



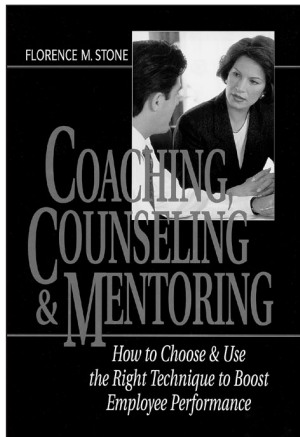
SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®

FILE: HANDS-ON MANAGEMENT

Boost Employee Performance the Right Way

COACHING, COUNSELING & MENTORING

By Florence M. Stone



THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

You can't get ahead without a staff of top performers today, people who know how to learn, adapt, and stretch. People who solve, rather than create, problems. They can give your company the competitive edge it needs to succeed. They can also be your ticket to advancement.

People really are your most important asset. It's true.

It's also true that these same people have more choices today. They don't have to stay with your company if they don't feel challenged or adequately rewarded. And money just isn't enough anymore.

So, how do you keep them?

The answer lies in helping them excel. Motivational experts say most people really do want to better themselves, to be all they can be. You don't have to threaten or force them to improve. But you do have to help them. In doing so, you'll become a better manager.

This summary shows you how to coach, counsel, and mentor your people to success — yours and theirs.

Coaching helps all your people. When you coach employees, you improve their ability to do their current jobs and increase their potential to do more in the future.

Counseling, on the other hand, addresses problem performers, people whose bad habits have become chronic. Taking care of people problems when they arise may cost you 10 percent of your time. Seems like a lot. If you don't deal with them, however, you may find yourself spending 50 percent of your time trying to put out the fire.

Mentoring is reserved for your most talented employees. Work with these people, help them advance, and they will become assets now and allies in the future. Ignore them, and they'll find someone else — maybe a competitor — who appreciates their talents.

You need different skills to tackle each of these three processes effectively. You'll find those skills and more in this summary.

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Cultivate Strong Interpersonal Skills

Coaching is a process that will help you get your people to do their best work.

To be a good coach, you must believe that people want to do well, that they want to please their managers and grow professionally. Your role is to help them gain the skills, abilities, and knowledge they need to increase their potential and improve their performance.

Get the Information You Need

You'll be better equipped to help your people get the skills they need if you have some basic skills:

First, you must be able to ask the right questions without making people feel uncomfortable. You need to be able to get information from them to help you make decisions about who to hire or promote and what skills they should acquire.

Listen well to their answers. Pay as much attention to their body language and nonverbal signals as to what they're saying.

Talk frequently with your employees. You'll be in a better position to detect morale problems and observe employees who are ready to take on more responsibility.

Become a good teacher. This means being able to assess what

employees need to learn as well as being able to train them.

Give feedback. When your people do something well, tell them. When they make mistakes, give them corrective feedback in a positive manner. Suggest improvements that let them know you believe they are capable of doing the work right.

Guidelines for Giving Feedback

Plan what you intend to say to your employees, and be sensitive to your emotional state at the time. This will help you keep personal frustration out of your remarks.

Be patient. Just because you know how something is to be done, doesn't mean your employees do. Where possible, show them how the job should be done.

Be specific, not general. Telling an employee to be more customer focused is too vague. Instead, you might say something like, "I was disappointed that we didn't do a customer-focus group this quarter. We need to hold these meetings every quarter in order to keep up with customers' needs."

Focus on behavior that can be changed. You'll only frustrate employees if you identify shortfalls they cannot change.

Use language and nonverbal signals that indicate your intent to help them.

Allow employees to respond to you. Give them the time and space they need to explain why they did the job the way they did it. ☆

Be a Good Team Coach

Coaching members of a team takes a special set of skills. Among the skills you need are the abilities to

- set direction. The team will depend on you to clarify its mission and make sure the group stays on course.
- organize. Bring the right people together. Give them the information they need before and after each meeting. Make sure they follow through on assignments.
- facilitate. Create an atmosphere that encourages people to share diverse viewpoints without fear of criticism or infighting.
- summarize. Briefly go over remarks made by team members and review the team's progress both during the meetings and in the written minutes.
- develop. Teach others the skills they need to work together as a team.

Coaching, Counseling & Mentoring by Florence M. Stone Selected by Soundview as an Outstanding Book for Business People

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Published by Soundview Executive Book Summaries (ISSN 0747-2196), 10 LaCrue Ave, Concordville, PA 19331 USA, a division of Concentrated Knowledge Corporation. Publisher, George Y. Clement. Publications Director, Maureen L. Solon. Editor-in-Chief, Christopher G. Murray. Published monthly. Subscription, \$195 per year in the United States, Canada and Mexico, \$275 to all other countries. Periodicals postage paid at Concordville, PA and additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Soundview, 10 LaCrue Ave., Concordville, PA 19331. Copyright © 1999 by Soundview Executive Book Summaries.

Some Do's and Don'ts of Coaching

Like an athletic coach, you need to motivate your people. But your responsibilities go far beyond giving pep talks.

Start with your behavior. Be a role model for excellence. Take your own advice, and your staff will be more likely to emulate your actions. Managers who tell their people, "Do as I say, not as I do," quickly lose the respect of their employees.

Hire right. Look for individuals who want to grow, develop new skills, and tackle challenges. Seek out people who have their own ideas and won't accept anything without explanation.

Encourage their growth by creating a positive environment. Build a rapport with your employees. Point out their strengths and note any improvement in performance. Treat their mistakes as learning opportunities; never threaten them.

Make sure people understand how their jobs tie into the company's overall strategy and mission. Clearly explain what you expect of them.

When you conduct performance appraisals, be specific about what each individual can do to improve. Write down their development goals. Provide training programs and resources that will help your employees achieve those goals.

Praise them when they do a good job. Be sincere, concise, and specific. For example, you might say to an employee, "You really helped us achieve our goal on time by working last weekend." This points out the importance of the person's action and how it supports the department.

Encourage Stretch

Get your employees to stretch. Start by determining the gap between the skills they have and the skills they need.

Make a list of all your employees. Which ones lack some skill that could improve their performance from average to excellent? Which ones have potential that hasn't been developed because their jobs don't

call for those strengths?

Once you've identified those with stretch potential, meet with them individually. Tell them that your goal is not to find fault with their performance but to identify ways they can improve. Explain what's in it for them as well as for the company.

Get them to suggest their own stretch goals. You could ask, for example, "What can we do to help you maximize your capability?" This not only gets your employees thinking about various possibilities but also reinforces their self-confidence.

Make it clear that stretch goals will require extra work on their part.

Empower them. Train them for the opportunities you've discussed. Share information with them. Build on their strengths.

Recognize that they may not succeed on their first attempt, and help them learn from their mistakes.

Avoid These Coaching Traps

Coaching holds its own pitfalls. Here are some of the most common and ways you can avoid them:

Hiring the wrong people. The

solution is to interview longer and more often. Ask more targeted questions about job skills and attitudes. Request others to interview top candidates as well.

Making implied promises. Don't promise to reward added effort with a raise or promotion if you can't deliver.

Changing from coach to autocrat. Be consistent in the way you treat your employees: Once a coach, always a coach. If you change styles in mid-stream, your employees won't trust you.

Being impatient. If you have to, patiently repeat those instructions a tenth time. Deal calmly with dumb mistakes. Losing patience sends a message to employees that you think they're stupid and erodes their self-esteem.

Focusing on attitudes. Rather than calling someone lazy, you might say, "You don't lend a hand to other workers and have been seen reading a newspaper when co-workers need help." This calls attention to behavior that can be changed.

Ignoring the problem. Don't allow little problems to grow into big ones. Deal with them as they arise. ☆

Stay Cool or You'll Lose Their Trust

Hal, an electronics plant manager, thought he was a good coach. He believed he had cultivated so strong a relationship with his staff that they would do what he asked with minimal fuss.

He was unpleasantly surprised, therefore, when his employees balked at an announcement that they had a month to install and go on-stream with new production equipment. They wanted more time. Hal told them they couldn't have more time. They got angry.

Hal got mad. He said they had no choice. He told them to shut up.

Ultimately, Hal's employees brought the project in on time but it took much longer for them to forgive and trust him.

Instead of becoming an angry dictator, Hal could have explained why the change was important and asked team members for their ideas about how to make it happen within the short time frame. He also could have taken some of the sting out of the announcement by talking in terms of "we" and "us" instead of "I" and "you."

Furthermore, he could have met first with the team's informal leaders and enlisted their support.

And he might have reduced his own defensiveness if he had anticipated questions and practiced his answers before the meeting.

How to Handle Performance Problems

Counseling has some elements of coaching, but it is designed primarily to address problem employees. These may be employees whose work consistently is substandard, who regularly miss deadlines, are uncooperative, insubordinate, or frequently absent or tardy.

Chronic complainers also fall into this category.

If the situation warrants counseling, your first step will be to bring the problem to the employee's attention. This can be done with a simple, spontaneous remark, such as, "Hal, you should be at your desk now, shouldn't you?"

Typically, however, counseling begins with the first in a series of one-to-one meetings with the problem employee. These interviews are the primary tool of counseling.

Five Key Objectives

The purpose of interviewing is fivefold: to get the employee to agree that there is a need for performance change; identify the cause of the problem; determine specific actions to improve performance; ensure those goals are met; and reinforce correct behavior.

Begin the interview by putting the employee at ease. You might say you're concerned about the situation, for example, but don't lecture. Employees are more responsive to counseling when they don't feel

they're under attack.

Move on to the nature of the problem. Be specific. To do this, you must have done your homework, documenting how often the problem occurred and the consequences of the problem on the person's work.

Give the employee time to respond. There's always the possibility that the individual is in the right and that the problem is nothing more than a misunderstanding.

If you establish that this is not the case, however, progress to your second objective: Identify what's causing the problem.

Some common causes include stress, unclear priorities, poor time management, too much or too little supervision, interpersonal conflicts, personal issues, or resentment over a promise you made and broke.

Revealing the source of the problem takes gentle probing and active listening. Some employees are more forthcoming than others. Be patient.

Counseling Employees for Misconduct

Rule violations or other misconduct demand more severe action than do performance problems.

Start with a verbal warning, particularly if it is the employee's first offense or the offense is minor. A verbal warning puts the individual on notice that the offending behavior has been noticed and must change.

Should the negative behavior con-

Once you've identified the problem's cause, the two of you must agree on specific actions to improve performance. Offer, or be prepared to get, information about the company's policies and procedures to help the employee develop an action plan.

If the problem is beyond your scope, refer the employee to the employee assistance program or human resources department.

A word of caution: trying isn't good enough. An employee who says, "I'll try," is agreeing only to attempt the action but not achieve it. Get the employee to state what he or she actually will do.

Follow up this first meeting with subsequent meetings that allow you to ensure the employee is achieving the agreed-upon action plan.

Reinforce any improvements you observe. You might even want to reward the employee with a special assignment or opportunity for special training. Keep that good behavior on track. ☆

tinue, issue a written warning. Give the original to the employee and put a copy in the person's personnel file.

If that doesn't work, have your boss or someone in human resources reprimand the individual. The message here should be that another incident will result in suspension.

Employees who engage in repeated misconduct or commit serious offenses should be suspended. Whether you pay the individual during this period should depend on the nature of the situation.

When all else fails, terminate the employee.

You may not go through all five steps; it depends on the seriousness of the conduct, the person's work history, and how the employee responds to the steps. In severe cases, such as theft, you actually may start with termination. ☆

Do You Have a Problem Employee?

If you think you may have a problem employee who needs counseling but you're not sure, ask yourself the following questions:

Am I making allowances for this person?

Am I acting more like the employee's parent or personal counselor than a manager?

Do I use my own busy schedule as an excuse to avoid dealing with the issue?

Do I feel angry?

Are other staff members angry?

Is the situation becoming the topic of conversation at work?

What to Do When Interviews Don't Work

Sometimes counseling interviews don't work. There is no noticeable improvement within the agreed-upon time frame which, ideally, should be no more than about two months.

Ask the employee why his or her performance didn't improve.

If appropriate, consider offering additional training, more frequently monitoring the most difficult performance areas, or developing another action plan.

If the employee still shows no improvement, it's time to send out a written warning. Once you issue this warning, set up another meeting to review the individual's plans to improve. At this meeting, tell the employee that failure to correct the problem may mean termination.

Document this meeting. In fact, document all your encounters with

problem employees. Your notes should clearly establish that there is a pattern of poor behavior.

If continued poor performance isn't the employee's fault or if extra training won't have an effect, you might want to consider transferring the individual to another job or department. If this isn't an alternative, demote the person to a level he or she is more capable of handling. Demotion is demoralizing but it's better than termination.

Firing the employee is your last resort. However, there are situations that warrant it. Keeping a poor performer not only creates management headaches for you, it brings down the productivity of others and thus affects your company's bottom line. Just make sure you have evidence your counseling efforts failed. ☆

Watch Out for These Counseling Pitfalls

Counseling has its risks. They fall into three categories: problems associated with the counseling process, problems at the warning stage, and legal problems.

Counseling Traps

The interview process is fraught with pitfalls. Be aware of, and try to avoid, the following:

- Dominating the discussion. Speak only 20 percent of the time and listen the other 80 percent.
- Shifting attention from the employee's performance problem to your own problem or feelings. It's not about you.
- Getting too involved with the employee's problem or feelings. If the employee cries, offer a tissue and compassion. But get back to the issue of poor performance.
- Trying to solve the problem without first discussing its nature. Employees can't correct their behavior unless they admit to a problem.
- Dictating the action plan. For the plan to succeed, the individual must help create it.

The biggest counseling mistake

you can make, however, is to avoid dealing with the problem. Granted, counseling is time consuming, but the problems that poor performers cause will not disappear by themselves. And don't think for a minute those problems go unnoticed by others, particularly your staff.

Warning Traps

Counseling interviews are only a step removed from a warning, and warnings are a step away from termination. Make sure you explain this to the problem employee at the first counseling session.

Once you move from interview to warning, follow through with whatever action you warned. If you don't, you'll lose credibility with your problem performer and, indeed, with your entire staff.

When you terminate an employee, set up a face-to-face meeting. Be brief. Review what led up to this point. Don't use the interview as an opportunity to get even for all the problems the individual caused you.

Treat the person respectfully. Offer wishes for future success, but

Is It Worth Your Effort?

Don't blindly commit to counseling. Think about whether it's worth it. Is the person a lost cause, or can you make a difference?

Take a look at the problem employee's track record with your company. How much would this person add to the organization if he or she worked to potential or beyond?

Evaluate the individual's motivation and willingness to change.

Consider too the value of your own time and how much you will have to invest.

If you are unwilling to make this investment or if you don't believe counseling will change the individual's behavior, consider transferring or terminating the employee.

have the individual leave immediately. Keeping the person on site can be disruptive to your workplace.

Legal Traps

Certain employee rights are protected by law. In the U.S., for example, the Americans with Disabilities Act makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities. Alcohol and drug abusers are covered under this law. But you have the right to take disciplinary steps against such workers if they are using drugs or alcohol on the job or are working under the influence.

Disgruntled employees can charge you with all manner of unfair practices. But you can protect yourself if you

- have adhered to your company's policies and procedures,
- can show you use the same criteria in evaluating all employees,
- can prove the standards or measurements you used to assess performance are based on the job's needs,
- have documentation to support your evaluations and final decision to fire the worker.

Remember, always put it in writing. ☆

Counseling Colleagues as a Team Leader

Leading a team sometimes presents challenges that may call for counseling — members who don't prepare for meetings, always arrive late, or quarrel with others in the group, for instance.

Dealing with these problems is easier if the group is made up of your employees. You have the positional power to influence their behavior.

You don't have this power, however, if the group is made up of your peers. In cases like these, you may have to strengthen your words by invoking the team's ground rules or utilizing peer pressure.

But counseling a team member shouldn't become a battleground. Work with the other person to find a solution, not to prove who's right.

Corrective Steps

The best approach is to follow these six steps:

Take the individual aside. Talk about the situation, using facts. Emphasize that the team's effort and the person's contribution to that effort are important. Avoid sounding self-righteous or you'll stir up resentment.

Give your colleague a chance to explain what's been happening. Listen and don't interrupt. Then paraphrase what's been said and ask questions.

Acknowledge the person's explanation. This isn't the same as excusing the disruptive behavior. Remind the team member of the consequences of continuing to be disruptive. If your peer defies your right to question his or her behavior, pull out a copy of the team's ground rules.

Determine the behavioral change that's needed. Don't dictate. Ask probing questions that will help the individual identify a solution.

For example, if the team member frequently has missed meetings and not completed tasks, you might ask, "Would there be some way that the team as a whole could free you to complete your team assignments?"

Get the person to commit to an action plan. Without this commitment, nothing will change.

Provide feedback and support. You can't very well offer praise at your colleague's performance appraisal, but you can applaud the person publicly for a job well done or write a thank-you note to be inserted

in the individual's personnel file. Even a smile when the person obviously makes an effort to correct the disruptive behavior — arriving early rather than late, for example — acts as a motivator.

Mediating Team Conflicts

Disagreements during team meetings can be positive, sparking new ideas. If they get out of control, however, you'll have to intervene.

Generally, anger between team members runs deeper than the topic under discussion. Look beyond the specific incident.

Meet with the individuals privately and get them to identify what triggered the outburst. Ask them for ideas on how to make things better. Try to steer the discussion away from personal accusations and toward a resolution.

You might explain how the conflict is jeopardizing the group's mission, or appeal to their egos by pointing out that they're damaging their reputations for professionalism.

If mediation fails to produce a solution, you and the team may want to consider confronting the two parties in a group. If all else fails, however, you may have to ask one or both parties to leave the team. ☆

Problem Behavior Can Infect the Rest of Your Team

Ted was always tardy. His late arrivals to team meetings, sometimes twenty minutes after the meeting began, tended to disrupt the group's discussion.

Jill, the team's leader, knew Ted had a crushing workload, so she didn't speak to him about becoming more punctual. Besides, he was the group's number cruncher and he usually arrived loaded with data.

After a month of late arrivals, however, Ted began letting his homework slide. Jill knew that his workload had eased so there was no reason for him to be lax or late.

Still, she didn't talk with Ted

about his behavior. And the problem mushroomed.

Soon, other group members began arriving late and didn't finish their assignments.

Jill was upset, but not as upset as the group members who had remained punctual and conscientious. The crisis reached a head when these team members, annoyed at Jill's inability to handle the situation, walked out of a meeting shortly after it began.

Jill knew she had to act.

She met with each of the latecomers. All explained they did it because Ted got away with it.

Jill acknowledged she should

have talked with Ted but said his actions didn't justify theirs. She told them their roles were critical to the team's mission and their lax behavior was costing them the respect of their peers. She got their attention and their cooperation.

Jill met last with Ted.

She expressed concern over his commitment to the team and gave examples of his behavior. When Ted bristled, Jill pointed out that the team's ground rules, which Ted helped write, stipulated punctuality. She said she'd have to replace him if he couldn't abide by the rules. Ted agreed to change.

And he did.

Everyone Wins in a Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring is for your exceptional employees, people who show promise but need help to become top performers.

As a mentor, your responsibilities are to represent the company's values, give pep talks, offer instruction about your company's political structure, influence decision makers to help your mentee, and provide contacts and resources.

What's in It for You?

Mentoring doesn't just help your employees. You too reap considerable benefits from the relationship.

A mentoring relationship shortens your employees' learning curves and increases productivity.

It builds loyalty. Your efforts tell staff members that you care about them beyond their ability to do their jobs. They will be less likely to leave your company if you are helping them develop professionally. This reduces turnover.

Mentoring helps communicate corporate values. If you explain to your mentee how important these values are to the company's success, that person might come up with ideas for achieving them. The result is a more innovative environment.

Your mentees can offer you additional corporate information from their own contacts in the company. And they may be able to keep you informed about concerns within your own work group.

They can help you complete some of your own projects, freeing you to pursue other ideas that may enhance the company's bottom line.

Your mentees will prove allies in the future as they advance their own careers and gain influence within the company.

Becoming a Mentor

Think about the people on your staff. Do you have an employee who is talented but needs to acquire more skills to move forward, or someone

who has good ideas but needs an advocate to realize them? Does a newly hired staff member need a better understanding of corporate values or your division's mission?

Perhaps one of these individuals has asked you to become a mentor. Or, the idea could come from you. Before you agree to, or suggest, a mentoring relationship, consider your chances of success.

Draw two columns on a sheet of paper. In one column, list the skills, abilities, knowledge, amount of attention and time you are willing to give to the relationship.

Bear in mind that people tend to underestimate their volume of work and overestimate their free time, so reduce by at least one-third your estimate of how much time you have to give the mentee.

Now list your prospective mentee's needs in the second column. Examine this list first.

Eliminate any sporadic needs or spur-of-the-moment occasions on which you were asked for help. Perhaps you once quickly reviewed a speech the individual prepared.

The remaining items on the list should be developmental needs. These demand a greater commitment from you.

Now look at your own list of resources. Draw lines from column to column,

linking your competencies with the employee's needs. Use a yellow marker to indicate needs you don't have the skills or time to address.

The more linkages there are between your employee's needs and your competencies, the more productive the mentorship will be. If yellow marks outnumber linkages, however, the person would be better off mentoring with someone else. ☆

Your mentees will prove allies in the future as they advance their own careers and gain influence within the company.

Bob and Faith: How Mentoring Works

Faith left a secretarial position to sign on as administrative assistant to Bob, head of purchasing. Faith had been unhappy with her previous job because she hadn't felt appreciated.

Bob recognized Faith's potential. Her professional track record, although mostly clerical, indicated she was capable of taking on more responsibility than the administrative assistant position required.

He started assigning projects that gave her an opportunity to stretch. Each time Faith excelled.

Pleased with her progress, Bob offered to help Faith advance in her job. In effect, he became her mentor.

He promised to put her in charge of several projects of her own, assignments that would make her more promotable in the future. He identified several skills she would have to develop to handle the work and of-

fered to help her if she encountered difficulties.

Faith was delighted. She agreed to meet with Bob on a regular basis to provide updates on her work and accept feedback. And she set about acquiring the skills she needed.

The mentoring relationship gave Bob time to work on other projects as Faith increasingly took on work he didn't have time to do. As a result, he was able to complete a reorganization plan for his department, saving the company \$100,000.

For her part, Faith became an increasingly skilled worker. At one point, she uncovered a vendor scam that would have cost the division more than \$50,000.

When, two years later, Faith accepted a job in other city, Bob helped her get the job. This time, though, she was management. ☆

Develop Open, Honest Communications

Mentoring must become a part of your schedule; it can't be done sporadically. Meeting with your mentee once or twice a month will give you a chance to stay abreast of progress and offer timely suggestions.

Talking with Your Mentee

The key to opening a mentoring discussion is to give the mentee an idea of what you intend to discuss. For instance, you might remark about a political issue that affects a project on which your mentee is involved.

Don't open with a question, particularly one that begins with "why." "Why" questions make people feel like they have to justify their actions.

Do use thought-provoking questions during the discussion to help your mentee consider how he or she might handle certain issues. And do offer more feedback than advice. Advice isn't a learning exercise.

By contrast, feedback is instructive. Make it clear you believe the mentee would have discovered and addressed the problem without your

assistance.

Give feedback in a straightforward and honest manner, the way you probably would like someone to assess your own actions.

Avoid being hypercritical, but don't hold back constructive feedback because you're afraid of hurting the person's feelings.

Share your own experiences, failures as well as successes. This will help your mentee anticipate problems that might arise. But give your mentee the freedom to do things his or her own way.

Finally, always follow up on tasks that you've assigned. You need to know what's happening, both the good and the bad.

Trust Is Critical

You must be able to trust that the other person will be open and honest with you. Your mentee, in turn, must trust that you will be honest about any problems that arise and will keep all conversations confidential.

Mentoring won't work without this mutual trust and respect. ☆

Measure Your Skills

The following questions will help you assess your ability to communicate with your mentee:

Do you interrupt with solutions before someone has finished explaining the problem?

Do you tell people what to do rather than questioning to help them find their own answers?

Do you believe there's only one way to handle a situation?

Do you get annoyed when you have to go over an issue again and again?

Do you throw people into new experiences without being around to help them out?

Do you make promises you don't or can't fulfill?

Do you get upset when someone you believed in lets you down?

Do you occasionally lie about opportunities for advancement or promotion to avoid addressing the limited available options?

Do you gossip with other managers about your employees?

Recognize and Deal with Problems in the Mentoring Relationship

Despite your best intentions, mentoring may not work out for you. Perhaps your mentee hasn't lived up to your expectations. Or maybe the individual has outgrown you, requiring challenges and skills you no longer can provide. Whatever the case, know when it's time to call it quits.

Discuss your decision to end the relationship with your employee. Point out the need for a new mentor to help close the individual's developmental gaps. Together, come up with a list of prospective new mentors that have these competencies.

Make it clear, however, that your door is always open to the individual, as it is for all your employees.

Cross-Gender Mentoring

Rumors can arise when you mentor someone of the opposite sex. One

manager, for example, was warned by his boss that he might not get the promotion he had earned because of a rumor that he was having an affair with his female mentee. Although there was no truth to this rumor, the manager was faced with a choice of furthering his own career or that of his mentee.

He decided to continue the mentoring relationship and, furthermore, to extend it to include another staff member. In the end, not only was he promoted, one of his mentees took his position when he moved up.

You cannot stop the rumor mill. People spread gossip because they're jealous of the special attention the mentee is getting.

However, once they see there clearly is nothing salacious going on, they usually get bored and seek other targets.

If you do sense jealousy on the part of other staff members, try to be more accessible to them. Also alert your mentee not to aggravate the situation by flaunting the association with you.

Identifying Problems

If you suspect there's a problem in your mentoring relationship, you may want to get feedback from your mentee.

Determine whether you are addressing the person's needs and meeting his or her expectations.

Find out if the mentee is satisfied with the way the meetings are going. Solicit suggestions for improvement.

Ask if there are special issues or new goals that should be discussed.

Honestly ascertain whether the person still needs your help or if it's time to find someone else. ☆