

Learning Success

Whether it's a formal or informal relationship, mentoring can lead to professional growth for both the mentor and protégé



Michelle Cain, CSP of Cain Sales Solutions

A Positive Influence

Vicky Fanuzzi, director of sales at InterContinental Toronto Centre, entered 2004 with prospecting as her top priority. The hotel industry was still recovering from a downturn in 2003, and Fanuzzi felt cold calling would have to play a greater role in making up for the lost business. But out of her team of 23, several senior staff had never developed prospecting skills. In addition, Fanuzzi had several younger reps on her squad still learning the skill. She decided to

bring in Michelle Cain, CSP, a coach with 19 years in hotel sales and a niche expertise in prospecting. Hired to perform group coaching sessions with the InterContinental team, Cain's role expanded to include one-on-one mentoring to reinforce the concepts she teaches in her training.

Cain's training centres on attitude -

namely an "above the line / below the line" approach. She says trainees who think "above the line" are responsible for their performance and think like victors. Those who demonstrate a "blame, deny and excuse" mentality have sunk "below the line." Cain works on developing a positive attitude. When she sees a trainee fall "below the line,"



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she holds them accountable.

The coach's influence helped several members of the InterContinental team double their results in a performance evaluation the company conducts on sales calls. Two of Cain's students scored the highest grades in the entire hotel chain. One performer is Rachael Buma, sales manager, corporate

groups. Buma feels the concern Cain shows for her progress has been key to her success. "Naturally you want someone to take a vested interest in your performance," says Buma. "That's what Michelle does."

Susan Bailey, who took over as director of sales shortly after Cain was brought in, believes her sales force feels comfortable confiding in an outsider. "If they've got concerns about the hotel or management they can voice [them] without making a direct complaint," she says. However, gaining the confidence of an entire sales force requires more than being an external presence. Cain works hard to build relationships with her students by asking them questions, getting to know their passions and establishing common ground up front. "If they don't know me, like me and trust me they're not going to be open to what I'm saying," says Cain.

Despite her results as a coach, Cain is humble about her role: "As a mentor I'm only effective if that

"Naturally you want someone to take a vested interest in your performance."

individual is open to growing and developing. And as proud as I feel for being a part of [someone's] success, I recognize it's them out there performing."

Tips for Mentoring

Are you considering taking in an inexperienced professional to show them the ropes? Here are four tips to help you create a success.

1

Hold Them Accountable

Many experts believe the most important role for mentors is to push the protégé when they're not meeting expectations. "The best thing Peter did was push me," says speaker George Torok of his coach Peter Urs Bender. "A good mentor will make you squirm once in a while when you don't meet your expectations."

Lead with Questions

As a mentor, one of your most important roles is to encourage your apprentice to be analytical and solve problems themselves. Consultant David Palmer has a challenge: "Can you lead them toward a goal just with questions?"

2

Respect Individuality

A good mentor will help the protégé develop their own style that they're comfortable with. Author John Robert Colombo describes his mentor's philosophy: "His basic approach is you must be good at doing what you do. I must be good at what I'm doing. There's no need to imitate me."

3

Avoid Too Much Too Soon

Teaching a trainee too much too soon leads to frustration. Trainer Michelle Cain recommends coaching at a comfortable pace that is still challenging. "When there's too much thrown at [the trainee] they're not open to learning because they're so panicked," the instructor stresses.

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