

MY MENTEE EXPERIENCE

BY CARA YOUNG

It's early April and I am about to meet my first ever mentor Susan Young, who has kindly offered her time to spend with me for the next few months as part of the AITD Mentoring Program.

I was eager to be mentored because I have a hospitality background and did not have a formal background in learning and development. I have been fortunate to have numerous roles in the same company over a period of years, one of which had me as a subject matter expert for a specific inhouse software application where I trained staff on how to use this product in our offices around Australia and internationally. About 18 months ago a newly created position became available as a Learning and Development Consultant in our head office within the Technology division, I applied and this is where I am today!

The role is very different from anything I have ever done before. A large part of my job is looking at our People and Culture and to create and drive a great working environment. How do I engage and motivate soft-skills to IT staff? What tips and tricks can I learn on Instructional Design, especially as a lot of my sessions are only 1-2 hours so I don't have the benefit of time?

It's an awesome job and I have a great manager who I support. However, my manager does not have the learning and development background so I need someone that I can leverage off with learning and development experience to help guide my ideas and thoughts.

My goal is to be the consultant as it says in my title, so people can come and ask for my thoughts or ideas and I will be able to provide awesome suggestions with confidence!

This is where Susan comes in. She has years of experience and knowledge working in the learning and development industry, in organisational development roles from Facilitator to Executive Manager – she has done it!

We organise to meet fortnightly, one being via Skype and the other in person when we can. However, we are not restricted to this as we stayed in contact

between these dates by exchanging emails of ideas and resources.

During our catch ups Susan ran a Myers-Briggs assessment, where I found out my type and she provided loads of reading material so I could get more of an understanding on it. I will be putting the challenges into my personal goals at work as areas of improvement and using my strengths to excel even more.

One of my immediate challenges was delivery of values workshops to provide staff with an understanding of what each value is and what behaviours are expected. Susan helped me with ideas and thoughts which we went back and forth on. I provided overviews of the Instructional Design and we adjusted and piloted sessions. These workshop discussions lasted throughout the whole mentoring period so that I was able to leverage from Susan. We discussed story boarding and how to use it and I recall it being similar to the chunking and sequencing I learnt from the AITD Instructional Design course. Even the use of the action cards was confirmation I was on the right track after attending the AITD Learning Transfer event with Emma Weber.

Susan also provided information about working with leaders and introducing me to Korn Ferry Cards, which I found out later our HR team have been looking at.

I attended a webinar on Facilitation and as soon as I mentioned this to Susan she gave me loads of reference materials and books on the different types and where she has used them in the past.

In July I created a Participative Goal Writing course and Susan told me she was impressed by the Instructional Design (after all the practices I had with our Values workshops). I trained staff interstate on this workshop and it was a great success!

Throughout our journey we also discovered we are both members of the Learning Summit Forum and we have been together at a session. Susan has introduced me to the Lean In Circle which was initiated from the

book *Lean in* by Sheryl Sandberg about encouraging females to step outside their comfort zones. Susan is part of the Australian Human Resources institute (AHRI), which I have been to a couple of their events this year, and she also gave me a magazine from the group which actually featured my boss.

I have learned a lot in the last seven months. My manager has seen the improvement of my skills and knowledge since I have been on this mentoring program and she can tell when I have been to see Susan because I come back with suggestions.

Mentoring is a commitment, but one I definitely recommend to anyone. I was lucky to have a mentor with so much experience in what I need. To have someone to help challenge your thinking and encourage you outside your own work (whether they work in the same field or not) or to have someone who is very supportive and can help you develop as a better person is something everyone should experience.

Even now after the official program has finished Susan and I still stay in touch and she is still happy to help, assist and challenge me as I further develop in my career as a Learning and Development Consultant.

Go to YouTube.com and search for AITDvideo to find Cara Young's mentoring program 2017 Reflection video.

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Susan Young (FAITD) is Senior Change and Business Analyst at NBN Co, and experienced L&D, OD and change manager, across corporate, university and VET.

