

AEBF business lunch

Some 100 guests participated in this preparatory luncheon for the Asian European Business Forum (AEBF) which was held in Brussels recently. Bringing together representatives from 47 countries, the objective of the AEBF is to draft recommendations to Asian and European Heads of State participating in the ASEM meeting.

After the introductory remarks by Belgian Ambassador Rudi Veestraeten, Thailand Trade Representative Khun Kiat Sittheeamorn delivered the keynote address, followed by presentations on: Financing growth in Asia and Europe by Dr. Twatchai Yongkittikul (Secretary General, The Thai Bankers' Association), Nandor von der Luehe (Chairman, Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in Thailand), and Dr. Thawelap Rittapirom (Senior Vice President, Bangkok Bank). Participants from the business sector got a clear picture of the challenges involved, and also had the opportunity to express their needs and concerns to the financial sector.



Management seminar on how to build an effective mentoring system

Studies rate mentoring as one of the most effective people-development approaches. Specialists Arnauld de Nadaillac and Jean-Francois Cousin gave a morning workshop on this topic. With the use of real case studies, a sense of humor and very active participation by the attendants, practical insights were gained on readiness of organisations for a mentoring system and how to effectively set up and maintain such a system.



photo by Thomas Crown

How to build effective mentoring system & relationships?

Mentoring can be defined as a 'learning relationship between two individuals who share mutual responsibilities to reach learning goals of the mentee'. A mentor is the person transferring competencies at work to the mentee. What makes mentoring interesting for companies is that it is highly effective and very low cost. Mentoring is individualized, focused on motivation and experience of the mentee and aligned with the company goals. The learning of the mentee is based on providing competencies to support real situations, whereas in training the focus is more on the content to be taught. Statistics rate mentoring as one of the most effective people-development approaches. Developing a Mentoring Culture costs very little, and can offer great benefits. Yet, why does it fail so often?

photo by Thomas Crown



Where does it go wrong?

Setting up an effective mentoring system can be a challenge, so where can it go wrong? The most common cause of a dysfunctional mentoring system is motivation, of both the mentor and mentee. Another issue is the sustainability. The project can take off on a very big scale, but when at a certain moment the enthusiasm of the start is fading, the goals set in the beginning are not reached. These problems can occur for instance when there is a bad atmosphere in the company, people are too busy, there is an unclear system, and the expectations are too high. Causes lying behind these problems can often be found in the organizational readiness and support.

How to create a successful mentoring system

To succeed in creating a good mentoring system, it is important that the organization (culture) is ready. There has to be planned support for mentoring, and there must be opportunities to link mentoring to the company goals. To attain this, the learning program has to be linked to the competency-needs of the mentee. This means that the mentoring starts from the mentee's needs, experience and motivation.

Also the structure of the mentoring system should be clear. The purpose and goal have to be stated, and international benchmarking can be introduced to keep comparing the quality and results of the mentoring program. Next to that, a plan has to be made on the components of the system. There have to be guidelines about the 'recruitment' of the mentor and mentees, the communication on mentoring, the education & mentoring methods, and the monitoring and evaluation.

An effective relationship

The mentoring relationship can be divided in three stages. At the start, 'rapport' has to be developed, and trust built between mentor and mentee. There has to be predictability and consistency from the side of the mentor, and the relationship is being tested by both sides. In this stage confidentiality is established, and the goals are set for the program.

After the start, the main focus is on reaching the goals. The relationship between mentor and mentee has to be close; they must keep track of progress, and evaluate the successes and challenges. At this stage, it is very important that the mentee actually learns from his/her failures, and builds up his/her competencies. Finally, the third stage is the conclusion of the mentorship.

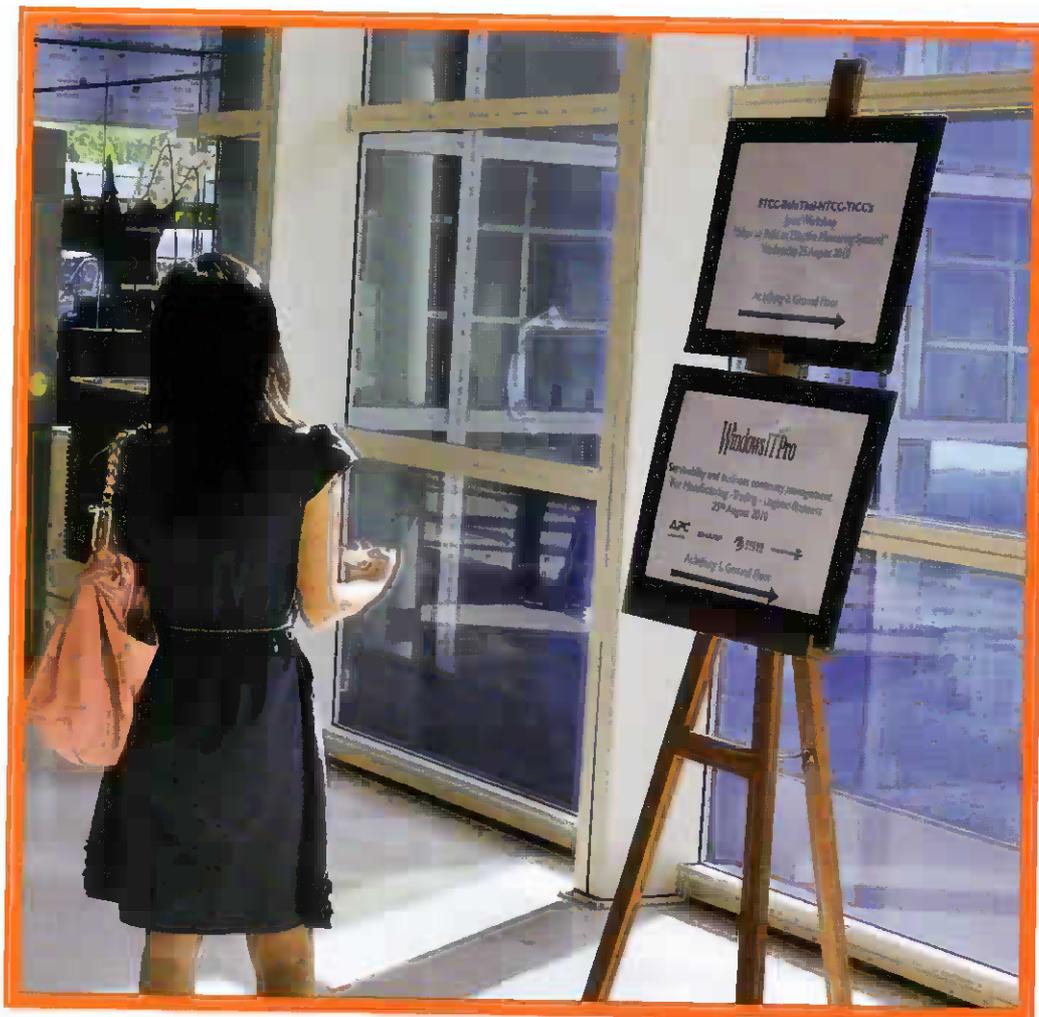
Through all stages, the relationship between mentor and mentee is very important. A bad match can seriously damage the results of the program. Therefore, it is important to 'recruit' a mentor not only on professional skills, but also on personality

traits and professional features. Training of the mentor is necessary, providing the mentors with listening & questioning skills, knowledge on how to structure the sessions and follow up, and information about the specific cultural features in the setting. The willingness of the person chosen to be a mentor can also be critical for the motivation and success of the relationship.

For the mentees, it can be just as effective to provide training before the mentoring program starts. They can build awareness and accountability for improvement, learn about the structures and benefits of the mentoring system, practice how to prepare/run/wrap-up and follow-up a session and how to maintain a good relationship with their mentor. This gives a bigger chance of meeting up with the expectations of the company, and increases the prospect of reaching the goals.

Results

In the end, people and companies find out that mentoring can be very rewarding, and good results often create a positive self-awareness for the mentor as well as the mentee. Also, mentoring skills learned can be used for the daily job of the mentor. A good mentoring system therefore provides valuable organizational learning, in an effective and productive way.



Jean-Francois Cousin is one of the 7 Executive Coaches in ASEAN holding the 'Professional Certified Coach' accreditation from the 'International Coach Federation'. He conducts workshops on leadership & mentoring and delivered over 2,400 'paid coaching-hours' so far. He has worked over 12 years in ASEAN, China & India.

Arnauld de Nadaillac has 24 years of experience in learning systems, of which 16 years in Asia. He is a representative of CEGOS European leader in training, and a sole certified ROI Evaluator.