

1995

Roots & Wings

Mentoring in the Community

Anyone who claims
that I am a dreamer
who expects to transform
hell into heaven is wrong
I have few illusions.....
There is only one thing
I will not concede: that it
might be meaningless to
strive in a good cause

Vaclav Havel, Summer Meditation



This publication has been sponsored by Swiss Bank Corporation and is a report on the 2 year Pilot Study of Roots and Wings Mentoring in the Community, funded by GE (USA) and Swiss Bank Corporation

The Beginning

We must give to others both
the 'Roots and Wings'....

The roots of personal worth,
of self-confidence

The wings of self-responsibility....

The message of Roots is
'You've got it!'

The message of Wings is
'Now go for it'

John Powell, Through Seasons of the Heart



Roots & Wings is a Business in the Community Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to Roots & Wings

Ron Pressman, Chief Executive of GE Power Systems Europe, after attending a Business in the Community 'Seeing is Believing' visit, brought mentoring children in schools in America, supported by GE (USA), to the attention of Business in the Community (BITC).

He believed that this type of employee volunteering could complement and reinforce initiatives that were already in place in education, by GE (USA), others in America and also a number of schemes in the United Kingdom. (Ref 1.1)

The concept of the pilot study was to broaden the potential range of mentoring applications and develop adult to adult mentoring where company employees could mentor adults working with, or supported by, the voluntary or public sectors.

Business in the Community brought together GE (USA) and Swiss Bank Corporation to deliver the resources to make the project a reality. These resources took the form of sponsorship from GE (USA) and a secondee from Swiss Bank Corporation, resulting in the close involvement of a wide range of interested companies, community groups and educational establishments.

BITC, in conjunction with the Roots & Wings sponsors formally set up a National Steering Group which comprised representatives from both the business sector and community groups. This was inaugurated and was in place from the commencement of the project; it contributed significantly to the focus and energy of the project team and the selected pilot partners. (acknowledgements A.1).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Focus and Aims of the Project

The aims of the project were to:

- *establish the case for business involvement in community mentoring schemes*
- *develop mentoring models, recommendations and guidance for employers and community organisations wishing to support such an activity*
- *develop, pilot and evaluate mentor and mentee training practices*
- *gather and disseminate practical experience and results of evaluation.*

Thus the project incorporated two dimensions - research and development - resulting in the adoption of an action research approach. In effect, the project team and the pilot partners were immediately integrating 'research' actions requiring the realignment of the programme into the schemes already in place, in addition to those that were in the process of being implemented.

The mentoring models proposed differentiated this project from the majority of other mentoring schemes, as Roots & Wings mentoring in the community would be:

- *Business Led*
- *One to One Mentoring Relationships*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pilot Strategy

- *identify and test the preparation, induction, and training needs for a variety of mentoring models*
- *identify and test effective co-ordination mechanisms between employers and community groups*
- *test and develop the matching process applied to the mentor and mentee volunteers*
- *identify and test evaluation hard evidence collection and analysis models*
- *demonstrate the 'business case' for the employers and benefits to community partners*

Initially the National Steering Group's vision of Roots & Wings was to "match" partners who would then define their parameters and objectives and work towards the achievement of them in partnership. However, in early 1994 in view of perceived risks inherent in such a strategy, and to our achievement of the core and local objectives it was realised that we would have to move from the role of facilitator, to deliverer.

In order to ensure that we achieved our core aims it would be necessary to continually review, evaluate and realign the mentoring pilot schemes in close partnership with our "local" delivery partners, as well as support the dissemination of best practice to all the scheme participants and partners. This could not be effectively delivered in the role of a facilitator.

Later stages of the programme were to include the dissemination back into the community and to the Roots & Wings supporters, the findings and lessons learnt from the project, with the aim of facilitating and contributing to the development of a national mentoring database.

This would result in the promotion of mentoring in the community based on the experience of the pilot schemes on a national basis, with the company members of BITC and other interested employers.

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Pilot Strategy

A mentoring relationship is just a relationship between two human beings. Perhaps the only thing out of the ordinary is that it has been 'created' - the two parties would never normally come across each other. Other than that, it could have all the dynamics of any human relationship including all the negative aspects. Therefore it was vital to the integrity of the Roots & Wings mentoring schemes that the training and induction should cover specific parameters, general guidelines for relationships and ways in which to deal with potential problems. With these parameters potential problems could be significantly minimised.

The greatest skill needed in a mentoring relationship is communication. Empathy cannot be easily taught, but preparation should include generic interpersonal skills. In particular, skills such as active listening, questioning techniques, together with awareness of the sensitivities in certain communities should form the basis of any training for mentors.

The National Steering Group encouraged and facilitated the creation of a workshop, involving a number of practitioners in related areas, to identify the preparation needs for a training and induction workpack.

The number of contributors was extensive and the first workshop, although a great success, raised as many questions as it answered.

These questions were raised out of "coal face" experience and an understanding of the sensitivities from different perspectives which could not have been identified or appreciated beforehand. The process was therefore of considerable value to the project team as it broadened and strengthened their knowledge of the 'marketplace'.

The key issues that were identified as a consequence of the workshop were:

- *it should be made clear that mentoring is not counselling;*
- *the dynamics of the relationship must be addressed at the outset;*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pilot Partners

IPC Magazines was identified as a potential 'champion' company. However, in the second year Swiss Bank Corporation became directly involved in supporting employee volunteering and took the lead in Deptford.

East London

The Education Business Partnership (EBP) had already set up a business mentoring scheme in a number of schools, and some employers were involved with the community in a variety of models. Therefore this area of London was chosen to see what Roots & Wings could leverage in terms of added value. Due to existing activity deliverability was high, as was sustainability, with a good range of employers focused throughout East London.

The development of mentoring in the UK was embryonic. The wish was to learn and disseminate best practice to business support groups elsewhere and indeed to benefit Roots & Wings in the implementation of the pilots. There was therefore benefit to be gained from the practical experiences of East London.

BP, which supports a wide range of educational initiatives, and Grand Metropolitan, a leader in employee volunteering were identified as potential 'Champion' companies.

West London

West London Leadership (WELL) was identified as a potential partner for the mentoring programme. It's membership consists of two TEC'S, six local authorities and twenty nine private sector member companies. As a business leadership team WELL identified the potential to develop its education and training objectives and provide a new and innovative way of encouraging employee involvement from its member companies.

GE (USA) and British Airways were identified as 'champion' companies.

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South Bristol

This included Hartcliffe and Withywood, an area which had twice failed its City Challenge bid, but which had, as a consequence, a very strong local community group supporting training. It also included the Knowle area where a local community group was only just being set up, supported by South Bristol College.

With few significant employers in the area and little mentoring activity in place, there was great scope for added value. The models developed here would have the potential to be replicated in other estate action groups around the country.

South Bristol Federation and South Bristol College agreed to act as co-ordinators in the initial planning and implementation stages of the pilot and played a key role in getting it off the ground.

National Westminster Life Assurance, a large new employer in Bristol and Calor Gas, recent enthusiasts for employee volunteering, were identified as potential 'Champion' companies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summary Roots & Wings Schemes

Introduction

The pilot undertaken in liaison with the London East Partnership and London East Alliance was exclusively concerned with raising awareness, dissemination of best practice and exploration of 'added value' by Roots & Wings to already mature established mentoring schemes.

There are currently 14 Roots & Wings mentoring schemes in place. They have been developed, refined and tested in the field in conjunction with the selected pilot partners. In addition to this there are a couple of 'hybrid' schemes which are not being directly supported.

This document summarises the schemes and takes three examples as case studies which will be covered in depth. The examples have been chosen to illustrate the different mentoring and funding models that a business and community group could support.

The pilot partners were each provided with seed-corn funding which they then used to leverage resources in addition to raising additional funding to support the Roots & Wings initiative.

Each pilot partner put in place a 'local' co-ordinator as the facilitator between BITC, in addition to the operational and administrative management of the individual mentoring schemes.

This approach proved to be successful as each of the Pilot Partners were able to attract public funding in addition to 'pro bono' assistance from the businesses who had implemented a Mentoring in the Community scheme.

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The following Roots & Wings mentoring in the community pilot schemes are being managed in partnership with Deptford City Challenge:

Swiss Bank Corporation and Deptford Green School

Mentoring Model: *Adult to Student Mentoring (Schools)*

Commenced: *April 1994 with 17 Mentoring pairs*

Currently has 60 Mentors and Mentees

Due to the maturity of the mentoring scheme it has developed into the provision of additional community opportunities, such as mentoring of teachers with the specific aim of transferring business skills within an agreed time frame. This year a pilot 'work experience' programme for mentored students was put in place.

The students being mentored are of mixed ability and the mentoring scheme now covers year 9 to year 11.

IPC Magazines and Deptford Green School

Mentoring Model: *Adult to Student Mentoring (Schools)*

Commenced: *February 1993 with 4 Mentoring pairs*

Mentees came from lower and upper 6th and in October 1994 they started with year 11 students of mixed ability.

IPC Magazines had undertaken a number of field trips to the Deptford Green area. By December 1993 they had decided to become involved in community mentoring on three tiers: mainstream schooling (Deptford Green School), a special needs project on truancy (School House), and business mentoring between adults (The Milton Court Resource Centre).