

GEOFF VOGT'S WONDERFUL MENTORING EXPERIENCE

At the start of my career I was adopted by several experienced managers who gave me insights into the ways of business that have stood me in good stead ever since. Formal mentoring was not in vogue, but this was a close substitute and I have always been grateful for their input to my success. They made time to sit and discuss my questions. Stuff I did not know I did not know was revealed and a bigger surprise was they asked questions and uncovered stuff that I did not know that I did know. I was very grateful for the fact these important people made time from their busy schedules to help little lowly me.

I have continued to seek out mentors on an informal and formal basis and have benefited enormously from the insights that high achieving leaders such as Col Peters, David McNeil, Stephen Baker and Dr Roger Sexton have been able to provide.

In the last ten years I have mentored several mentees. Some have wanted to know how to build business relationships, some about how to deal with difficult people, some about how politicians think, and a notable mentee was an immigrant who simply wanted to know why people did not seem interested in what he had to say. In every case the mentees have expressed great gratitude that someone as busy as me would spend time with them, just as I had felt in my formative years. In every case I learned about things I did not know I did not know, I learned a lot about how younger people think and lot of that was things I did not know I had forgotten. The mentees had made me a much better person. I actually believe that I learned more as a mentor than I gave to the mentees. Several of the mentees have kept in touch and it is very rewarding to hear their stories and see their progress.

One of the most rewarding was the immigrant who had left a very senior highly paid position running the Asia Pacific data centre in Malaysia for a very large multinational parcel delivery company and had taken a modest paying middle level job in the IT department of a SA government agency. He had moved to Adelaide to give his children better opportunities in life. After our first meeting it was clear that people did not seem interested because they could not understand. He spoke with a clenched jaw at very high speed and that overlaid on his Indian accent forced through a narrow aperture made his mutterings unintelligible to me. We worked progressively on getting his mouth to open wider and his talking speed with less focus on the accent. He joined Toastmasters and asked his children to remind him if he was not speaking clearly. Recently he informed me that his children love it when he reads a story to them, that he had won an award at Toastmasters for the best new impromptu speaker of the year and that the CE of the government agency had told him due to his improved ability to communicate he is now being considered a strong candidate for the most senior roles. I cannot tell you how rewarding it was to hear such good news; news I would not have heard if I had not volunteered to be a mentor.