

January 2008

The Desired Outcome This Month: Who Can Influence your Success?

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YOUR BUSINESS

Mentor or Godfather?

I was having a conversation with Barbara Nelson, a friend and colleague about the different kinds of mentors and the different roles they play in your success. She agreed to share her point of view on how this really works by writing the lead article in this issue. Enjoy.

By Barbara Nelson, CEO Neoscale, Inc.

A good mentor/champion can make all the difference in your career. There are a lot of people who are talented and work hard, but only a few of them get the top jobs. Why?

Usually it's because of who they know and how they leverage these relationships.

Forty years ago, my father got advice as he was retiring from a successful military career and pursuing civilian opportunities. He was told "Shamelessly exploit your friends." It's still true today; we just call it mentoring, coaching and networking.

When I have conversations with people who want mentors, I find myself distinguishing between mentors/coaches and Godfathers/mothers. In either case, I am not referring to some formal program of mentoring.

Real mentoring starts with a genuine connection between two people (which may or may not happen through a formal system).

Mentors/coaches:

People who teach you things that matter. They explain things, make time to answer your questions, assess your assimilation of the material (or your growth in change of behavior); they critique, exhort and encourage.

They are usually good role models. There's a content aspect which is really key. It might be functional domain expertise (for example, how to read and really understand an operational dashboard). It could also be political savvy (for example, who the internal power brokers are and how best to influence them)

Mentors/coaches are teachers. They may not be in powerful positions, have meaningful networks or rock star status.

Godfathers and Godmothers:

People in positions of power who do things for you that no one else will. They take risks with you that allow you to grow substantially in your career. Give you a key job no one else would consider you for, and the air cover to learn until you do the job well. Give you funding when no one else will. Put you in contact with a powerful network they have access to with the appropriate intros/recommendations.

Godfathers are fierce advocates. They may not have any content expertise, they may not be good role models, but they wield a lot of power. They are rain-makers.

Mentors/coaches are generally more important early in a career; godfathers are more important mid – late career. Both are essential to success. Both believe in you.

Thanks, Barbara!

For additional thoughts on getting and using mentors you can refer to the [July 2007 issue on Mentoring](#).

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YOUR PEOPLE

Your team: is it really working for you?

It's no secret that having a great, high performing team is good for your success, but I think every manager at some point has had an experience where their team just isn't working. It can be the overall structure of the team or specific individuals who are sucking the life out of the system.

It occurred to me only recently that I always had a great team -- my teams always told me, "this is the best team I've ever been on", -- for a long time I took this for granted.

But when I reflected on what I did, I realized there was a set of steps that I did over and over again.

I was using a repeatable formula that works really well

...to get the right people in the right roles, and get everyone focused, aligned, and motivated to deliver.

Here's how I have done it:

1. **Start with the desired outcome.**
(Surprise!) Get the business outcome clear. What are the overall business outcomes? What does your team need to do and deliver to support those outcomes?
2. **Really get to know the people on the current team, as individuals.**
Take the time to learn their backgrounds and what they tend to do well over and over again. What kinds of things motivate them and multiply their energy? What kind of things drain them or don't fit well with their natural strengths? Focus on achieving a very honest and realistic assessment for both of you.
3. **What skills will drive the desired outcome?**
With the business outcome in mind, think about what your organization will need to do to deliver it. Outline what key skills are required to make progress and remove risk? What connections are necessary? What are the specific outputs that need to be produced?
4. **Create a blank org chart**
Then think about what the ideal organization would be to achieve the desired outcome. At first don't consider who is there already. Focus on what needs to get done? What are the specific skills and work outputs to do it?

Create a top level org chart with no names on it. If necessary add key leadership roles one level down to

create a complete picture, and cover the primary work areas.

5. **Get feedback**

Show your new blank org chart to all the people that work for you in one-on-one discussions. Get their feedback. What did you miss? What did you get wrong?

You will learn more about how your current organization works, who is going to support you no matter what, and who will try to change your mind to only to protect themselves.

6. **Map people to key roles**

Start putting the people who are your top performers and who are good fit for the new org chart in the boxes, and when you don't have a good fit, leave it blank. The goal is not to find a role for everyone that currently works for you. The goal is to build the best and strongest team possible.

7. **Personally Recruit**

Personally and actively recruit your key players into their new roles, or intentionally reinforce why their current role is still critical in the new structure. Motivate them to join the new program by appealing to what is personally important to them. (You found this out in step #2)

8. **Take care of the people who don't fit in the new structure**

Treat them well and with a lot of respect. People will watch and notice how you treat the people you need to move or remove. Discuss your direction with HR, get an understanding of what the options are for the people who don't fit. Is there a role a level down for these people? In another org? Will you need to do a layoff?

9. **Interview for the new roles**

Create an open interview process for the new roles. Make the expectations really clear about why you created new roles and what the requirements are for the position. Let the people whose jobs have been eliminated interview for the new roles if they want to.

This is also a good process to deal with people who are performing OK, but have style or cultural issues that are damaging to the team. Redefining the organization with new roles that have new requirements is a good way to give yourself the flexibility to move damaging people out of the way.

10. **Be intentional about forming the new team.**

Do intentional team building exercises and most importantly give your new team a very clear view and a timeline of what needs to get done to accomplish your mission and meet the desired outcomes for the business.

You created this team for a real and specific purpose. Reinforce that.

11. **Create Execution Plans**

Let them create the action plans and measures to support the strategy, have a meeting where they all share their plans with each other, so everyone gets a sense of what the new team is delivering, and then be prepared to track and measure people on progress.

12. **Don't forget social time**

Build social time for the team into the time you spend together. People need to get to know each other as people. Offsites with dinners work well. You probably have someone on your team that is good at thinking of "fun" activities if you are not. I always delegated this to somebody.

13. **Create regular processes, meetings communications.**

A steady drumbeat of communications creates consistency that breeds confidence. Haphazard, and cancelled staff meetings undermine your leadership and the strength of the team.

14. **Don't tolerate hidden agendas or politics on your team.**

Get the facts on the table, work through the uncomfortable conflicts, and insist that the team works toward an aligned outcome.

15. **Have clearly defined outcomes and measures and manage to them.**

Do not tolerate fuzziness around deliverables and timeframes. Measure performance and have consequences, both good and bad. Keep the performance expectation clearly defined, measured, and high.

16. **Thank people**

Thank people regularly for their support as individuals and as a team.

A great team which is structured right is the only way for an organization to perform at its best.

It has little to do with the team and structure that is in place when you get there. It has much more to do with the work that needs to get done, truly finding the best people to do it, and creating the focus and the environment for the team to thrive.

Here, again, I want to thank the people who were on my former teams and made them great!

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YOUR VISIBILITY

Your Secret Admirers (or detractors)

In the [April 2007 issue](#), I talked about developing communication plans with your stakeholders, and listed the usual suspects.

Here I want to make the point that it's important to really think broadly about who all the people are who can have an impact on your success.

Missing the boat on this can create big obstacles. Don't leave it to chance. Here are some key groups you need to pay attention to.

Your Boss's Peers

In a corporate role, one group that many forget is your boss's peers. They really do get a vote in what happens to you. At the staff meeting your boss attends with his peers they talk about the people at your level.

Who are the top performers? Who is capable of stepping up? etc. If you are not one of the people mentioned, you will be overlooked for opportunities.

Your desired outcome should be that not only is your name mentioned in these discussions, but that these people know who you are personally, and think well of you.

If you have a good boss, s/he will have no problem arranging introductions and developing opportunities for you to interact with their peers. By the way you should be doing this for your top performers too.

If you have a boss who is threatened by this, I'm sorry, AND you will need to find a way to do this informally without setting off any alarms with your boss.

It's important to find a way to connect with these people so that when these discussions come up at the next level and you are in a much bigger pool with all the people that report to your boss's peers, your good work and capabilities have a reason for standing out.

Your Customers

Your customers should be your best advocates. It's a very powerful thing for a customer to know who you are and have something good to say about the value, service, and care they have received from you personally.

Making personal connections with customers and taking care of them will have a way getting back to your

organization or to inspire other customers to do business with you. Products are hard to differentiate, your relationships with customers can't be copied and good ones will serve you well.

Many times when I was running a business a customer would comment on their experience with an employee in my organization, both good and bad. I always took notice.

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YOUR LIFE

Your family: what do they think you are doing?

A big part of my approach is to find a way to integrate the energy you put in your work into your life, in a way that your life "works".

Getting desired outcomes clear with your family about what you are doing and why can have a very big impact on your success, or if it is not clear, it can be an enormous source of frustration and energy drain.

Here are some examples of disconnects:

- ✦ I know people who are making an investment to work really hard for some finite number of years specifically so that they can take care of their family. Only their family doesn't know that, and feel like they are always a low priority.
- ✦ People who are trying to earn way more money than their family needs or cares about, and are not in tune with what the family does need and care about, so there is always contention about what is important.
- ✦ People who are quite happy in their job, doing a fine job contributing financially to the family, but their partner is always harping about why they are not more ambitious and getting promotions, etc.

There are many versions of this. My advice is to be honest first with yourself and then have a real discussion with your family about why you are doing what you are doing.

Having this conversation on purpose and out loud can get you all on the same team and create a tremendous source of support and energy instead of being a constant source of misunderstanding, disappointment and drain.

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I hope you have found a few useful ideas that you can apply right away to start building value in your career and business.

Let's keep the discussion going.

Please contact me if you have feedback, on these topics.

And please let me know I can help you with your career or business.

Contact me:

**If you were sent this issue of
The Desired Outcome by a friend,
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to get your own copy each month.**

About Patty

Patty Azzarello became the youngest general manager at Hewlett Packard ever at the age of 33. She ran a \$1B software business at the age of 35 and was a CEO for the first time at the age of 38.

[More About Patty >>](#)

Patty Azzarello is the CEO of Azzarello Group, www.AzzarelloGroup.com a unique services organization that works with companies to develop and motivate their top performers, and with individuals to build success in their business and career, based on a systematic leadership approach she created from her personal experience.

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