



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Reverse Mentoring

Traditionally, mentoring is an informal, patriarchal relationship, wherein a veteran executive counsels a young, up-and-coming protégé. Learning and development was based on the mentor's agenda and was more like a sponsorship. However, the concept underwent a total facelift and evolved into dynamic, flexible relationships, with varied options.

Today it is 'Reverse Mentoring' that is picking up with organizations. Mentoring of this kind not only updates "senior" executives about the latest in the field, but also levels out any kind of age-related diversity within organizations. At General Electric (GE), junior, techno-savvy employees mentored seasoned managers about web sites, the Internet and e-commerce. The program saw the CEO, Jack Welch being mentored by 37-year-old Pam Wickham, an e-business Communications Manager, who also manages GE's Web site.

The program is informal, driven by the protégés' needs, and structured by the mentoring pair. The need for the program was acute because of the 'e' environment. For some protégés, learning starts with the basics in the Internet and web sites. For others it is about e-business trends and technologies.

Patrick Dupuis, 37, Vice-President and General Manager of Finance and Financial Services at GE Medical Systems, a manufacturer of medical diagnostic equipment in Milwaukee, meets regularly with Marie Limousin, 28, an e-business Black Belt Quality Manager. Dupuis learnt how to put up a web page and host "solutions" in the server rooms with Limousin's help. She is a reality check and knowledge tester for him. They share a symbiotic relationship, wherein both benefit from the program.