Ian Bruce, was made possible by the coming together of City University's Cass Business School and the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants (WCoMC). This partnership offers a combination of world class business education and world class management consultancy dedicated to enhancing performance and developing talent across the Third sector; it is a remarkable marriage.

One of the fruits of this union has been the development of a pro-bono Mentoring service dedicated to supporting the Chief Executives of smaller charities (loosely, those with annual income of less than £3m, although this is not an absolute selection criteria, which centres far more on ability to pay); and a highly subsidised paid-for Mentoring service provided by Cass CCE Consulting offered at heavily discounted rates. As part of its mission as a social enterprise Cass CCE Consulting is committed to offering best-in-class mentoring and coaching services at affordable rates; this is only possible because of the co-operation between the founding partners and individual consultants' preparedness to tithe a significant percentage of their daily fees towards the ongoing development of Cass CCE services, a 'sacrifice' they willingly make. I recently asked a colleague why she was so readily prepared to do this. Her response was immediate: 'Why wouldn't I? What Cass CCE does is important and I love contributing to it'.

Members of the WCoMC are actively involved in "live" pro-bono mentoring partnerships with around 70 Chief Executives; Bill Penney co-ordinates the Mentoring Service for the WCoMC and is the first point of contact for referrals. Bill has a cohort of WCoMC members who participate in the scheme from amongst whom he takes considerable care to "broker" successful partnerships. I asked him how the service was developing "It's going from strength to strength with 7 new enquiries in the last week alone". The WCoMC takes care to ensure that its Mentoring offering is first rate by providing ongoing development and training for its Mentors through a series of Mentor Master Classes run by Patrick Lavin and mutual coaching sessions run by members of the Company's Charities Committee, chaired by Gareth Rees.

The subsidised-but-paid-for Coaching and Mentoring support offered through Cass CCE Consulting tends to be embedded within ongoing relationships of a broader nature with a growing number of clients who work with Cass CCE on a broad range of effectiveness projects.

So what is the difference between Coaching and Mentoring? Is there one? Does it matter? Answer, there are probably almost as many definitions or at least variations of definition as they are practitioners. In this practitioner's humble opinion the difference, if any, firstly doesn't matter a jot and secondly only signifies points along a single continuum. Very crudely and of questionable value might be a reasonably general acceptance that Mentoring is about adding value through content

and experience and coaching through skills; actually, almost always a combination of the two in a flexible holistic approach is likely to be what works best. What is widely accepted is that the role of a Leader, whether CEO or Chair is both challenging and often frankly lonely. With good chemistry and relevant skills and experience combined with a real appetite to be mentored, an effective mentoring partnership is an extremely powerful tool in increasing both the leader's and the organisation's effectiveness. And from my own experience I would add that the most effective partnerships are equally rewarding and valuable to both partners.

What is important is that the explicit aim of both is to help the Mentor or Coaching partner to be the best (in this case, the best Chief Executive) they can be; and so if we focus on this as the desirable outcome, debates over definition are largely irrelevant.

How is it useful? Who better to tell us than some of the CEO Mentor Partners with whom we've been working; please [visit the WCoMC website](#) for feedback volunteered during a recent Quality Evaluation Review and for wider information about the consulting and education activities of the Company. In summary terms, Mentoring is useful because it offers a confidential, independent, risk free and knowledgeable one to one space in which to look at the challenges (whether mountains, icebergs or opportunities) that are the CEO's responsibility. It is often said that the role of a CEO can be a lonely one; Mentoring can offer a working partnership with a "critical friend" which adds real value and can lessen the sense of isolation.

Since participating in the WCoMC's Mentoring scheme I am increasingly aware of the need for Mentoring support for the Chairs of Trustee Boards of Voluntary Sector Organisations. But so far little and certainly not enough is being done here although the Governance Hub have a number of interesting initiatives being piloted at the moment. One such has been developed and is being trialled by Cass CCE at the moment within its Governance Practice headed by Ruth Lesirge, Visiting Fellow and Consultant. This involves working with a group of 30 or so Chairs on a co-mentoring pilot; the second meeting of this trial group takes place on 9th July at Cass and it will be interesting to see how the co-mentoring sessions which have been taking place over the preceding 2 months have fared; we will be following progress on this initiative in future editions of the newsletter.

So where does this get us? Some of the way certainly, but only touching the surface; the more we meet this very real need and see the impact that good mentoring has on both individual and therefore organisational performance, the more committed we become to making it more available on an affordable basis throughout the sector. In the Autumn we shall be embarking upon a series of joint initiatives with charitable partners to secure some long term (min 2 year) funding relationships for these purposes.

Are you a charity CEO responsible for an organisation with annual income of less than £3 - £4 million and limited reserves? Are you a CEO of a larger voluntary organisation who would value a mentoring relationship but don't see how you can justify any significant spend on such an activity? Are you a Chair of Trustees who believes that Mentoring might be fruitful but have no Trustee development provision in your organisation's budget? If you have any interest in exploring how Mentoring might



be available and affordable for you then please [email Gabrielle at Cass CCE](#), who will ensure that you are contacted by the appropriate member of the WCoMC or Cass CCE Mentoring team.