

Personal trainers are history: if you want to keep up with the times, you've got to get a mentor. Anita Holford finds what makes mentoring work for artists



Life support *if the system's right*

THE THIRST FOR personal development has spawned a range of industries catering for one-to-one advice and support in almost every area of life. Feeling unfit? Get a personal trainer. Want to be more comfortable in your surroundings? Hire a Feng Shui consultant. Feeling unmotivated? Call a life coach.

Mentoring is an older form of person-to-person life support. The origin of the term can be traced to back to the writings of the Greek civilisation and it has been used through the centuries to describe a trusted adviser, friend or wise person (see overleaf) helping another (the 'mentee'). Haydn and Beethoven had a mentoring relationship, as did Freud and Jung.

Since the 1960s, it has been used as a tool in business, education, and social welfare. Employers and training organisations began to realise that people learn in different ways and that training courses aren't suitable for everyone. As the body of knowledge about how people learn has developed, there's been a greater emphasis on 'experiential' learning such as mentoring, where people learn through their own and others' experiences rather than according to a predetermined cur-

Above: spot the mentor. The National Mentoring Forum's definition doesn't say anything about a mentor being older than the 'mentee'

riculum. Over the years, however, mentoring has tended to be developed in the same way as any other training programme, within frameworks and structures which involve intervention from an external organisation.

In the last few years, the profile of mentoring within music has been raised by schemes to support young people wanting to enter the music industry, but the term is often loosely used, as in the New Deal for Musicians (see p16). The Musicians' Union has recently developed *Maestro*, an online training programme for would-be mentors. Although it doesn't set up mentoring relationships many musicians mentors have benefited from the programme; it is now accredited and so can lead to a formal qualification.

More generally within the arts a number of schemes have been developed, although few have managed to be sustained much longer than a couple of years or to provide for large numbers of participants. Sustainability appears to be one of the main problems: finding mentees is usually easy, but finding and supporting mentors needs a sizeable investment in time and money, as Catherine Devenish, training officer at South West Arts has found: "We ran a scheme in association with Skillnet South West and trained about 20 arts mentors, but found that a network

needed active management and we didn't have the resources – we're now looking at working in association with other mentor schemes such as Prince's Trust and Business in the Community. Co-mentoring seems to work, where mentors mentor each other, and support for mentors should certainly be built into any scheme."

Tim Kelly, Arts Development Officer for Hampshire County Council agrees. *Arts mates*, a scheme that he coordinated which ran for two years and involved around 35 artists and arts administrators ended eighteen months ago for this very reason: "We had to constantly work to find mentors. I made a lot of 'phone calls, and then had to convince people, and in the end we just didn't have time to do it."

THE ONLY LARGE scale scheme that has been developed to date is run by the Arts Marketing Association and Pam Henderson, director, is convinced of the value to the profession: "The main benefit of mentoring is that it focuses on the needs of the mentee, it's not curriculum driven," says Henderson. "I don't know of any other professional development tool that does that. The anecdotal evidence is that the scheme is working because it's enhancing people's professional development and they're better at their work because of it."

Around one hundred people working in arts marketing or management have taken part in the last two years, and another hundred have signed up for the latest phase which began in April. The scheme is voluntary (mentors give time for free; mentees bear their own costs; AMA administers from its own resources) and AMA has a large input, promoting the scheme widely, providing a training day for mentors and mentees, brokering the relationships, and giving informal support throughout. Once

a relationship is set up, it's then up to the two participants to agree the terms, such as the frequency, length, and location of planned meetings, but Henderson believes that the intervention of the AMA in training and brokering is crucial: "The relationship is much more likely to succeed than fail if mentor and mentee have participated in a training programme for mentoring. We've only had around two or three failures, and that's been either because we weren't so experienced at match-

ing people, or because the mentee hadn't put in enough thought as to why they wanted to be in a mentoring relationship, or what they wanted to get out of it."

Ken Bartlett, director of the Foundation for Community Dance, which commissioned a research study in 1998 into mentoring, thinks that last point is crucial. Mentees, he says, need to get "very clear what support they need. You might think you need a mentor when in fact all you need is a free venue to rehearse".

Mentoring facts

What is it?

Depends who you ask, says the National Mentoring Network:

● "Mentoring is a one-to-one, non-judgemental relationship in which an individual mentor voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. This relationship is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentee's life, and lasts for a significant and sustained period."

The National Mentoring Network/ the Home Office

● "Off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking." *Mentoring in Action: A Practical Guide for Managers, Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1995*

● "An adult who can provide a pupil with the benefit of their life, school or work experience with a view to encouraging them to move confidently through a range of new experiences." *Salford Business Education Partnership*

● "The support of one individual by another within a personal relationship developed through regular contact over a period of time." *Pan London Standard*

● "A recognisable process where one person offers help, guidance, advice and support with respect to the learning or development of another person." *Neil Blunt, Arts Training Central*

How can I tell if it's mentoring?

We can all probably name one or two people who have had a major influence in our working lives, but

mentoring isn't about being a role model or a guru, or even a good tutor. What sets mentoring apart is that it focuses on an individual's specific needs and interests, and so is driven by the learner rather than a curriculum. It's less about skills development than about reflective learning – encouraging people to find their own answers through active listening, asking questions, giving feedback, and helping with problem-solving techniques. It's also not about unconditional admiration: although trust, encouragement and support is vital, it involves testing people's assumptions, challenging them, or helping them to see things from a different perspective.

In some cases it takes place accidentally or informally, but in others it forms a clearly defined agreement between mentor and mentee, with certain ground rules, often facilitated and managed by an external organisation. Mentors are usually more senior in age or experience than the learner, and it's generally accepted that they should not also have line management responsibility for the mentee. Mentors' roles are often summarised as:

- coaching – by showing how to carry out a task or activity
- facilitating – by creating opportunities for learners to use new skills
- counselling – by helping learners explore the consequences of potential decisions
- networking – by referring learners to others when the mentor's experience is insufficient.

What are the benefits?

For the mentee: improved self-confidence and self-esteem, increased motivation, contacts, broadened horizons and the raising of achievements and aspirations. For the mentor: developing coaching and counselling skills, an increased understanding of how

people learn, a revitalised interest in their work, as well as in many cases mutual support.

Could I be a mentor?

According to the Mentors Forum, potential mentors should have the ability to:

- respect other people's views of the world and work with them
- believe that the mentee has the necessary potential to succeed
- see the best in others, empathise and offer encouragement
- take risks and do things differently, but be supportive and always allow the mentee to take responsibility for their own decisions.

Where is mentoring used?

Mentoring is increasingly used in schemes which offer support to disadvantaged young people. Dalston Youth Project, for example, finds mentors for teenagers at risk of committing crime, or who are truanting or excluded from school. Mentoring is also offered through schools and other educational institutions to raise standards, and improve personal and social skills.

Employment services such as the New Deal for unemployed 18 to 24 year olds (which helps people who have been unemployed for six months or longer to find work and improve their employment prospects) have recognised mentoring strands. In the case of the New Deal, this is targeted towards people who are homeless, have literacy or numeracy problems, lack confidence or motivation or are from ethnic minorities. The New Deal for Musicians provides one-to-one advice and guidance for unemployed people through local Music Industry Consultants: see p16.

LINKS and RESOURCES

Reading

Getting the most from... mentoring. Neil Blunt, Arts Training Central, 1999
Free from W: www.swa.co.uk/info/ment.htm

Mentorsforum

Website from Business Link Hertfordshire includes information such as Finding yourself a mentor; What is mentoring; Gender issues in mentoring; Mentoring as a driver for change; Finding yourself a mentor; Evaluating mentoring.

W: www.mentorsforum.co.uk

Mentoring scheme for the arts marketing association, Pam Henderson, 1999. From AMA: see contacts

Mentoring relationships in the development of community dance, Draft final report 2, 1998 Neil Blunt, Sally Hartshorne, Chris Westlake, Katie Venner, Christine Bennets. Foundation for Community Dance, Cathedral Chambers, 2 Peacock Lane, Leicester, LE1 5PX T: 0116 251 0517 E: info@communitydance.org.uk W: www.communitydance.org.uk

Artists Professional Development Scheme Review 1995–2000 Andrew Wheatley and Deborah Rawson May

2000. One of the few reports into mentoring for artists, this reviews a mentoring scheme for mid-career and emerging visual artists based in the South East run as part of a wider Artists Professional Development Scheme which includes an ongoing Networking Forum; one-day professional development seminars and online resources. The scheme was designed to address the challenges artists face in building a career; the lack of defined career path, low level of income, solitary nature of their working lives and the difficulty in finding constructive criticism. The results range from dramatic career changes, to more practical developments.

£8.00 plus 50p p&p from: Education Through Art, 11 Markwick Terrace, St Leonards on Sea TN38 0RE T: 01424 461 232

Contacts

Arts Marketing Association Pam Henderson, 7a Clifton Court, Clifton Road, Cambridge, CB1 7BN T: 01223 578078 E: info@a-m-a.co.uk W: www.a-m-a.co.uk

Business Link Hertfordshire

Offers services for organisations considering mentoring through a separate company, Exemphas, including designing and developing a programme and support/learning materials, and

ongoing support through advisors, mentors forum and mentoring network.

Jane Clark, Exemphas T: 01727 813543 E: info@mentorsforum.co.uk W: www.mentorsforum.co.uk

Hampshire County Council Tim Kelly, Arts Development Officer, Recreation and Heritage, T: 01962 845939 E: tim.kelly@hants.gov.uk

National Mentoring Network

Membership organisation providing information, advice, signposting and publications including a newsletter. Members include educational organisations, business partnerships, career services, businesses, voluntary and community groups. Also manages the DfES bursary programme for mentoring in schools.

National Mentoring Network, First Floor, Charles House, Albert Street, Eccles, Manchester M30 0PD T: 0161 787 8600 E: natment@globalnet.co.uk W: www.nmn.org.uk

TAPS Graham Surtees, Education and Training Manager, PO Box 338, Milham Ford School, Harberton Mead, Oxford, OX3 0GA T: 01865 798855 E: graeme@tradarts.org

Not everyone agrees. TAPS (Traditional Arts Projects), began *Passing notes*, a two-year mentoring scheme for aspiring folk musicians aged 18 to 25 at the end of last year. In common with other mentoring schemes, it's about mentees developing a broad range of skills – running a business, developing themselves, and understanding the context of their work – rather than learning a trade. As Graham Surtees, education and training manager, puts it: "Mentoring is not a musical relationship, it's about career development. All our mentors do other things: teaching, lecturing, running workshops, and importantly, manage their own careers. We wanted to develop a sense of realism about what mentees' economic position would be. A lot of them think they'll earn a living purely by performance – hopefully we've opened their eyes."

Unlike the AMA's scheme, *Passing notes* doesn't offer training for mentors

and mentees. Surtees believes that it's more important to focus on the personal and musical dynamic: "An effective mentoring scheme creates relationships and can't be formalised," he explains. "We're trying to reproduce and strengthen something that's already been happening in the folk world, and perhaps used to happen more, without wanting to be too structured and qualification-based about it." The MU's *Maestro* programme was made available to mentors (see below) but few used it. "Often, the mentors themselves have experienced being a mentee, and so have strong views about how it should be done. If you're talking about a professional field like marketing which is based on acquired knowledge, then perhaps training people in how to be a mentor and mentee is more important."

ONE OF THE common misconception is that mentors have some form of guru status. In fact, the relationship is much

more democratic, with the learner driving the learning and the mentor guiding the mentee to find their own answers. As Tim Kelly points out: "It's about holding a mirror up, developing self awareness for both mentors and mentees. We wanted to ensure that *Arts mates* was as much about mentors as it was about mentees, particularly as it was voluntary scheme. But we also genuinely felt that mentors had as much to gain." Training was developed for mentors and mentees to encourage good practice in mentoring and Kelly found that this was challenging for both parties: "We were at pains to stress where that power should lie, and that was a very good learning experience for a lot of mentors. It was very challenging for them because of that – we quashed any notion that this was going to be easy, that they were going to feel very comfortable as the expert. We tried to show them that providing that level of support to someone it takes a lot

of skill, and you need to learn how to do it – it's not just a matter of your experience and skill being the be all and end all. That was why we were wary of any paid scheme, as we felt that might shift that balance," Bartlett's view of the power balance is that it's up to the mentees. "People might want to have different mentors for different aspects of their personal and professional development. A mentor for their artistic practice might be someone very different than if they were concerned about their business development."

Passing notes skirts close to the edge in terms of power balance in the relationship because the mentors were pre chosen, are relatively well known in their field (Karen Tweed, Joe Broughton, Kellie While, Chris Wood and Andy Cutting) and have been strongly involved in shaping the scheme from its conception. They are also directly involved in choosing mentees, alongside TAPS, and Huntingdon Hall, a folk music venue run by folk agent Chris Jaeger which is the other partner in the scheme. Surtees argues that the credibility of the mentors was crucial for the scheme in its early stages, although they may cast the net wider for the next year: "The mentors needed to be established performers and educationalists who could balance the other two areas of expertise that we offer, and that will touch on the career of a young folk musician. Huntingdon Hall provides the commercial end of venues and agents, and TAPS as a development agency that connects

with the world of arts councils and arts funding, provides the non-commercial aspect. It had to be a very informed choice of mentor to balance this level of expertise."

The other aspect that distinguishes TAPS' scheme from others is that mentors were paid, and this is another issue that polarises views. Tim Kelly believes that the voluntary nature of *Arts mates* was essential: "We had strong feelings about the ethos we wanted to prescribe, and that's why we wanted it to be voluntary. We also wanted mentees to be able to come back and say 'that's enough now, I've got all I need from this mentor, now I need something different from someone else'. Sometimes people only realised what they needed when they were part way through the process. If those mentors were paid, they probably would have felt less able to do that, and mentors themselves may have been less inclined to report problems." Kelly acknowledges, however, that this was also the fatal flaw: "The real weakness of a voluntary scheme is exhausting the supply of mentors, and that's why the scheme ended 18 months ago – it was too labour intensive to find mentors. And I simply didn't feel able to ask freelancers to participate – it's different for people who have a salary."

IF VOLUNTARY SCHEMES are fatally flawed, yet schemes involving payment go against the very nature of mentoring, the only option left may be not to have a formal scheme at all – particularly where

mentoring is already silently making its mark. The Foundation for Community Dance commissioned a research study in 1998 which unearthed a wealth of first hand accounts of informal mentoring, showing that it has had a massive effect on the artform. Personal stories "were related with a rare passion, detailing moving stories of commitment by which older generations of amateurs had not only helped develop their immediate successors but may also have introduced a culture of 'outstanding personal support' which sets the sector apart."

What's most interesting about the study is that it points to where the crux of the professional development problem lies for the community arts. Mentoring – and professional development as a whole – is important strategically, and at grass roots level, but any formalisation is simply not going to be embraced with open arms by artists. Sound Sense's consultations with its members and others has shown that community musicians are wary of developments that may create a profession of community music, with codes of practice and qualifications. Their argument is that the strength of community arts is in its diversity. The ability – and necessity – to be responsive to the context in which it takes place means that it can't be nailed down or shaped into formalised practices.

WHERE DOES THAT leave mentoring for community artists? The FCD study's authors make some valid points which could well signal the way forward. They warn that initiatives "produced by the planners and politicians" could be unwelcome amongst community dancers, but conclude that mentoring relationships are too valuable to be left to chance. They make a number of recommendations for the arts funding system, local authorities, and dance agencies, including making mentoring links a feature of all induction packages for dance workers; creating support networks; training; a non-prescriptive but nationally agreed code of conduct and guiding principles for those who are mentoring informally; offering brokerage facilities for potential mentors and mentees.

Organisations and funders will no doubt continue to want to place informal learning into some form of structure that can be funded, measured, monitored and assessed; and artists will continue to reject orthodoxies, while benefiting from support and training on their own terms. But if mentoring is, as David Clutterbuck of the European School of Mentoring describes, "the single, biggest, most important, tool in professional development" then it's something that community artists can't afford to ignore.

Mentoring latest

New Deal for Musicians

Later in 2002 the New Deal for Musicians will be opening to tender the contracts for Music Industry Consultants (MICS) who provide one-to-one advice and guidance for young unemployed musicians and Music Open Learning Providers (MOLPS), which provide for those undertaking open learning through New Deal. A summary of the existing New Deal for Musicians scheme is available by email from Sound Sense, and musicians or music organisations interested in being considered for contracts should contact:

Steve Birchall, New Deal for Musicians, Employment Service
T: 0114 259 5796 E: steve.birchall@employment.gov.uk
Sound Sense E: info@soundseuse.org

Register for research opportunity

Sound Sense is currently investigating the potential for mentoring as a professional development tool for community musicians and, on behalf of Women in Music, for women musicians. If you have an interest in mentoring, either as an organisation that runs or hopes to run a scheme, or as an individual who would be interested in becoming or having a mentor, please contact us to register your interest in being involved in future discussion./ research groups.

Sound Sense contact details on p3