

Mentoring Matters

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This month Mentoring Matters caught up with our Asia Pacific representative, **Eric Ng**. Eric is the president and master trainer of ESSN International Pte Ltd.

MM: What are some of the biggest challenges facing organizations in the Asia-Pacific?

EN: Asia Pacific is a great place to be in. This is the world largest and most populous continent. It hosts 60% of the world's population, approximately 4.3 billion people.



In my view, three big challenges facing organizations in the Asia-Pacific are:

a) Business Growth Expectations in Asia

Asia is growing in many ways: its economy, its population, its GDP, and in increasing numbers of millionaires. As a result, there are high expectations for the region. The challenge facing organizations are two-fold: How to increase performance and show results, and how to sustain and find new markets to compete.

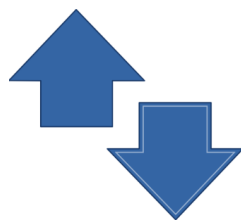
b) The Need for Top Quality Leaders

There is also a shortage of global leadership quality in Asia. As organizations grow, the need for great leaders is absolutely critical. How can leaders be identified, trained and mentored? Is there a cookie cutter system or a best way to do this?

c) Implementing Change

The only constant is Change! Organizations know that they need to constantly manage changes in strategy, business, management and people skills across the region. Asia is not a homogeneous region; rather, it is a complex, multi-cultural and dynamic environment. Organizations need to be relevant or else they become irrelevant!

MM: What downsides and upsides are you seeing in the Asia Pacific around mentoring and leadership?



EN: The downside is the command and control, hierarchical style of management. This has passed down from generations and no one wants to rock the boat. It's a sacred cow to challenge or suggest a change. This trend will still continue where there are only two rules at work. Rule number ONE - The Boss is Always Right. Rule number TWO - If the Boss is wrong, revert to Rule number ONE!

The upside is that as more and more global organizations invest and set up offices in the Asia Pacific region, there is an infusion of alternative leadership styles. There is more contact and communication, less emphasis on positional power. Leaders need to take the time to mentor their second tiers and high potentials.

MM: What are some of the challenges in rolling out mentoring cross-culturally?

EN: Cross-culturally, the expectations between the mentors and mentees differ. The influence of personality, behavior, gender, values, attitudes, thinking, learning and practice will be different. In a recent mentor/mentee workshop we discussed the differing assumptions of mentors and mentees. We clarified the issues of context, time orientation, task vs people focus, 'face', genders and how to communicate.

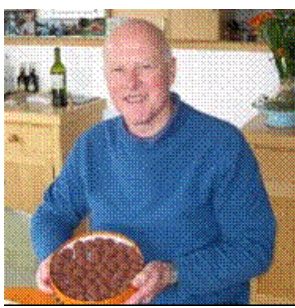


AMSL Leaders at the Mentoring for Success Workshop in Asia

MM: What is one example of a mentor success story?

EN: We have had many successes with our customers for their business, training plans and mentoring. Apart from growing the business of our customers, there was one big success that I fought hard for the mentors. That is giving due recognition to a mentor. In one organization, we rolled-out the mentoring process where the mentors are assigned to mentees. Some mentors are assigned more than one mentee. On top of their daily work responsibilities, they have to undertake the role of mentors.

WIIFTM? What's in it for the mentor? More work and responsibilities! I led a brainstorming session with the mentors to identify how they can be supported. One key idea was to allocate a budget for the mentor to use when meeting with the mentees. For Asians, food is very important. The morale and motivation of the mentor increased. The mentees looked forward to the meet-up session for food and drinks at a restaurant so that they can update each other in a relaxed environment. I had some mentors thanking me as I presented the ideas to management and it was well received and supported. Management must provide benefits so that WIIFTM is clearly articulated.



MM: Who mentored you and what did you gain from the experience?

EN: I had a wonderful boss, John Woodhouse (from England), when I first joined Reuters as a Regional Training Consultant based in Singapore. He sent me to London and arranged for me to meet with all the key stakeholders that I had to work with. John had a plan in

mentoring me so that I was able to perform and deliver my KPI's (Key Performance Indicators). He had a mentoring process similar to the Zachary model of Preparing, Negotiating, Enabling and Closure. At the end of my first three months, I exceeded my targets and had a pay rise. From that time on, I am a solid believer of mentoring!

MM: What books are you reading that you would recommend to our readers?

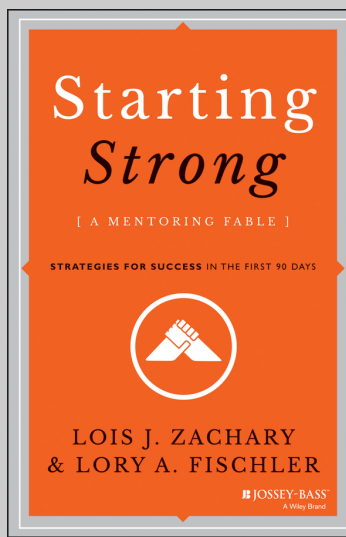
EN: I have just completed reading [Something Beautiful for God](#) by Malcolm Muggeridge. The book is about Mother Teresa of Calcutta, her work, her life and interview. Mother Teresa herself is a mentor. It was her calling to serve among the poorest of the poor in the slums of India. She was convinced to live and bring much good in the cause. She trained, gave, cared and mentored many more Sisters to carry out the tireless work every day. She is a wonderful example of a mentor having a desire to serve and to give more to her mentees.



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