

1-to-1 learning

Mentoring helps Boeing prepare leaders—and attract, retain and develop the company’s employees

BY ROBERT STERLING

Rex Sturdy and Twana Lee are different from each other. And that’s good. Sturdy, the senior manager of Site Services Facilities (part of Shared Services Group) in Huntsville, Ala., mentors Lee, a facilities analyst and nonmanager in Huntsville. Sturdy has been with Boeing for 31 years; Lee just less than three.

Despite the dissimilarities, the two have forged a strong and meaningful mentor-mentee relationship based on a common ele-

ment they share: a fervent desire to become the best at what they do. And that means learning from one another.

Sturdy and Lee’s relationship is representative of many mentoring associations taking place throughout Boeing. This one-to-one dialogue benefits both mentor and mentee, and includes discussions about their differences and communication styles. That awareness will strengthen Boeing people across the enterprise.

“I didn’t limit myself to a mentor who looked or acted like me or somebody I wanted to copy,” said Lee, the mentee or protégé. “At first I was cautious and a bit apprehensive, but I wanted a leader,

Rex Sturdy (left), senior manager, Site Services Facilities in Huntsville, Ala., visits with Twana Lee, a facilities analyst. Lee and Sturdy said that they’ve both learned a great deal from one another through their mentoring relationship.



MIKE MCCORMICK PHOTO

like Rex, who could help me bring out my best in a challenging and changing environment.”

Rick Stephens, senior vice president, Human Resources, said mentoring is a key component in Boeing’s rigorous pursuit to develop current and future leaders. “Part of the ‘leaders teaching leaders’ approach, mentoring gives leaders the opportunity to learn as well as to define and model leadership,” Stephens said. “This program is structured around best practices to make our mentoring world-class and strengthen people in ways other methods cannot.”

By incorporating discussion tools to support cross-cultural dialogue and including the mentees’ manager, this mentoring approach will bolster Boeing’s efforts to retain and develop talent in an increasingly competitive and dynamic labor market.

WORLD-CLASS MENTORING, DEFINED

The addition of this companywide program provides a number of new key components, including goal setting, scheduled meetings, and connecting mentors and mentees who are different from each other and may not meet through the normal course of business.

“Teaching people to work across different cultures is teaching them to work together,” said Connie Jack, part of the Global Diversity & Employee Rights team within Human Resources. “What’s important to remember is everyone is diverse, including white males. That may mean an Irish-American talking with an Italian-American. That’s diversity too.”

The formal, companywide program, Jack said, offers a detailed and structured approach to the methodology for both mentor and mentee. In designing the new program, the team relied on exhaustive research that helped identify best practices around mentoring.

The program includes an orientation, training and a mentoring agreement that identifies goals, objectives and role definitions. It also has regular evaluations to track progress toward objectives along with input from the mentee’s manager. These comprehensive tools and recommended participant metrics help ensure a value-added experience. Participants meet monthly (in person and/or by phone) for one year with the mentee’s manager actively contributing to some of the mentoring discussions.

Why build such a robust program?

“Past research tells us while mentors are overwhelmingly satisfied with mentoring programs, mentees often are not. And that defeats the whole purpose,” Jack said. “Many companies struggle with mentoring programs, but Boeing’s incorporation of tools and metrics, and taking advantage of best practices, will put us among leading programs and create the most return on participants’ investment of time and information sharing.”

WHY IT MATTERS TO BOEING

Boeing is full of bright and talented employees and there are numerous mentoring opportunities. So where is the value in a company-wide mentoring approach?

To understand the answers, one need only look to the near future.

Within the next five years, tens of thousands of Boeing employees will be eligible for retirement, Stephens said. Consequently, the competition to identify, attract, retain and develop top talent will be fierce—particularly in an industry like aerospace, where there’s a significant demand for scientific and technical expertise.

“We’re looking at potential major shortfalls in skills and labor,” Stephens said. “Since it’s likely we’ll have more good jobs than qualified people, all hands must be readied, and every mind must be prepared to contribute. We have a huge opportunity here.

Mentoring in action

Below and on Pages 32 and 33 are examples of employees across Boeing involved in mentoring

A high-energy combination

In physics, energy can be calculated through Einstein’s famous equation, $E=mc^2$. When Yvette Winn and Mylene Novelo are in a room together, they create a tremendous amount of energy that would have made Einstein proud.

Winn, director, Commercial Airplanes Program Management for Finance and Group, serves as mentor for Novelo, a BCA Procurement Cost Support analyst. Winn, with 21 years of experience at Boeing, was reared in Louisiana as part of a Cajun family whose first language was French. Novelo was born in the Philippines, where she learned English as well as her native Tagalog. She has an engineering background and has been with Boeing for one year.

“I was born into a culture that clearly defined a woman’s place,” Novelo said. “But growing up in the United States, I learned not to be afraid to voice my beliefs. I’m excited to take advantage of every opportunity I’ll have at Boeing.”

Winn shares Novelo’s enthusiasm. She stresses performance and communication as the key elements to making a mentoring relationship successful.

“I see a lot of myself in Mylene, so I focus on how much we’re alike,” Winn said. “Because Mylene came to me with her goals and ambitions, we’ve been able to strategize through such things as her Performance Development Partnership to make things happen. Communication is really the key.”

The greatest value of mentoring, Winn said, is that it produces a cross-pollination of ideas, attitudes and ways of thinking that inspire creativity and productivity among employees at all levels. “Bringing more views to the table results in better solutions and better products,” she said.

—Robert Sterling

Yvette Winn (left), director, BCA Program Management for Finance and Group, reviews Mylene Novelo’s Performance Development Partnership (PDP) plan to help guide her toward her career ambitions. Winn serves as a mentor for Novelo, a Procurement Cost Support analyst.



■ FEATURE STORY

“The challenge,” Stephens added, “is making sure we have an employee base already on the job to meet the formidable need. For Boeing to stay competitive, we must create the right environment that enables a successful career for every employee.”

Enhancing the company’s diverse and engaging work experience will help Boeing as the labor market becomes increasingly competitive. Ethnic groups, traditionally in the minority, will continue entering the work force in record numbers. Boeing must be positioned not only to attract these diverse candidates, but provide an atmosphere that encourages their development.

BUSINESS GROWTH, DIVERSE WORK FORCE

While Boeing’s leaders make a strong case for fortifying the “pipeline” to meet future demands, they also recognize the relationship of a diverse work force to business growth.

Joyce Tucker, vice president, Global Diversity & Employee Rights, calls diversity Boeing’s biggest competitive advantage. And while it’s the right thing to do, developing diverse leadership is also good business as Boeing’s customer base becomes increasingly global. By tapping into more resources from groups that reflect current and emerging markets, the company becomes closer to those markets and ultimately its customers.

“Corporations are recognizing that in order to be as innovative as we have to be and as competitive as we have to be, we have to avail ourselves of all the talent out there,” Tucker said. “Everyone has something to contribute. Wherever the talent is coming from, we want them.”

Boeing can leverage mentoring as a way to impart knowledge to potential future leaders. But more than that, mentoring transfers cultural knowledge from the company’s diverse employees to managers who must learn to lead diverse teams successfully. In the end, that means building the work force so leadership more closely mirrors the demographics of Boeing’s people, communities and customers.

“Building a diverse work force is not a program,” Stephens said. “It’s not something you do today and then move on to something else tomorrow. It’s part of our culture, and it’s a gradual process that continues indefinitely.”

For more information, please visit <http://globaldiversity.whq.boeing.com/mentoring/index.html> on the Boeing intranet. Questions can be e-mailed to the team through the “GRP Enterprise Mentoring” mailbox in Outlook. ■

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Distance is no object

Neha Gupta works for Boeing Shared Services Group in her native India, but she’s learning firsthand what it’s like to walk in Mary Armstrong’s shoes in Seattle. Armstrong, SSG president, is Gupta’s mentor.

“It’s a great way to learn more about Boeing and understand what successful people do right,” said Gupta, who is based in New Delhi and joined Boeing International Corporation India two years ago as SSG business manager in the Asia-Pacific region.

For Gupta and Armstrong, the learning experience has been invaluable, despite the 12.5-hour time difference between New Delhi and Seattle. To make it work, Armstrong deliberately schedules meetings related to Gupta’s interests to ensure Gupta can attend during her normal working hours in India. They have a planned schedule when they meet via telephone and in person, in addition to regular business meetings.

“It’s even better to learn across different cultures in order to see points of view and behaviors,” Gupta said. “India and the United States have



Maximizing mentoring

What makes a mentoring program best-in-class? Boeing conducted extensive research on internal and external mentoring programs to determine best practices. Successful mentoring programs—which provide value to both the mentor and mentee—had core essential elements:

- **Specified length of time and meeting schedule.** Establish a one-year program with monthly meetings—some of which are face-to-face.
- **Structured mentor–mentee matching.** Try to mix it up and have different people paired who would not normally interact with each other at work. (Mentees may not be in the mentor’s chain of command or at the mentor’s peer level.)

- **Pre-, mid- and post-evaluations.** Give standardized surveys to both the mentor and mentee to measure the value of the experience for the participants and to track the program overall.
- **Orientation sessions.** Conduct an orientation to develop skills for creating and maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship.
- **Cross-cultural curriculum.** Provide discussion tools around cultural concepts that support full engagement of both the mentor and mentee.
- **Inclusion of mentees’ managers.** Set-up periodic meetings with the mentoring pair and the mentee’s manager to help incorporate development goals into the mentoring discussions.

All mentoring programs or informal mentoring pairs at Boeing are encouraged to use these best practices. Related tools will be available on the

vast cultural differences, such as the woman's place in a business. Even though there are differences, all the needs and aspirations are the same. We want the same things in life and work."

Like Gupt, Armstrong has found great personal value through their mentoring partnership. "I'm learning from Neha a lot about what's important to her professionally and personally, and I'm learning about her culture," Armstrong said. "It's a challenge for SSG international employees, because they are very small office operations, so they don't see firsthand job progression. When they gain knowledge of the many career-growth opportunities Boeing offers, then they'll want to stay at Boeing."

—Katherine Sopranos

Despite 7,000 miles between them, Mary Armstrong (below, right), Shared Services Group president, mentors Neha Gupt, with SSG business management in India. Gupt said the experience has helped her gain a better cultural and business understanding.



BOB FERGUSON PHOTO

Mentoring site over the coming weeks at <http://globaldiversity.whq.boeing.com/mentoring/index.html> on the Boeing intranet.

Mentoring courses on the BEN

The Boeing Education Network (BEN) offers a "mentoring suite" of three courses on demand, on the Boeing intranet:

- Leaders as Mentors (GEBEN548). <http://leadcoursesearch.web.boeing.com/csrtDetails.cfm?course=GEBEN548>
- Leaders Teaching Leaders (GEBEN596). <http://leadcoursesearch.web.boeing.com/csrtDetails.cfm?course=GEBEN596>
- Feedback is a Gift (GEBEN630). <http://leadcoursesearch.web.boeing.com/csrtDetails.cfm?course=GEBEN630>

ERIC SHINDELBOWER PHOTO



Lanson Quan (above, left), an engineer with Integrated Defense Systems, discusses the challenges he faces in moving into management with Andy Chabelal, his mentor and IDS engineering manager. Quan credits his mentoring relationship with Chabelal for helping him overcome personal cultural barriers—and thus becoming a better leader.

Clearing cultural hurdles

No one would question that Lanson Quan possesses all the tools to be a leader. Quan, based in Huntsville, Ala., is an Integrated Defense Systems engineer in the Ground-based Midcourse Defense System. He's also involved with the Boeing Asian-American Professional Association affinity group.

Despite his solid background, Quan is working closely with his mentor Andy Chabelal, an IDS engineering manager in Huntsville, to overcome what both men see as a barrier to success.

"As a Chinese-American, I grew up in a culture that frowned upon self-promotion, but rather letting one's accomplishments alone speak for themselves," Quan said. "My goal is to move into management, and I realize I need to communicate better to help make that happen. At first, it was uncomfortable to approach someone senior to have this discussion since I thought it might not be appropriate. It's an ongoing challenge for me."

Chabelal, an Indian-American who's been with Boeing for 18 years, recognizes the challenges Quan faces and the need to overcome the cultural barrier. "His internal drive to succeed is there, but Lanson needs to find ways of making sure people are aware of what he wants and what he's accomplished. To get ahead, you need to advertise yourself. I went through it myself," Chabelal said.

Both mentor and mentee are working on ways to overcome Quan's challenge. That includes writing down successes and reviewing resumes to assure critical areas get highlighted. Quan is actively soliciting feedback from others to assess constantly how others perceive him. "If I were not in this relationship with Andy, I don't believe I'd be where I am today," Quan said.

—Robert Sterling