



CAREERS MENTORING PROGRAMME CASE STUDY

Jerry Muscroft from PJA

Jerry Muscroft is a Director PJA, an independent transport, engineering and placemaking consultancy whose projects have included providing technical advice to developers, designing new roads, and active travel strategies to town centre regeneration schemes such as Wakefield.

After training as a civil engineer, Jerry has amassed more than 30 years' experience in planning, design and delivery of development infrastructure in the UK and Internationally.

A major change in his career came during the 2009 recession, when he left the business he helped grow to join a large corporate. "It was the hardest decision I made," he said. "It ended up being the right decision, but it didn't feel like it at the time."

What makes a good mentor?

Someone who listens. You must understand what your mentee wants to achieve out of life - what their goals and objectives are.

Once you've established that, you have to come up with a strategy to help them exceed their expectations. I think the only way you can do that is to listen first and understand them rather than trying to impose something that you think is right for them.

How have the mentoring sessions gone?

Good, they're great kids. The last session was a bit difficult as we talked about strengths and weaknesses, and they initially found it hard to open up. It was easier after we put pen to paper creating spider-grams, breaking the task down. I ran through the exercise myself, and slowly that drew the kids into the conversation. A couple of kids seemed a bit disenfranchised, but actually, after asking questions to find out

what their problems were and responding to them, they all opened up and were engaged.

Why do you make a good mentor?

Over the years I've had successes and I've had failures. It's learning from those experiences that's important. I've learnt how to get the best out of people, by listening and talking through their problems and working out a strategy where they can achieve their best.

What do you want your mentees to learn?

Don't be afraid of mistakes. A lot of people are held back because they don't want to fail. But there's no such a thing as failure because they're all learning experiences. Also, I want them to learn how to use their strengths and skills to their advantage. For example, I'm a visual person and can visualise designs in my head easily, so I work with that ability to help explain a design's pros and cons to my clients.

Did you have a mentor?

I'm learning from people every day but my biggest mentors came from playing team sports. From playing rugby and sailing you learn how to work within and build a team. I believe in the power of the team - a group of individuals can come up with a far better solution than just one person on their own.

And your strengths and weaknesses?

My strengths are empathy and building teams and people, but also questioning, not believing the first answer. My weakness is my impatience. We gain strengths from everything we do. You just got to believe in yourself and find that inner strength.