



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

Enter Publication Name

July 2003 – Issue No. 12



Developing Leadership— A New Level of Mentoring

by David C. Miller

It is no secret that the insurance industry has experienced significant consolidation in recent years. As I reflect about how that has impacted our profession, I observe a once secure profession losing its security and fewer actuaries left to do more work. In the midst of downsizing and re-engineering, I wonder about the role of mentoring in the actuarial profession. Has the current condition of the industry made mentoring relationships a luxury that can no longer be afforded? My sense is that, in many companies where middle-management is being whittled down, the answer is implicitly “yes.” With the emphasis on short-term results, there seems to be little or no time to develop people. Professional development is left for the individual to acquire on his or her own time.

If this is what is really happening in companies, I wonder what the long-term future is for these organizations. Developing leadership seems to be a necessity that cannot be ignored if an organization is to ultimately succeed. If you are in an organization where leadership development does not occur, why do you think that is? I propose that one reason is that insurance companies are no longer thriving, but are trying to survive. In an environment of cutting costs and downsizing, employees inevitably can develop a scarcity mentality – “there is only so much opportunity to go around, so I must grab onto as much as I can before it is gone.” As understandable as this response is, true leaders operate from an abundance mentality. One that says, “there is more than enough opportunity available for everyone.” True leaders understand that as they develop potential leaders and, in essence, share opportunity and responsibility, everyone in the organization benefits.

If you are a leader in your organization and have the responsibility for managing a staff of people, how could you go about cultivating leaders in your organization? Before you do anything, you want to be really clear with the reasons you want to do this. Without strong motivation, it will be hard to follow through, especially since the current environment (as discussed above) will not necessarily support you. Brainstorm all that developing leaders will give to you and the organization. For example, developing leaders will help you carry the load, will help the organization grow, will allow you to step up to the next level and will increase enthusiasm and motivation in your employees. You have probably heard it said that a leader is only as good as the people under him/her. Raising up leadership is a win/win/win proposition: a win for the new leader, a win for the organization and a win for you.

Now that you are associated to your purpose, how do you go about developing leadership in your staff? In his book *Developing the Leaders Around You*, John Maxwell describes a five-step process to equipping potential leaders:

Step 1: I model. This involves doing the tasks while the person being trained watches. It is important that he sees the whole process from start to finish. Often, training begins in the middle of the task and this can cause confusion.

Step 2: I mentor. Here you continue to perform the task but the person you’re training comes alongside and assists you in the process. Explain to the trainee not only the how but the why of each step.

Step 3: I monitor. Now it’s time to trade places. The trainee performs the task while you assist and correct. It is important to be positive and encouraging during this process. Continue working with him until he develops consistency and then ask him to explain the process to you. This will help him understand and remember it better.

Step 4: I motivate. In this step, you take yourself out of the process and let the trainee do it himself. Make sure he knows how to do the task without help and keep encouraging him. Stay with him until he senses success. Now the trainee may want to improve the process. Encourage him to do so and learn from him.

Step 5: I multiply. Once the new leaders do the job well, it becomes their turn to teach others how to do it. For you it is an opportunity to turn the new leader loose to take more responsibility and free you up to pursue other developmental tasks.

As you reflect on this process, you may be thinking, “Dave, this sounds fine, but I can’t possibly personally mentor every person on my staff.” Nor should you. Maxwell advises to lead and nurture everyone within your influence, but spend 80 percent of your time on the most promising 20 percent of the potential leaders around you.

Our current environment demands that we do more with less. Consider developing and reproducing leadership as a pathway to empower the fewer available human resources in order to release all of their creativity and ingenuity to do more. □

David C. Miller, FSA, MAAA
is President and
Professional Coach at
Transformation Life
Coaching in Newtown, PA.
He can be reached at
dave@translifecoach.com
or through his website at
www.translifecoach.com