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**Leadership Development
Initiative (LDI) Curriculum**

The Mentoring Relationship: Working Virtually

The Mentoring Relationship-Working Virtually
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Overview

Because of the international aspects and Initiative complexities, the LDI Mentor-Mentee dyad is different than the 'usual' mentoring relationship (self-chosen and mostly face-to-face). The Mentor-Mentee (Leader) dyad is assigned, and except for the face-to-face during the Residential Courses and on-site mentor visits, much of the mentoring and coaching will be done virtually. These realities add levels of complexity that are now discussed.

In Phase 2 of mentoring (negotiating, establishing agreements) and Phase 3 (enabling growth and facilitating learning), conversations must ground themselves in the Mentee's reality and goals. Leaders are asked to consider "What do you need to get from your Mentor to enhance your success and achieve your goals?" Discuss your action plan and goals with your Mentor. Seek insights and advice from the Mentor. Ensure questions are clear and understandable. Listen and really hear what is being said. Ask questions for clarification; acknowledge the other person's point of view. Acknowledge and thank your Mentor.

Mentors were asked, "What can you give to your Mentee in terms of support, vision and challenge?" The role of the Mentor is to help Leaders shape their vision, and at the same time to positively challenge and 'grow' the vision. If the degree of shaping and challenge is a mismatch, frustration and miscommunication may arise. An effective Mentor focuses on support in the early relationship, and over time increases the challenge incrementally as tolerated, or as might be needed by the Leader.

As the trust in the relationship grows, feedback can be a two-way street. Optimal feedback will set a context, be specific and descriptive, be non-judgmental, authentic, and be respectful of differences. Integrating learnings from any feedback enhances the relationship and makes success more likely.

The previously completed Kolb Learning Style Inventory (LSI) is reviewed by each participant. Knowing about one's own learning style helps to better understand problem-solving and decision-making strategies, team work challenges and communication, and fosters empowered personal and professional relationships. The Mentor-Mentee dyad discusses the implications of their (potentially) different learning styles, and develops plans to work with and support the preferred style (assimilating, converging, accommodating or divergent).

An exercise that exemplified the difficulty of expressing ideas without the benefit of face-to-face communication is offered. The exercise reinforces the challenge, and also the real need to ensure information being sent is what the other is actually receiving. Virtual Mentoring requires careful and skillful communication. Reliance on technology adds layers of potential confusion and frustration. All are asked to write and share a variety of specific feedback tips/strategies to optimize communication strategies, with their virtual reality and learning style differences in mind.

Objectives

After this presentation, participants will:

1. Identify the Learning Style of their 'partner' (Mentor – Mentee)
2. Create strategies to diminish the challenge of virtual communications
3. Describe personal needs and aspirations for the unfolding relationship

Important Teaching Points

- It is essential to manage social presence and time commitment when engaging in 'virtual mentoring'; strategically manage the time set aside
- Set a commitment for 'virtual mentoring': follow a regular schedule, allow for flexibility, schedule accountability conversations
- Regular feedback is valuable, whether things are going smoothly or not. Direct the feedback to something that is changeable; balancing candor and compassion. Consider the recipient's learning style when giving feedback.
- Specific feedback is best. Consider how the feedback can enhance leadership development.
- Take time to digest any feedback, avoid being defensive, and look for ways to enhance growth
- Be clear about the difference between conversation and transactions

Slides

Unfortunately, we do not have permission to share the slides that were developed by the presenters for this session. We recommend that you read the following resources to enhance your understanding and comfort with the material.

Resources / References

1. Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (2008). *The Leadership Challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
2. Zachary, L.J. (2011). *The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
3. Zachary, L.J. & Fischler, L.A. (2009). *The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.