



April 2007

Masterful Mentoring

▶ TIP

Tip of the Month

Make a commitment to one another to bring your best efforts to each of your mentoring interactions.

▶ FULLY ENGAGING YOUR MENTORING PARTNER

Mentorship is meant to be a learning relationship where both parties benefit from spirited sharing. To get the most from your mentoring experience, you must fully engage your mentoring partner. Yet, it takes time and focused effort to create a learning partnership that has the attributes necessary to be truly transformative. In this article, we will discuss what a fully engaged mentoring relationship looks like and how to achieve it.

Levels of Engagement

Mentorship hinges on the quality of the interpersonal relationship that exists between the mentee and mentor. One of the leading indicators of a high-quality mentoring partnership is the amount and type of engagement that is demonstrated. In simplest terms, there are two identifiable levels of mentoring engagement: semi-engaged and fully engaged.

Semi-engaged – At this level, mentoring relationships are typified by communications that are intended to be persuasive (selling and telling) as a way to negotiate terms and conditions. Interactions are guarded, reserved, and focused mainly on immediate results. Hallmarks of a semi-engaged mentoring relationship include:

- Withholding thoughts, ideas, opinions, or facts – in general, there is not enough trust to allow open and free exchanges.
- Viewing your relationship solely from the vantage point of your role – mentees being the takers of knowledge and mentors being the givers of knowledge.
- Placing value for the relationship mostly in the what's-in-it-for-me factor – self-interest drives most of the individual motivation and relational behavior.

Fully Engaged – At this level, mentoring relationships are typified by communications that are intended to be participative (honest sharing), collaborative, authentic (full disclosure), and focused mainly on mutual



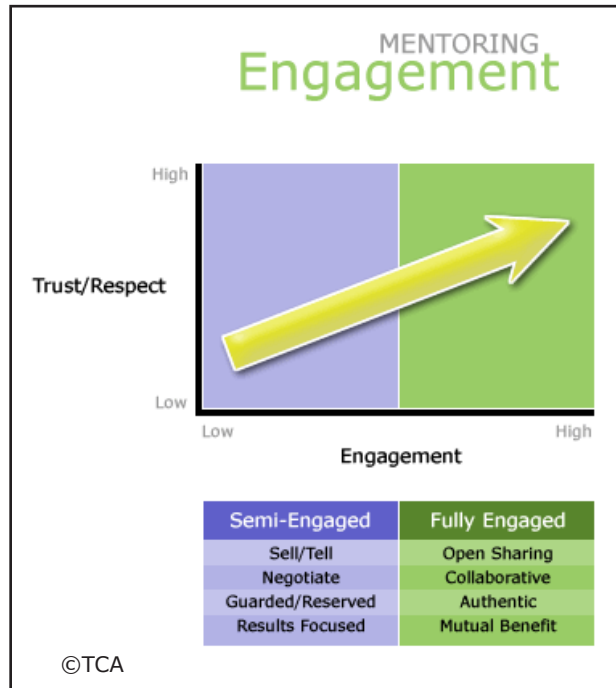
RESOURCES

Triple Creek offers many free resources on our web site, including booklets, research papers, and an archive of past newsletters.

Visit www.3creek.com for access to these additional mentoring resources.

FULLY ENGAGING YOUR MENTORING PARTNER (cont.)

benefits. Hallmarks of a fully engaged mentoring relationship include:



- Freely exchanging thoughts, ideas, opinions, or facts – trust is high enough to enable the honest and open discussion of issues that are private and intimate.
- Having shared respect – high levels of respect open the doors to two-way learning where the mentor can gain as much new understanding as the mentee can from each exchange.
- Bringing mutual value to realization – there exists a synergistic energy that surpasses individual interest and allows the partners to co-create new understanding together.

This type of energy enables each to focus more on the interest of the other than themselves.

The Nature of Fully Engaged Mentoring Relationships

Fully engaged mentoring relationships require that both mentee and mentor be committed to each other. Mentorship depends heavily on mutual trust in and respect of the competence of the other, and fully open and honest sharing needs to be the norm during routine conversations. Like any high-trust relationship, mentorship is subject to the laws that govern human interactions. In particular, several absolutes exist that you should be mindful of.

- *Time is necessary to build depth.* It is wrong to think that because your initial conversation with your mentoring partner went well that you are fully engaged. Respect and trust take time to develop. Both partners will have to share truths about how they think, act, and emote before true depth of relationship can be formed.
- *Testing is important to prove relational viability.* It is essential that your relationship be tested and tried in the crucible of experience. It is not as important to always be right as it is to be authentic and to prove yourself to be authentic.
- *Integrity (personal and professional) proves commitment.* As the saying goes, people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. It is important to show your



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FULLY ENGAGING YOUR MENTORING PARTNER (cont.)

commitment to your partner by showing up consistently, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally as well.

- *Fluctuations in the relationship are inevitable.* One or the other of you will become distracted, overwhelmed, or disenchanted with the relationship from time to time. It is quite possible to look over the life of a mentoring relationship and identify times where you went in and out of being fully engaged.
- *Sharing is the foundation that builds trust.* Risk is required to achieve depth of relationship—risk in the form of honesty and openly sharing your fears and emotions, as well as your thoughts and ideas.

Because of the complex nature of trusting within learning relationships, it is very important that mentoring partners become focused and intentional about creating and maintaining a fully engaged partnership. When both are fully engaged, the possibilities for transformational learning are limitless.

Practice Exercise

The following exercise can help you discuss the level of your mentoring engagement with your mentoring partner.

1. Assess the type of mentoring engagement that you are experiencing (semi-engaged or fully engaged). Determine your level of engagement by asking the following questions:
 - How often do you or your partner hold back from sharing honestly and openly?
 - Do you maximize your opportunities to bring value to your partner?
 - How much positive energy do you feel is currently in your relationship?
2. Discuss your satisfaction with the type of engagement that you are currently experiencing.
 - If you have determined that you are currently fully engaged, conclude how you achieved this state and how you will maintain your commitment level.
 - If you have determined that you are currently semi-engaged, establish how you will achieve a fully engaged state.