

# Book Review

## *The Lawyer's Guide to Mentoring*

### by Ida Abbott

Reviewed by Rebecca Normand-Hochman

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Reading the second edition of *The Lawyers Guide to Mentoring* had the same effect on me as it did when I read the first edition in 2009 – it inspired me personally and professionally in powerful ways that I did not expect. This is a book that every lawyer should read whatever their level of seniority or responsibility. It should also be mandatory for anyone starting in a talent or leadership role in a law firm.

The *Lawyers Guide to Mentoring* provides practical guidance and high-level expertise on mentoring as a professional development topic, it also importantly opens our minds to the imperative needs that lawyers have to be supported in their development, and this today probably more than ever before.

As Ida Abbott explains in her book, mentoring is at the heart of the apprenticeship model by which lawyers historically prepared for and entered the legal profession. This model no longer exists (although revivals of the model are making a comeback in the United States and in the United Kingdom), but the lawyers' need for personal and individualised professional support has not disappeared. On the contrary, a study carried out by the NALP Foundation in 2011 found that 95% of lawyers ranked mentoring and on-the-job training as the most important professional development functions.<sup>1</sup>

In the current context where the traditional law

firm model is threatened by a number of external and internal forces (eg, globalisation, artificial intelligence, changes in the needs of new generations of lawyers and their motivations and aspirations), making sure that lawyers can meet their clients' increasingly complex and sophisticated demands starts by ensuring that the profession knows how best to develop lawyers of the highest standard.

This new edition takes into account the changes that have happened in the 18 years since the first edition, such as the emergence of new types of mentoring forms and relationships. However, when comparing the two editions, it is interesting to note that the vast majority of what was written 18 years ago is still relevant and corresponds closely to today's evolutions in mentoring.

The first part of the book provides an historical and theoretical background to mentoring – how it evolved and how it compares with other forms of contemporary mentoring such as coaching or sponsorship. The second part of the book focuses on mentoring relationships and describes how they work, the success factors, the various phases and the benefits for all those involved.

The third part of the book details the various elements that formal mentoring programmes need to have in place in order to deliver the expected outcomes, including a checklist as well as the various phases from the design and launch of the programme to the evaluation of the programme and the increasing use of technology. The fourth and final part of the book looks at mentoring in bar associations, corporate law departments and law schools and shares insightful examples of initiatives run in US institutions.

Throughout her book, Ida Abbott explains how she sees mentoring developing and increasing in importance in the years to come. The following points are particularly insightful:

- Mentoring will become even more critical as a

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strategy for engaging and retaining high performing and high potential lawyers;

- Boundaries between mentoring and coaching will blur and overlap. This is particularly true in organisations that use in-house coaching, where mentors and coaches will collaborate to provide a more well-rounded and comprehensive experience for lawyers;
- Mentoring and coaching will be used more widely by leaders and senior lawyers;
- Mentoring will become an integral part of succession planning;
- Innovative mentoring models will proliferate and be used more frequently;
- Bar associations and other professional associations which run mentoring programmes will continue to spread;
- Mentoring will become more professional. International networks of mentors will be developed, making mentors as readily available as coaches are today.

As Ida Abbott concludes in her first chapter: *whatever changes occur, certain things will remain essential for lawyers who represent, advise and advocate for clients. One is the craving for personalised hands-on guidance and support through which they learn and maintain excellence in performance, professionalism and leadership. Another is the basic human need for trust-based relationships that make people feel connected, heard and valued. Both of these are at the core of mentoring.*

I share the view that Scott Westfahl gives in the foreword to the book about the fact that Ida Abbott has made an enormous contribution to the profession with her work on the topic over the years. I also have the privilege of knowing the author and of sharing with her the strong belief that mentoring is at the core of extraordinary professional development in our profession.

The *Lawyers Guide to Mentoring* will no doubt inspire many lawyers to incorporate mentoring into their daily lives and to contribute to building a culture of conscious individual development around them.

1 Leading Law Firm Professional Development, the NALP Foundation for Law Career Research and Education, 2011.