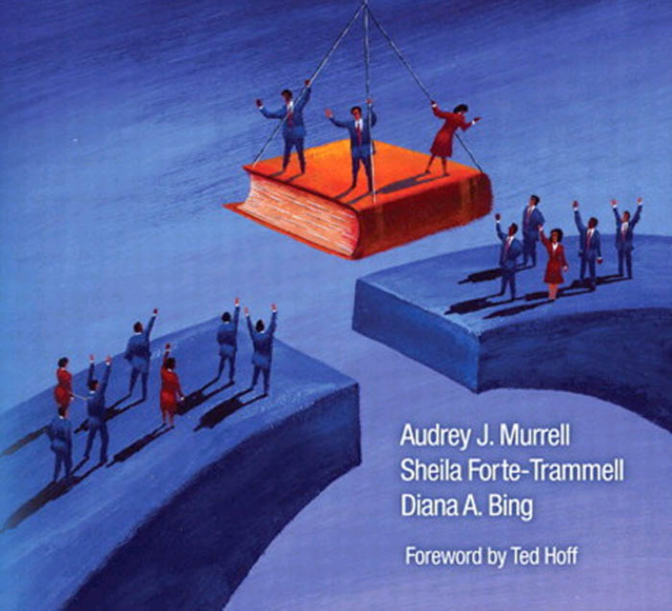
Intelligent Mentoring

How IBM Creates Value through People, Knowledge, and Relationships



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Foreword

Ted Hoff

Since its founding nearly a century ago, IBM has believed that the vitality of the next generation simply will not endure without mentors, without the guidance of experienced colleagues sharing their knowledge, wisdom, and experience with the newer members of our global community. You could say that mentoring has been part of IBM's DNA from the beginning. We know that providing inspiration to others enables all of us to reap the rewards of leadership. We know that our business has grown stronger over the years through collaboration and the practice of sharing information.

The world economy has today reached a turning point. For example, in less than a decade, the Internet has reached more than a billion people and has become the world's operational infrastructure. Open standards—widely adopted technical and transactional specifications—are spurring the creation of new kinds of products and services. Taken together, the Internet and open standards have enabled new business designs allowing all institutions to better integrate their operations and respond rapidly to global business challenges. As a result, businesses, governments, and institutions of higher learning can innovate in new entirely new ways, affording new growth opportunities in both economic and societal activity. Seizing the opportunities demands unique foresight, capability, and an employee base equipped with entirely new skills.

At IBM we foster a climate that promotes continuous learning, enabling our employees at all levels to become problem solvers, creative thinkers, and global citizens. We make it a priority to reexamine and reinvent our processes and practices through every aspect of our business. Mentoring is no exception. It helps us anticipate the needs of our global clients and enables us to provide them with twenty-first-century solutions and services.

To carry this out successfully, we offer our employees throughout the world the tools and resources to build their portfolio of expertise and experience. At the same time, they know that they are expected to leverage this knowledge to help build the skills of their colleagues, to make an impact on their immediate organization, and, overall, to drive success for IBM. Knowing how to respond rapidly to the needs of the client depends on the expertise of our employees, and mentoring is an important tool in the process.

A critical component of our mentoring program is **expert mentoring**, which is anchored on the premise that it takes many years of intense formal training and practical application for expert knowledge to develop—especially in areas such as information technology. To be competitive, companies must find ways of escalating the pace at which crucial knowledge is transferred to feed the constant development of new experts in their specific disciplines across the business.

It is an expectation pervasive across our company, and special emphasis is being placed on reaching out to technical IBMers in the emerging countries. Our approach to mentoring is that geographic boundaries should not be an inhibitor, or a barrier, to the transfer of knowledge and expertise vital to providing the kind of service our clients expect from us. As a globally integrated enterprise, we erase geographic lines of demarcation in all our transactions, including people and technology. Mentoring and knowledge-sharing must transcend borders in developing cultural competence, global leadership, cultural diversity, and the ability to work seamlessly in a virtual world.

I often remark to employees that if innovation is to truly matter, we must understand the changing nature of innovation and the shifts in the way it occurs. Human capital is central to that understanding. Innovation is happening more rapidly than ever, and it is far more dependent on collaboration across disciplines, specialties, and organizations than ever. There also is increasing emphasis on open sharing of intellectual capital as a platform for innovation, which is how I see mentoring as an enabler. The ability to innovate, reinvent, and adapt is a traditional strength of IBM and through expert mentoring and collaboration we are able to sustain our competitive advantage.

Mentoring and collaboration support the three IBM core values:

- Dedication to every client's success
- Innovation that matters—for our company and for the world
- Trust and personal responsibility in all relationships

Fostering a workplace climate that thrives on trust, that is focused on building individual and organizational capabilities, and that demonstrates intellectual curiosity are the necessary elements that move our innovation agenda forward.

Intelligent Mentoring: How IBM Creates Value through People, Knowledge, and Relationships is an admirable piece of work offering practical insights on mentoring as a way to preserve and transfer knowledge crucial to the success of an organization. It employs first-hand experiences to articulate how mentoring is relevant to global institutions of all types and sizes.

Overall, this book helps us understand that mentoring simply has to transform from a moral obligation to a personal and business imperative. It has the power to stimulate bold, new thinking—fertile ground for not only spurring innovation and creative problem solving, but living the IBM values.

—Ted Hoff
IBM's Chief Learning Officer and VP for Learning

I

Introducing IBM's Mentoring Portfolio

Chapter Contents

- Mentoring Transformations 4
- IBM's Challenge 5
- IBM's Response 9
- Creating a Mentoring Portfolio 13
- Contribution of *Intelligent Mentoring* 16
- References 19

The past two decades have witnessed an explosion of interest across a variety of organizations, disciplines, demographic segments, and professions in the topic of mentoring.[1] One recent annual benchmark by a leading management consulting firm noted that companies are increasingly using mentoring as a key technique for attracting and retaining high-potential employees, new hires, as well as senior executives.[2] There is also clear evidence that interest in mentoring is not only pervasive in the United States, but also extends around the world within many global organizations.[3] Ironically, as our interest in mentoring continues to grow, our ability to understand how to unlock the power of mentoring relationships has not kept pace with this expanding curiosity. Issues such as the benefits of formal versus informal mentoring, how to structure formal mentoring programs to increase effectiveness, and what tools and techniques can be used to measure the impact of mentoring efforts, are just a few of the critical questions that persist.[4] While most agree that mentoring is important, there is still a crucial need to understand how to unlock the power of this valuable tool.

Throughout the pages of this book, we argue that a well-designed and diverse portfolio of mentoring programs and activities can provide a powerful and strategic tool for organizations that must face the rapidly changing demands of attracting, developing, and retaining talent within their global workforce. The examples of mentoring throughout IBM are used to illustrate how one organization can leverage new and existing skills/expertise as well as foster knowledge sharing across traditional boundaries such as function, geography, demographic group, and culture. We describe how IBM uses a broad portfolio of both formal and informal mentoring efforts to support three core components of its global business strategy:

- **Building organizational intelligence**, which allows IBM to bridge skill, leadership, and knowledge gaps while creating a climate where collaboration leads to innovation
- **Connecting across people**, which focuses on providing support and development across all employee segments
- **Sustaining business impact**, which involves integrating mentoring within the overall strategic goals and objectives of the organization

As illustrated in Figure 1-1, these three components are part of IBM's global strategy, and each helps to frame the selection and design of mentoring tools used within its portfolio approach. The need to develop this global business model was articulated by IBM CEO, Samuel Palmisano, stating that, "In a world where the means of production and distribution are increasingly available to anyone, the only way to differentiate yourself is to have better skills, to have a better idea, to come up with a more innovative solution, to know more than the next guy, and to apply it more effectively."[5]

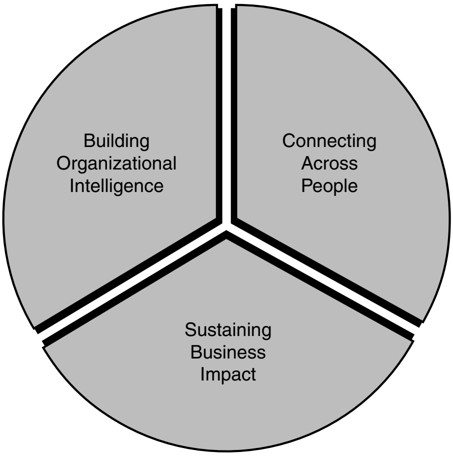
Building Organizational Intelligence
Connecting Across People
Sustaining Business Impact

Figure 1-1 IBM's strategic business model.

The catalyst for this book was born out of the experience of IBM in using mentoring to address critical issues such as how it competes within the global "war for talent" and meets the demand for innovation within the dynamic technology industry. Benchmark and trend analyses provided evidence that IBM, like a number of other firms, was facing an aging workforce, a pipeline shortage, and the growing need to retain and transfer cutting-edge knowledge. In addition, internal analyses revealed that shifts in the IT industry would demand people who not only had deep technical knowledge and professional skills, but also the ability to collaborate in increasingly diverse and virtual environments. In attempting to address the needs of talented employees who are seen as the knowledge capital for IBM, the realities of shrinking training budgets, limitations of traditional classroom training, and the need for accessible and flexible learning systems presented some real challenges for the industry giant. These were all factors that led IBM to invest in and to revitalize mentoring as a strategic tool to attract, develop, retain, and energize employees throughout its global business enterprise.

We share and reflect on best practices developed within the global portfolio of IBM's mentoring initiatives. In the following chapters, we explore some of the emerging research on and innovative applications of mentoring as well as how the very nature of mentoring is being transformed by these efforts. To provide concrete illustrations of the power of mentoring, we present several best practices from IBM's mentoring portfolio to illustrate some simple but creative ways IBM uses these practices to address issues related to mentoring as well as key lessons learned. While the development and innovative use of formal and informal mentoring within IBM is an ongoing and continuous process, our discovery is that the activities highlighted in this book have strengthened and energized attention to mentoring throughout the IBM community worldwide. Our goal is to extend this energy and expand the dialog to other organizations. While there are ongoing discussions and communication about how to make mentoring effective and how to cultivate a stronger mentoring culture within IBM, sharing its portfolio approach may provide a catalyst for other innovative uses of mentoring that can not only transform organizations but can also transform the way we think about and utilize mentoring as a valuable and strategic management tool.

Mentoring Transformations

Traditional approaches to mentoring were developed during a period of time where the expectation for stable, long-term, full-time employment within a single organization was still the norm for people throughout their careers.[6] On the individual's side, the need for flexibility, mobility, and lifelong learning are some of the dominant themes that have altered expectations about careers and employees' relationships to the firm.[7] On the organization's side, the use of restructuring, cross-function integration, and demands of the global supply chain have created new organizational structures, processes, and requirements.[8] Both of these dynamic trends have led to what researchers call a change in the "psychological contract," or the expectations that employees and employers have concerning mutual relationships and obligations within the business enterprise.[9] Others argue that the changing nature of individuals' careers and organizational demands requires a fundamental shift toward a new type of employability that is market-driven rather than employer- or employee-driven.[10]

Thus, changes in the employer-employee relationship coupled with the demands of market-driven employability mean that resources and support that are needed within organizations are more complex. In addition, a market-driving employment relationship requires that individuals take a more active role in managing their careers than was true decades ago.[11] Recognizing the importance of these dynamics, a great deal of research has focused on the increasing need for employees and employers to change their approach to mentoring from traditional forms such as senior-to-junior informal relationships or one-on-one formal relationships (for example, supervisors) provided by the organization, to thinking about mentoring as a diverse network of career and personal support.[12] The traditional definition of a mentor as a more senior individual who uses his or her influence and experience to help with the advancement of a single protégé or mentee is still relevant. However, the transformation of mentoring as experienced by IBM and captured by scholars examining other organizations is now expanding the types of relationships beyond this traditional senior-junior relationship to include a broad portfolio of mentoring forms such as peer mentoring, virtual mentoring, group mentoring, and reverse mentoring.[13]

To fully appreciate the need for such an expansive and complex view of mentoring, we must first understand the various challenges facing organizations like IBM. These challenges not only set the context for the mentoring portfolio developed by IBM, but they also provide the blueprint for similar issues being faced by other global companies. The responses to these concerns can then point us toward the best fit between specific global challenges and unique mentoring solutions.

IBM’s Challenge

IBM’s global business strategy (refer to Figure 1-1) was created in response to key challenges faced by the firm and similar global companies. Issues of talent development and retention, knowledge creation and transfer, and sustaining business impact can each be tied to clear trends facing the company.

The well-noted “War for Talent” concept as articulated by the McKinsey & Company[14] report reflects the increasingly competitive market for talent, leaders, and innovative knowledge workers. This report declared that knowledge or talent is now the key factor in driving the effectiveness of many organizations today and in the future. Thus, a company’s capability to attract, develop, and retain talented individuals provides a competitive advantage as the war for talent persists. Issues such as social capital, communities of knowledge, and talent management have replaced some traditional human resources topics of hiring, staffing, and performance evaluation. The

McKinsey research included surveys of 13,000 managers and executives across more than 120 companies, along with case studies of 27 leading companies. It found clear evidence that better talent management leads to better performance. On average, companies that did a better job of attracting, developing, and retaining highly talented managers earned 22 percentage points higher return to shareholders. Unfortunately, as the authors noted in the report, organizations have a long way to go in being prepared for the ongoing talent war. Thus, organizations like IBM needed to face several issues impacting its current and future pipeline of knowledge within the organization—its people.

The first clear challenge is that the global war for talent means that top organizations around the world must pay more attention to the impact of high employee turnover, particularly among diverse employee segments. For example, Ernst & Young discovered that a lack of retention of women was costing the firm about $150k annually, in addition to causing a decrease in client satisfaction because the people responsible for their projects frequently changed.[15] Nortel Networks faced difficult challenges after three years of widespread layoffs and a decline in share values. It made the retention of the remaining talent within the company a strategic priority to help stem the negative trend. Deloitte management made the decision to focus more strongly on developing its international talent in the late 1990s but could only recruit about 1% of the organizational global workforce to participate. To meet this challenge, they created a Global Development Program, which began by understanding what attracted potential candidates to work at Deloitte internationally. Its focus on global retention helped Deloitte design an effort to double the number of participating countries and employees in these efforts. Deloitte executives see this strategic focus on global workforce development as a factor in the company's 2002 11 percent growth in global revenue.[16]

The significant impact that employee turnover has on key performance metrics is not unique to these few companies nor to IBM. This disturbing trend was highlighted by the findings of the most recent "corporate leavers survey." Conducted by the Level Playing Field Institute, this study showed that each year across the United States, more than 2 million professionals and managers voluntarily leave their job because they feel that they are treated unfairly.[17] This study concludes that voluntary turnover costs for U.S. firms in 2007 reached a staggering $64 billion dollars. This research also showed how employees who left their firms later provided information that discouraged potential customers and job applicants from working with their former employer. Thus, ignoring retention issues may impact future recruitment of talent and new customers into the organization. Also disturbing was the finding that people of color were three times more likely to report that workplace unfairness was a key reason for their voluntary exit compared to white males. The clear message from these studies and other corporate examples for IBM is that turnover and the loss of human capital is an expensive proposition that negatively impacts an organization's competitiveness.

The second challenge involves generational differences that are causing a dramatic change in what employees expect from their employer, as well as how they view the meanings of work and career. A great deal has been written, particularly in the United States, about the impact of "Generation X" and the emerging "new millennials" and their requirements for a satisfactory workplace environment.[18] These changing demographics are providing a talent pool of potential employees who expect a very different workplace than traditional organizations may provide. For example, members of Generation X have the following expectations about the work environment:

- Bureaucracy will be replaced with more participatory management
- The value of the employee shifts from being defined by tenure toward an emphasis on accomplishments, and open communication is facilitated throughout the organization
- An employee-friendly work environment is cultivated that includes respect, learning, collaboration, work-life balance, and a sense of purpose[19]

Similar observations are now being offered in terms of values and workplace preferences for those in the next generation of new millennials.[20] After several decades of research trying to identify the key drivers of employee turnover, it is clear that supportive relationships that build what is frequently called "relationship wealth"[21] are essential, and are becoming increasingly important to new generations of employees (for example, Generation Xers and new millennials). What this suggests to companies like IBM is that organizations must not simply look to attract and retain talent, but must focus on employee development and ultimately engagement of talented knowledge workers.

The third challenge is that the particular issues faced by the IT industry may require a somewhat unique approach to workforce development and utilization. The vital role that knowledge and intellectual capital play within the IT industry has been recognized by a number of industry leaders. For example, Microsoft CEO Bill Gates noted in his speech before the Joint Economic Committee of Congress that, "The lifeblood of our industry is not capital equipment but human capital." Similarly, Intel CEO Andy Grove commented that today's global economy "is all about human resources." In a speech at INSEAD, IBM CEO Sam Palmisano argued that, "We need to think seriously about issues in a global—not just a multinational context…the new skills we'll need to develop…and the new kinds of organizational culture that will be required." Each of these leaders within the IT industry points to the demands for knowledge workers, the challenges faced within this dynamic industry, as well as potential solutions.

IT effectiveness has been clearly linked to the pool of available knowledge professionals across a wide variety of IT specializations. As demand increases yet the supply remains stagnant, those with valuable skills, knowledge, and expertise will seek out the best options.[22] In one research study of human capital within the IT industry, the profile of the typical IT worker was found to be distinctly different than that in other industries. IT professionals were found to typically be younger workers who have less of an investment in a firm-specific employment relationship compared to older and more long-term employees.[23] This means that they utilize a different cost-benefit perspective to determine whether to join, stay, or leave any organization or employer.

In addition, change within the IT industry happens at a rapid pace, which has a significant impact on career opportunities and mobility for people within the field. The issue of "knowledge obsolescence" or having expertise that is no longer in use or that has been replaced by newer knowledge and technology is a challenge for these workers. Career stagnation, or what is called "career plateauing" which creates a feeling of being trapped in one position with little opportunities for growth and change, is also a key concern.[24] What this means for IT and IT-related organizations is that the need to develop an approach to recruiting, training, and developing employees must be done in a manner that is flexible enough to meet the challenging demands for these talented knowledge workers.[25] Employees within the IT industry require access to rapidly changing information,[26] broad information sharing within the workplace, and flexible opportunities for competency development. Interestingly, a number of studies also focus on the need to go beyond traditional monetary bonuses and rewards to effectively drive performance and retention among IT professionals.[27]

Clearly this array of challenges highlights the need for an innovative set of solutions for companies like IBM. To outline a response, IBM examined the market trends, but then focused on internal analysis and benchmarking to determine the specific issues within the IBM culture. Several key questions were raised. What is the nature of recruitment, retention, and development across the business enterprise? How was the climate and culture of IBM viewed by current and potential employees? Did people see the existing employee support system, including mentoring, as useful? The response and revitalization of mentoring came as part of IBM's response to these critical questions.

IBM's Response

In the early stages of this effort, IBM conducted a series of benchmarks and internal research (interviews, surveys, focus groups, and so on). Analyses of these data revealed a number of shortcomings regarding employee recruitment and development at IBM. One of the key factors that emerged was a need and desire to revitalize and expand mentoring throughout IBM. Employees and managers perceived mentoring as an opportunity targeted more toward executives and high-potential employees rather than something that was accessible across broad and diverse segments of the organization. Research results indicated there was confusion about how development techniques such as mentoring could help employees grow their skills and careers, and that information about key resources such as mentoring was not available from one easy-to-access central location. Across IBM, individual business units developed a number of homegrown programs such as "mentoring matching" tools that added to the information confusion. Further, the human resources department found that employees were challenged to find the time to engage in mentoring relationships in the company's complex and demanding business environment.

Mentoring was also not generally viewed as critical to transferring knowledge or fostering innovation. Rather, it was seen as just a "morale-booster," and not a vital tool that helps to drive core business-related outcomes. Further, there was a lack of clarity about the roles of mentors and mentees, as well as the different types of mentoring relationships that could be valuable, including peer-to-peer mentoring, group mentoring, junior-to-senior (or "reverse") mentoring, and mentoring relationships in virtual environments (or e-mentoring).

While there was an interest in mentoring and career development within IBM, the solution that needed to be identified and then implemented was far more complex. One of the key challenges IBM faced was how to create a mentoring initiative that would meet the needs of more than 356,000 employees working with clients across 170 different countries. The mentoring effort had to meet the diverse needs of employees across generational and other diversity dimensions. In addition, the program had to take into account evolving work arrangements where close to 49% of IBM's employees worked outside of a traditional office environment. This array of challenges meant that the answer to IBM's mentoring questions could not be found in a one-size-fits-all type of mentoring program with a traditional design. For example, four distinct generations coexist in the IBM global workforce. Each has a different style, preference, and approach to acquiring and disseminating crucial knowledge. To blend within and across generations in the learning process and address the different styles, IBM's approach to mentoring had to be flexible, sensitive to different learning styles, and take into account diversity across generation, culture, and other important dimensions (for example, race, age, and gender).

After an extensive internal and external analysis, IBM began revitalizing mentoring through a corporatewide initiative. To meet the challenges and opportunities its internal and external audit identified, a new mentoring program took shape as an innovative, multipronged approach. However, the first step was to raise the visibility of mentoring as a potential tool for meeting some of the challenges and opportunities within IBM. The early stages of the mentoring revitalization efforts directly targeted some of the key feedback gained within the internal benchmark and included:

- Developing a *single Web site* as a "trusted source" for all corporate mentoring information
- Creating a series of streamlined and easy-to-access *mentoring resources,* such as mentoring podcasts, success stories, mentoring guides, and mentoring best practices that focus on the mentor and mentee relationship, and how to make it work
- Leveraging *search capabilities* of the corporate "telephone" directory to find a mentor for any level of expertise, career advisement, or social networking
- Establishing *international and cross-geography mentoring programs* whereby employees from other countries and cultures could learn from one another
- Forming *group speed mentoring cafes,* whereby an experienced mentor meets with numerous mentees in a group setting for topical mentor moments

- Changing the *Individual Development Planning* tool so that mentoring relationships can be recorded and included as part of the annual employee development plan
- Providing managers guidance on ways to include mentoring as a form of recognition in the performance evaluation process
- Building a *"Dear Mentor" chat capability,* where employees can electronically ask questions of a team of mentoring experts
- Designing an extensive Mentoring Promotional Campaign across the enterprise
- Securing executive backing through creating *executive champions* who act as advocates for the mentoring program

This initial array of IBM mentoring initiatives was used to launch its multilevel deployment approach. In a top-down phase, the human resources department, together with an executive leadership team, provided the charge and mandate for mentoring through a series of promotional activities across the business units. Executives were involved in speaking engagements at global organization meetings, panel discussions, webcasts and podcasts, and mentoring jam sessions. Parallel to engaging executives, a bottom-up phase was simultaneously launched through many grassroots efforts to touch numerous employees in a short period of time. This included engagement of diverse employee networks such as the Global Women's Council, which includes several thousand women who developed a resource guide for mentoring; the Asian Diversity Network Groups, which conducted a webcast focusing on mentoring; and the Global Black Executive Network team that helped to develop an electronic book that outlines important mentoring and career development resources available throughout IBM. These efforts involved peer, group, expert, and reverse mentoring activities throughout the organization. In addition, the revitalization initiative engaged a mentoring team that included "volunteers" from within the business to help drive the development and deployment of various grassroots activities. While organizations usually address only one or two types of mentoring, the IBM approach generated a diverse portfolio of mentoring activities, thus yielding an innovative strategy not widely seen in literature or in practice.

The approach that has emerged from IBM represents an innovative use of mentoring for several reasons. First, the use and revitalization of mentoring has taken place as a "grassroots" effort, that is, within various department and segments of the organization. At the same time, the leadership of the organization has been fully committed to the use of mentoring as a strategic tool. The synergy created by this dual approach was critical for signaling the importance of mentoring throughout IBM and for building support among the sponsors and participants of the revitalization effort.

Second, IBM has taken the unique approach of creating a **strategic mentoring portfolio** or series of formal and informal efforts to infuse mentoring within the culture of the organization. This portfolio approach means that there is not one type of mentoring program or structure that can be the solution for any challenge or opportunity facing the organization. Instead, managers, business units, and HR professionals select from a wide variety of mentoring tools and techniques to find the mentoring solution, rather than simply implementing a traditional mentoring program. Third, the use of mentoring was placed within the overall strategic objectives of the organization. As illustrated by Figure 1-2, core features of IBM's mentoring portfolio are linked to the key components of its global business strategy. In this way, mentoring is not seen as a special or extra activity. Rather, mentoring is seen as a central and integrated aspect of how business is accomplished and executed throughout IBM worldwide.

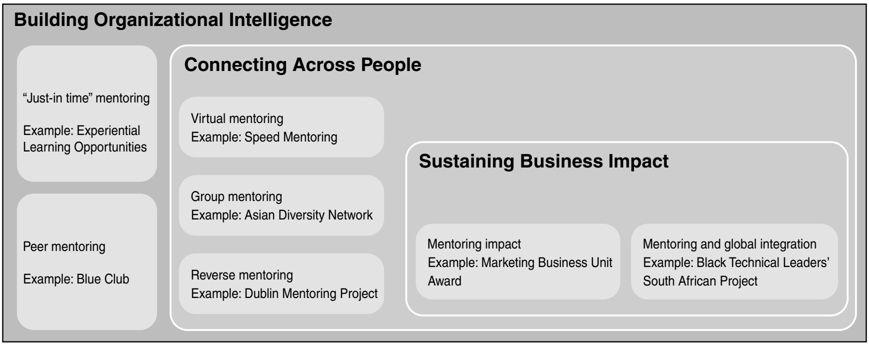
Building Organizational Intelligence
"Just-in time" mentoring
Example: Experiential Learning Opportunities
Peer mentoring
Example: Blue Club
Connecting Across People
Virtual mentoring
Example: Speed Mentoring
Group mentoring
Example: Asian Diversity Network
Reverse mentoring
Example: Dublin Mentoring Project
Sustaining Business Impact
Mentoring impact
Example: Marketing Business Unit Award
Mentoring and global integration
Example: Black Technical Leaders' South African Project

Figure 1-2 IBM's mentoring portfolio.

IBM's methodology reflects a strategic approach to mentoring that moves away from the traditional single role or person as "mentor" paired with one or more junior "protégés" and toward an understanding of the various benefits that a diverse portfolio of mentoring tools and techniques can offer. Building a mentoring portfolio means that the right mentoring solution can be applied to meet the specific needs or opportunities of the organization, employees, and other key stakeholders. IBM's portfolio approach also links its diverse array of formal and informal mentoring programs to key strategic objectives of the firm, as depicted in Figure 1-2. The synergy created by matching mentoring solutions to strategic objectives of the firm is both essential and innovative. Thus, throughout the chapters of this book, we highlight various examples of IBM's approach to mentoring and discuss how it supports critical components of the company's global business strategy. While each example has been developed out of a series of trial-and-error efforts for IBM, they all represent a unique approach to mentoring that can help any organization attract, retain, and develop its most important asset—people.

Creating a Mentoring Portfolio

While IBM has built a portfolio of mentoring activities, traditional forms of mentoring are still part of this innovative mixture. There is some disagreement on the effectiveness of most formal mentoring programs.[28] Key issues of debate include clarity of mentoring goals and objectives, access to mentoring relationships across different functional and expertise areas, and employee input into the matching process. Based on IBM's internal benchmarking, similar issues were also identified. Access to information in a "just-in-time" manner, employees being able to gain critical knowledge, and support to develop important competencies that are transferrable across business units also emerged. Early on, one of the ways IBM intended to reach its strategic objective of creating organizational intelligence was to capitalize on its Experiential Learning Opportunities Portfolio described in Chapter 2, "Organizational Intelligence: Using Just-in-Time Mentoring Solutions." The Experiential Learning Portfolio uses a web-based and cross-functional approach to traditional mentoring, yet provides employees with global experiential developmental opportunities, such as stretch assignments, cross-unit projects, job shadowing activities, and a host of other features that are typically found in traditional mentoring programs. However, the access to and sharing of knowledge about mentoring activities was vastly increased because of the Experiential Learning Opportunities initiative. It provides a mechanism for employees to develop critical and transferable skills because they can access existing and emerging developmental opportunities and mentoring on a global basis.

The ways in which mentoring is developed within IBM is evidence of the importance the organization places on developing communities of knowledge worldwide to support and sustain organizational intelligence. For example, IBM's Latin American team developed the Blue Club Mentoring program, which was born out of frustration, feelings of isolation, and workplace stress articulated by new and less experienced managers within this region. Chapter 3, "Organizational Intelligence: Fostering Communities of Knowledge," focuses on how Blue Club involves a "high-touch" approach to mentoring that provides support, information, and resources to up-line managers for use in mentoring sessions with new and less experienced managers. Especially within cultures that do not acknowledge a separation of professional and personal lives,[29] the need to provide career and social support within a community or via group mentoring is important as people try to balance the demands of a highly competitive and rapidly changing work environment with the dual demands of their family and nonwork lives. As you will see from the Blue Club example, these types of "high-touch" mentoring relationships may take longer to develop but can help to support a company's strategic objectives, such as IBM's focus on building trust within its global business enterprise.

An imperative for IBM's mentoring portfolio is to focus on how to build connections across people and across geographies. As a cutting-edge technology company, the use of virtual solutions to solve critical organizational challenges was part of the normal business process. As a result, IBM launched several virtual mentoring efforts to provide broad access to knowledge on a just-in-time basis. One example is the unique approach called "speed mentoring" discussed in Chapter 4, "Connecting People: Creating Meaningful Engagement." This concept was developed within one unit and then expanded across the organization as a way of providing broad access to people, ideas, and solutions. Speed mentoring utilizes virtual group mentoring for problem-specific assistance, socialization of relatively new employees, or the sharing of vital information on current or emergent topics. As you will see, speed mentoring allows many people to gain access to information, connect with organizational experts, and develop their expertise by linking to these knowledge resources within a fast-paced, technology-enhanced environment.

Helping to strengthen and build connections across people involves mentoring activities that provide a wide variety of career as well as social and emotional support. In Chapter 5, "Connecting People: Mentoring as a Tool for Diversity and Inclusion," we highlight the work of the Asian Diversity Network Group (ADNG), located at IBM Austin, Texas, that began mentoring employees in the United States and then expanded to mentoring new employees in the China Development and Research Labs. The ADNG is one of various Diversity Network Groups (DNG) within IBM that provides support for the expanding and diverse employee segments throughout the organization. Ron Glover, VP Global Workforce Diversity, described these networks as IBM's "Diversity Army"; the network also includes the Women's Subnet, where women of all levels and functions mentor each other and provide support. These various networks or affinity groups provide critical support for employees who may otherwise feel disconnected from the overall organization, or who work in remote or developing locations that may produce feelings of isolation.

In addition to the affinity group mentoring efforts, reverse mentoring is also part of IBM's mentoring portfolio. As discussed in Chapter 6, "Connecting People: Using Mentoring to Signal Value in People," most people think of mentoring only as a more "experienced" or senior-level person providing advice or expert knowledge to a more junior or younger person. The reverse mentoring effort within IBM involves a type of role reversal, whereby a senior-level person is actually mentored by a junior-level employee, usually one who is new to IBM—somewhere between a recent graduate and an employee with two years' tenure or less. This example provides IBM with a better understanding of how mentoring not only helps to build relationships, but is also a powerful tool for knowledge transfer across generations throughout the organization. To build a culture of collaboration and innovation, knowledge must be shared across traditional boundaries such as functional unit, as well as location and demographic categories, such as generational diversity. The reverse mentoring effort within IBM provides a useful example of one approach for cutting across the boundaries that block the development and transfer of critical knowledge, and for supporting employee as well as organizational outcomes.

While mentoring can be successful in helping to address specific needs of the organization, a critical part of its success is sustaining the business impact of these efforts. While most organizations have broad reward and recognition programs, the marketing business unit within IBM combined mentoring and employee recognition to help support the exposure and visibility of employees within the group and provide critical metrics on its impact. In conjunction with its more traditional formal mentoring program, the marketing group developed a mentoring award and recognition program. Not only do individuals receive recognition for their functional knowledge or job-specific performance, but also the mentoring award helps to provide visible reinforcement and endorsement of these mentoring efforts as a valuable part of the business unit. As we discuss in Chapter 7, "Business Impact: Using Mentoring to Deliver Value for Competitive Advantage," this effort has led to some innovative approaches for sustaining the mentoring effort within the marketing group.

In Chapter 8, "Business Impact: Using Mentoring Solutions to Solve 'Wicked Problems,'" we discuss an initial pilot program that matched high-potential employees in South Africa with technical leaders and business executives in the United States for one-on-one mentoring relationships, along with monthly modules that covered global leadership competencies and critical business topics. The concept of this cross-geography program has been expanded to include the pairing of employees in different parts of China and India to technical leaders in mature organizations in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada. In addition, the Black Technical Leaders Forum (BTLF) was created out of a need for technical leaders to support the socialization, development, and connection of new and less experienced black technical employees throughout the organization. While initial concerns focused on retention of this diverse talent segment, the BTLF initiative developed a model that has been leveraged by other diverse constituencies within IBM's global business enterprise. We use both of these innovative examples to discuss how mentoring can be integrated across the entire value chain of the organization. The activities of the BTLF and the use of mentoring as part of IBM's South African expansion are powerful examples of how effective mentoring can help to address current issues faced by the organization and can also be integrated into emerging opportunities worldwide.

Each of these examples is provided within the context of the mentoring tools, techniques, and strategies that make them a good fit for the overall business model within IBM. Together with new and emerging research on mentoring, we focus each chapter on how mentoring can provide solutions to critical business challenges and help leverage emerging business opportunities. Sharing the knowledge gained by the IBM mentoring experience yields a wide range of potential contributions detailed throughout the chapters of this book.

Contributions of *Intelligent Mentoring*

As we discuss in more detail throughout the book, the contribution of this diverse portfolio of mentoring initiatives is that it taps into different approaches and forms of mentoring in a way that helps to sustain the business impact. Early success is shown by worldwide requests to assist and guide in the development of local mentoring programs. Data was also collected from evaluations of mentoring panel discussions, webcasts, speaking engagements, and "jam sessions" and shows that high satisfaction levels are being sustained. Participant evaluations show that IBM's mentoring initiative also has measurable human capital results. Employee feedback indicates that employees are expanding their search for mentoring outside of their business units and geographies to gain diverse skills, experience, perspectives, and knowledge. Mentoring is helping employees find new ways to connect and build their abilities and productivity. The mentoring program continues to receive unsolicited positive feedback. Hits to the Mentoring Web site are up 12% over last year, and the Explore Mentoring Web site has had nearly 132,000 discrete hits since its launch. Mentoring contributed to a 5% increase in 2006 over 2005 on favorable responses to an internal employee survey data question, "Do you have the opportunity to improve skills?" Lastly, a companywide formative evaluation survey was developed to determine the broader range of the mentoring initiative's ongoing impact. All of these are positive early signs of the potential long-term impact that this mentoring portfolio will have on IBM's global business enterprise.

However, as we discuss later, the most significant impact of the mentoring initiative is yet to be realized, as mentoring is helping employees practice and adopt their IBM Values through Collaboration by making learning a strategic priority. The long-term goal is for mentoring activities to instill a sense of value among employees that supports positive morale and excitement around learning and innovation. In addition, the goal of the mentoring initiatives throughout IBM is to develop and share what is known as **deep smarts**.[30] Deep smarts are all about tacit qualities such as culture competence, emotional intelligence, and organizational competence, which are vital for leadership and innovation within the twenty-first century. One long-term goal of the mentoring relationships across IBM is to demonstrate that these types of deep smarts require that employees stay with a company to fully develop their expertise. The commitment to mentoring at IBM must be sustained over time to see the true benefits of this strategic approach in developing this type of knowledge. For IBM, mentoring is not a "quick fix." It is part of an overall strategy to reshape and revitalize the organization for not only short-term recruitment and retention goals, but also for long-term learning and innovation priorities. Thus, we will see that an important long-term aspiration for IBM's mentoring initiatives is to build organizational intelligence and a culture of collaboration.

In addition to developing the learning capacity and deep smarts throughout the organization, another critical long-term goal is to reshape the culture at IBM. In *Why Innovation Matters to IBM*, the "management and culture of innovation" is identified as necessary for creativity. "Advanced technology plus collaboration make it possible," as it is stated in the document. The goal is to build a collaborative culture that helps employees and business partners to co-produce innovation. However, what must come first is an environment that actively promotes collaboration. And that's exactly what knowledge management experts recommend to reverse the loss of deep smarts. They suggest that work must become a dual-purpose project that includes the opportunity for new employees to absorb the tacit knowledge and explicit skills that could easily exit a company forever, as well as for experienced employees to develop, utilize, and share their knowledge in diverse collaborations throughout the organization. As you will see from the best practice examples provided throughout the book, mentoring at IBM is being strategically used to assist the transfer of business skills, support ongoing leadership development, and create a collaborative culture. While traditional mentoring still holds enormous value, an essential end goal for IBM is the creation of this collaborative *culture,* which is being facilitated by a wide variety of different mentoring activities. The hope is that in the future IBM environment, the sentiment by a majority of employees will be that "I am responsible for your—and my—learning" as one indicator of this culture of collaboration.

When writing this book, we wanted to understand more about the complex nature of mentoring relationships and to strike a balance between mentoring research and real-world application. As Kathy Kram and Belle Ragins write, "Mentoring research needs to inform and be informed by mentoring practice."[31] Unfortunately, there is often a disconnection between the research on mentoring and the practice of mentoring. Frequently, books are published that offer a "practical guide" for mentoring without being informed by the state-of-the-art research that provides the evidence of how mentoring activities can be effectively designed, implemented, and evaluated. On the other hand, research on mentoring is often conducted outside of the industry, organizational, or cultural context that is known to have a profound impact on these types of efforts. Our goal and contribution of this book is to accomplish both without sacrifice to either research or practice.

Thus, the chapters within this book seek to address this critical gap. Research on mentoring must be shaped by the reality of mentoring practice, and practice must be grounded in rigorous research. Thus, we explore the various ways that IBM is leveraging existing knowledge and research on mentoring to shape and sustain its strategic efforts toward organizational intelligence, connecting people, and having a business impact. Our attempt is to focus on the interface between research and practice on mentoring, using the successes and challenges faced by IBM's mentoring initiatives as one piece to solving its long-term strategic puzzle. By sharing the IBM experience, we provide an in-depth look into one organization's journey from a large global enterprise trying to better connect "virtually dispersed" people who once felt isolated and disconnected and, at the same time, keep pace with a rapidly changing technology industry. We attempt to capture how IBM used mentoring to transform its organization from a place where employees referred to IBM as meaning "**I**'m **B**y **M**yself" into IBM as meaning "**I**'m **B**eing ***M**entored.*" Our hope is that the story of the successes and challenges of IBM as outlined in the following chapters will provide a catalyst for all types of organizations to revitalize and expand their use of mentoring as a strategic tool for the recruitment, retention, and engagement of a diverse and talented workforce that continually adds value to the organization across its worldwide enterprise.

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Index

A

access, creating
  to information, 82-84
  to knowledge and expertise, 34-36
  to people, 81-82
  to virtual communities, 84-86
accountability of managers, 91-92
Adkins, Rod, 145
ADNG (Asian Diversity Network Group), 112-116
affinities, basing mentoring on, 109-110
After-Action Reviews, 37
Akers, John, 155
Allee, Verna, 139, 177
American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), 77
Applegate, Lynda, 69
Asian Diversity Network Group (ADNG), 112-116
ASTD (American Society for Training and Development), 77
attracting talent, 31-33
Atwater, Marion, 173
award and recognition programs, 15, 162-163
  Mentor Appreciation Award, 172-176

B

balanced scorecards, 167
balanced view of "value added," 167-171
Barner, Robert, 203
Black Diversity Network Group, 119
Black Technical Leaders Forum (BTLF), 16, 193-197
Blue Club Mentoring program, 14
  business benefits of, 61-63
  goals of, 60
  origin and development, 59
  group speed mentoring, 62
  topics covered in Blue Club sessions, 60-61

Blue Pages, 81-82
boundaries, mentoring across, 64-66
Brand, Moises, 148
BTLF (Black Technical Leaders Forum), 16, 193-197
Business Conduct Guidelines, 105
business impact
  adding value through mentoring
    balanced view of "value added," 167-171
    creating competitive advantage through enduring skills, 165-167
    lessons learned, 176-177
    Mentor Appreciation Award, 172-176
    mentoring as high-performance work practice (HPWP), 161-164
    overview, 160-161
  impact of intelligent mentoring, 205-207
  "wicked problems," solving
    feed-forward orientation, 186
    global talent management, 187-203
    lessons learned, 203-205
    overview, 182-187
    "wicked problems" defined, 184

C

Camillus, John, 184-185
career derailment, preventing, 141-144
career plateauing, 8
career stagnation, 8
Carver, George Washington, 197
Cary, Frank T., 153
Catalyst Organization, 103
census data (U.S.), 99
Chambers, John, 56
Chang, David, 114
Chen, Danny, 115
collaboration
  across differences, 140-141
  collaborative culture, building, 18
  fostering, 68
  multigenerational collaboration, 151-152
Collins, Jim, 165
communicating value to employees, 133-136
communities of practice
  Blue Club program
    business benefits of, 61-63
    goals of, 60
    origin and development, 59
    group speed mentoring, 62
    topics covered in Blue Club sessions, 60-61
  building, 55-57
  fostering meaningful collaboration, 68
  future of, 69-72
  learning through, 53-55
  mentoring across boundaries, 64-66
  as mentoring solution, 57-58
  overview, 52-53
  strengthening relational competencies, 66-68
competitive advantage, creating with enduring skills, 165-167

competitive market for talent, 5-9

connecting people
  diversity and inclusion
    as business imperative, 101-103
    Explore Mentoring Web site, 105-109
    future of, 116-121
    group mentoring via Diversity Network Groups (DNGs), 110-116
    impact of mentoring on, 103-105
    importance of, 98-99
    mentoring based on affinities, 109-110
    U.S. demographic trends, 99-101
  employee engagement
    benefits of, 76-80
    challenges, 76
    group speed mentoring, 84-90
    lessons learned, 90-93
    mentoring Web sites, 82-84
    social networking tools, 81-82
  reverse mentoring
    collaborating across differences, 140-141
    communicating value to employees, 133-136
    definition of, 136
    in Finland, 146-148
    implementation, 144-145
    in Latin America, 148-151
    multigenerational collaboration, 151-152
    origins of, 136
    overview, 126-128
    perceived organizational support, 131-133
    planning, 137
    preventing career derailment, 141-144
    psychological/social contracts, 128-131
    respecting individuals, 138-139
    signaling ethics and integrity, 153-155
    signaling power of, 137-138
    supporting employee development, 139-140
    in United States, 145-146

contracts, psychological/social, 128-131

contributions of intelligent mentoring, 16-19

Cormulada, Samantha, 192

Corporate Technical Recognition Event (CTRE), 166

costs of employee turnover, 6

Cross, Jeff, 86

cross-geography mentoring
  overview, 16
  South Africa's cross-geography mentoring initiative, 197-203

CTRE (Corporate Technical Recognition Event), 166

culture, collaborative, 18

D

Dean, Mark, 35, 193-195

Dear Mentor feature (Explore Mentoring Web site), 106

deep smarts, 17

***Deep Smarts* (Leonard and Swap), 36, 197**

Deloitte, 6
demographic trends (U.S.), 99-101
***Developing the Depth and Versatility of Your Organization's Leadership Talent—Bench Strength* (Barner), 203**
development of IBM mentoring portfolio, 9-11
differences, collaborating across, 140-141
directories, employee, 81-82
diversity
  as business imperative, 101-103
  Explore Mentoring Web site, 105-109
  future of, 116-121
  group mentoring via Diversity Network Groups (DNGs), 110-116
  impact of mentoring on, 103-105
  importance of, 98-99
  mentoring based on affinities, 109-110
  U.S. demographic trends, 99-101
Diversity, Inc., 102
DNGs (Diversity Network Groups), 14, 110-116
Do, Lydia, 120

E

e-mentoring, 14, 80-81
  group speed mentoring, 84-90
  mentoring Web sites, 82-84
  social networking tools, 81-82
Early Career group, 119
East Fishkill manufacturing plant mentoring program, 191-192
EI (emotional intelligence), 66-68
Eisenberger, Robert, 131
emotional intelligence (EI), 66-68
***Employee Handbook for Organizational Change* (Pritchett and Pound), 69**
employee turnover, impact of, 6
employees
  attracting and recruiting, 31-33
  employee directories, 81-82
  employee turnover, impact of, 6
  engaging
    benefits of, 76-80
    challenges, 76
    group speed mentoring, 84-90
    lessons learned, 90-93
    mentoring Web sites, 82-84
    social networking tools, 81-82
  expectations, 128-131
  market-driven approach to talent management, 31
  preventing career derailment, 141-144
  respecting, 138-139
  signaling value in. *See also* reverse mentoring
    communicating value to employees, 133-136
    overview, 126-128
    perceived organizational support, 131-133
    psychological/social contracts, 128-131

  socializing, 33-34
  supporting employee development, 139-140
enduring companies, characteristics of, 165-167
engaging employees
  benefits of, 76-80
  challenges, 76
  group speed mentoring, 84-90
  lessons learned, 90-93
  mentoring Web sites, 82-84
  social networking tools, 81-82
Ernst & Young, 6
ethnics, signaling, 153-155
expectations of employees, 128-131
Experiential Learning Opportunities Portfolio, 13, 25, 28, 40
  components, 42
  future challenges, 46-47
  impact of, 43-45
  lessons learned, 45-46
  objectives, 41
Expert Mentoring program, 35
expertise, accessing, 34-36
Explore Mentoring Web site, 105-109

F

feed-forward orientation, 186
feed-forward processes, 186
Filipczak, Bob, 118
Finland, reverse mentoring in, 146-148
Fleming, Tom, 89
flip books, 83, 107-108
formal mentoring, effectiveness of, 24-26
Forte-Trammell, Sheila, 193
fostering collaboration, 68

G

Gates, Bill, 8
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) community in Latin America, 148-149
General Electric (GE), 136
generational differences, 7
***Generations at Work* (Zemke et. al), 118**
Gerstner, Louis, 71, 133, 138
Glasgow, Arnold H., 69
glass ceiling, 100
GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender) community in Latin America, 148-149
Global Guide to Mobile Work, 82
global talent management
  Black Technical Leaders Forum (BTLF), 193-197
  East Fishkill manufacturing plant mentoring program, 191-192
  overview, 187-191
  South Africa's cross-geography mentoring initiative, 197-203
Glover, Ron, 111, 117, 151
***Good to Great* (Collins), 165**
group speed mentoring, 62, 84-90
Groves, Amy, 85

H

Harris, Mark, 201
Herreld, J. Bruce, 135
Hervey, Mike, 170
high-performance work practice (HPWP), mentoring as, 161-164
high-touch mentoring, 58
holding managers accountable, 91-92
HPWP (high-performance work practice), mentoring as, 161-164
Human Capital Study, 25
hybrid approach to mentoring, 26-27

I

IBM mentoring portfolio
- adding value through mentoring
  - *balanced view of "value added," 167-171*
  - *creating competitive advantage through enduring skills, 165-167*
  - *lessons learned, 176-177*
  - *Mentor Appreciation Award, 172-176*
  - *mentoring as high-performance work practice (HPWP), 161-164*
  - *overview, 160-161*
- award and recognition programs, 15, 162-163
  - *Mentor Appreciation Award, 172-176*
- Black Technical Leaders Forum (BTLF), 16, 193-197
- Blue Club Mentoring program, 14
  - *business benefits of, 61-63*
  - *goals of, 60*
  - *origin and development, 59*
  - *group speed mentoring, 62*
  - *topics covered in Blue Club sessions, 60-61*
- Experiential Learning Opportunities Program, 40
  - *components, 42*
  - *future challenges, 46-47*
  - *impact of, 43-45*
  - *lessons learned, 45-46*
  - *objectives, 41*
- communities of practice
  - *as mentoring solution, 57-58*
  - *Blue Club program, 59-63*
  - *building, 55-57*
  - *fostering meaningful collaboration, 68*
  - *future of, 69-72*
  - *learning through, 53-55*
  - *mentoring across boundaries, 64-66*
  - *overview, 52-53*
  - *strengthening relational competencies, 66-68*
- core features, 12-13
- cross-geography programs, 16
- development of, 9-11
- diversity and inclusion
  - *as business imperative, 101-103*
  - *Explore Mentoring Web site, 105-109*
  - *future of, 116-121*
  - *group mentoring via Diversity Network Groups (DNGs), 110-116*
  - *impact of mentoring on, 103-105*

importance of, 98-99
mentoring based on affinities, 109-110
U.S. demographic trends, 99-101
Diversity Network Groups (DNGs), 14
employee engagement
benefits of, 76-80
challenges, 76
group speed mentoring, 84-90
lessons learned, 90-93
mentoring Web sites, 82-84
social networking tools, 81-82
Experiential Learning Portfolio, 13
hybrid approach to mentoring, 26-27
impact of, 16-19, 205-207
knowledge-resilient culture, sustaining, 38-40
linking mentoring to organizational intelligence, 30-31
accessing knowledge and expertise, 34-36
attracting and recruiting talent, 31-33
socializing of employees, 33-34
supporting knowledge retention, 36-38
mentoring award and recognition program, 15
reverse mentoring, 15
collaborating across differences, 140-141
communicating value to employees, 133-136
definition of, 136
in Finland, 146-148
implementation, 144-145
in Latin America, 148-151
multigenerational collaboration, 151-152
origins of, 136
overview, 126-128
perceived organizational support, 131-133
planning, 137
preventing career derailment, 141-144
psychological/social contracts, 128-131
respecting individuals, 138-139
signaling ethics and integrity, 153-155
signaling power of, 137-138
supporting employee development, 139-140
in United States, 145-146
revitalization of mentoring, 24-30
virtual mentoring, 14, 80-81
group speed mentoring, 84-90
mentoring Web sites, 82-84
social networking tools, 81-82
"wicked problems," solving
feed-forward orientation, 186
global talent management, 187-203
lessons learned, 203-205
overview, 182-187
"wicked problems" defined, 184
IBM strategic business model, 2-3
key challenges, 5-9
competitive market for talent, 5-7
generational differences, 7
IT industry issues, 7-9
mentoring portfolio. *See* IBM mentoring portfolio

IDPs (Individual Development Plans) process, 57
impact of intelligent mentoring, 16-19
impact. *See* business impact
inclusion. *See* diversity
Individual Development Plans (IDPs) process, 57
informal mentoring, effectiveness of, 24-26
Innovators' Award, 163
integrity, signaling, 153-155
intelligent mentoring, impact of, 205-207
Invention Achievement Award, 163
IT industry challenges, 7-9

J

Jarrett, Gail Walker, 174-175
Johnson, Marilyn, 202
Jordan-Evans, Sharon, 135
just-in-time mentoring solutions
  Experiential Learning Opportunities Program, 40
    components, 42
    future challenges, 46-47
    impact of, 43-45
    lessons learned, 45-46
    objectives, 41
  hybrid approach to mentoring, 26-27
  knowledge-resilient culture, sustaining, 38-40
  linking mentoring to organizational intelligence, 30-31
    accessing knowledge and expertise, 34-36
    attracting and recruiting talent, 31-33
    socializing of employees, 33-34
    supporting knowledge retention, 36-38
  revitalization of mentoring, 24-30

K

Kaye, Beverly, 135
Kerr, Steven, 167
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 154
knowledge
  accessing, 34-36
  communities of practice
    Blue Club program, 59-63
    building, 55-57
    fostering meaningful collaboration, 68
    future of, 69-72
    learning through, 53-55
    mentoring across boundaries, 64-66
    as mentoring solution, 57-58
    overview, 52-53
    strengthening relational competencies, 66-68
  knowledge-doing gap, 169
  knowledge obsolescence, 8
  knowledge-resilient enterprises, 64
  supporting knowledge retention, 36-38

- sustaining a knowledge-resilient culture, 38-40
- tacit knowledge, 53

The Knowledge Evolution: Expanding Organizational Intelligence (Allee), 139, 177
knowledge-intensive work, 54
knowledge-resilient enterprises, 64
Kram, Kathy, 18

L

Latin America, reverse mentoring in, 148-151
learning through communities of practice, 53-55
Learning Suite, 108
Lee, Paul, 170
Lema, Marcelo, 149
Leo, Bruno Di, 148
Leon, Marcela, 61
Leonard, Dorothy, 197
Level Playing Field, 102
Lin, Dave, 114
linking mentoring to organizational intelligence, 30-31
- accessing knowledge and expertise, 34-36
- attracting and recruiting talent, 31-33
- socializing of employees, 33-34
- supporting knowledge retention, 36-38

Lockwood, Nancy, 188
Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce (DeLong), 36
Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay (Kaye and Jordan-Evans), 135

M

MacDonald, Randy, 205
Macon, James, Jr., 196
manager accountability, 91-92
market-driven approach to talent management, 31
Mentor Appreciation Award, 172-176
Mentoring Learning Suite, 82
mentoring portfolio. *See* IBM mentoring portfolio
mentoring tax, 104
mentoring transformations, 4-5
micro-inequities, 102
muddling through, science of, 186
multigenerational collaboration, 151-152

N-O

Nortel Networks, 6

on-boarding, 33
organizational intelligence
- communities of practice
  - *Blue Club program, 59-63*
  - *building, 55-57*

  fostering meaningful collaboration, 68
  future of, 69-72
  learning through, 53-55
  mentoring across boundaries, 64-66
  as mentoring solution, 57-58
  overview, 52-53
  strengthening relational competencies, 66-68
 just-in-time mentoring solutions
  Experiential Learning Opportunities Program, 40-47
  hybrid approach to mentoring, 26-27
  knowledge-resilient culture, sustaining, 38-40
  revitalization of mentoring, 24-30
 linking mentoring to, 30-31
  accessing knowledge and expertise, 34-36
  attracting and recruiting talent, 31-33
  socializing of employees, 33-34
  supporting knowledge retention, 36-38
Outstanding Innovation and Outstanding Technical Achievement Awards, 163
Ovation Awards, 163

P

Palmisano, Samuel, 3, 29, 165
Peltola, Ville, 147-148
perceived organizational support, 131-133
planning reverse mentoring, 137
popularity of mentoring, 2
Pound, Ron, 69
practice, communities of. *See* communities of practice
preventing career derailment, 141-144
Pritchett, Price, 69
Proctor & Gamble, 136
Prusak, Lawrence, 177
psychological contracts, 4, 128-131

Q-R

Ragins, Belle, 18
Raines, Claire, 118
recognition and award programs, 15, 162-163
recruiting talent, 31-33
relational competencies, strengthening, 66-68
reshaping IBM culture, 17
respecting individuals, 138-139
retention of knowledge, 36-38
reverse mentoring, 15
 collaborating across differences, 140-141
 communicating value to employees, 133-136
 definition of, 136
 in Finland, 146-148
 implementation, 144-145
 in Latin America, 148-151
 multigenerational collaboration, 151-152
 origins of, 136
 overview, 126-128

- perceived organizational support, 131-133
- planning, 137
- preventing career derailment, 141-144
- psychological/social contracts, 128-131
- respecting individuals, 138-139
- signaling ethics and integrity, 153-155
- signaling power of, 137-138
- supporting employee development, 139-140
- in United States, 145-146

revitalizing mentoring, 24-30

Ringo, Tim, 205

S

Sandell, Johan, 146-148

science of muddling through, 186

Second Life, 85

signaling value in people
- communicating value to employees, 133-136
- overview, 126-128
- perceived organizational support, 131-133

psychological/social contracts, 128-131
- reverse mentoring
- collaborating across differences, 140-141
  - *definition of, 136*
  - *in Finland, 146-148*
  - *implementation, 144-145*
  - *in Latin America, 148-151*
  - *multigenerational collaboration, 151-152*
  - *origins of, 136*
  - *planning, 137*
  - *preventing career derailment, 141-144*
  - *respecting individuals, 138-139*
  - *signaling ethics and integrity, 153-155*
  - *signaling power of, 137-138*
  - *supporting employee development, 139-140*
  - *in United States, 145-146*

***Situated Learning* (Lave and Wegner), 52**

social co-participation, 53

social contracts, 128-131

social networking tools, 81-82

socializing of employees, 33-34

South Africa's cross-geography mentoring initiative, 197-203

strategic business model (IBM), 2-3
- key challenges, 5-9
  - *competitive market for talent, 5-7*
  - *generational differences, 7*
  - *IT industry issues, 7-9*
- mentoring portfolio. *See* IBM mentoring portfolio

strategic mentoring portfolios. *See* mentoring portfolios

strategic sustainability, 182

strengthening relational competencies, 66-68

supporting
- employee development, 139-140
- knowledge retention, 36-38

sustainability
  strategic sustainability, 182
  sustaining a knowledge-resilient culture, 38-40
Swap, Walter, 197

T

tacit knowledge, 53
talent
  attracting and recruiting, 31-33
  global talent management
    Black Technical Leaders Forum (BTLF), 193-197
    East Fishkill manufacturing plant mentoring program, 191-192
    overview, 187-191
    South Africa's cross-geography mentoring initiative, 197-203
  market-driven approach to talent management, 31
Tan, Ray, 113
Technical Leadership Exchange (TLE), 85
technology, limitations of, 91
text chats, 86
Thank Your Mentee cards, 162
Thank Your Mentor cards, 162
Think Fridays, 70
THINK motto, 70-71
Thomas, David, 103
TLE (Technical Leadership Exchange), 85
traditional mentoring, 4-5
transformations in mentoring, 4-5
triple bottom line, 160

U-V

"Unlocking the DNA of an Adaptable Workforce" (Ringo and MacDonald), 206

value, adding through mentoring
  balanced view of 'value added', 167-171
  creating competitive advantage through enduring skills, 165-167
  lessons learned, 176-177
  Mentor Appreciation Award, 172-176
  mentoring as high-performance work practice (HPWP), 161-164
  overview, 160-161
value in people, signaling
  communicating value to employees, 133-136
  overview, 126-128
  perceived organizational support, 131-133
  psychological/social contracts, 128-131
  reverse mentoring
    collaborating across differences, 140-141
    definition of, 136
    in Finland, 146-148
    implementation, 144-145
    in Latin America, 148-151
    multigenerational collaboration, 151-152
    origins of, 136

    - *planning, 137*
    - *preventing career derailment, 141-144*
    - *respecting individuals, 138-139*
    - *signaling ethics and integrity, 153-155*
    - *signaling power of, 137-138*
    - *supporting employee development, 139-140*
    - *in United States, 145-146*
- **virtual communities, access to, 84-86**
- **virtual mentoring, 14, 80-81**
  - group speed mentoring, 84-90
  - mentoring Web sites, 82-84
  - social networking tools, 81-82

W-X-Y-Z

- **War for Talent concept, 5-9**
- **Watson, T. J., Jr., 70, 153**
- **Web sites**
  - Explore Mentoring, 105-109
  - mentoring Web sites, 82-84
- **Welch, Jack, 136**
- ***Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?* (Gerstner), 71**
- ***Why Innovation Matters to IBM*, 17**
- **"wicked problems," solving through mentoring, 182-187**
  - feed-forward orientation, 186
  - global talent management
    - *Black Technical Leaders Forum (BTLF), 193-197*
    - *East Fishkill manufacturing plant mentoring program, 191-192*
    - *lessons learned, 203-205*
    - *overview, 187-191*
    - *South Africa's cross-geography mentoring initiative, 197-203*
  - "wicked problems" defined, 184
- **"Winning Strategies for a Global Workforce" (Towers and Perrin), 38, 93**
- **women in workforce, glass ceiling for, 100**
- **Women Inventors Community, 205**
- **Women's Diversity Network Group, 120**
- **Wooden, John, 154**
- **Wright, Gary, 195**

- **Your IBM, 33**

- **Zemke, Ron, 118**