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What is Speed Mentoring?
by Jeff Furman
Commentary

What Is Speed Mentoring?
And Why Is It Becoming Very Popular At PMI NYC?

By Jeff Furman, PMP®

One of the most popular of the PMI NYC Chapter's many offerings is its new "Speed Mentoring" program. The series was started by Suzan Cho, our chapter's highly-driven VP of Outreach. Suzan had worked with a similar mentoring program at the company where she manages projects, and where she saw the benefits first-hand. So she generously gave her time and customized the program and rolled it out for PMI NYC.

As one of the volunteer mentors in the PMI NYC Speed Mentoring program, I wanted to share this concept with the readers of PM World Journal, to help other PMI Chapters and companies who might like to offer this format for their people.

Q. What exactly is "Speed Mentoring?"

A. A cousin of "speed networking," but *more than just networking*. PMs come to the Speed Mentoring sessions for some guidance from Senior PMs who serve as mentors. And many of the mentors are also PM Instructors, so the events are held at universities such as NYU, where the mentors also teach their PM classes, as I do. The universities host the events, supplying the facilities, PCs, projectors, and more, and also co-sponsor them with the PMI NYC Chapter.

The attendees bring their questions to the events (about PM challenges, career search, etc.) which they pose to the mentors during the Q&A portion of the presentations. And then later, they get another chance to connect with the mentors and ask them more questions one-on-one, at a reception held after the presentations.

Q. What are the logistics of a typical Speed Mentoring Night?

A. Typically there are 10 mentors selected for each event. Each mentor prepares a presentation on topics such as: *"Career Search In PM,"* or *"Interviewing Skills,"* or *"Using LinkedIn Strategically for Self-Marketing,"* or *"PM Opportunities in Health-Care."* Or sometimes there is an overarching theme for the evening, where each topic will be related to that theme.

Each mentor is scheduled to give his/her presentation four times over the course of the evening, at 6:00, 6:30, 7:00, and 7:30 PM. Each presentation is scheduled for 25 minutes, including Q&A with the participants (and with a 5-minute break after each session).

Each participant attends four sessions (given by four different mentors). A wrap-up and reception follows afterwards, where the attendees continue to network with each other.

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They can also connect further with the mentors they met that night. The reception also offers the chance for the attendees to meet the other mentors, as well as the chapter leaders and university people who hosted the event.

Q. How does Speed Mentoring benefit the *"mentees?"*

A.
- They meet several mentors who might help them further in the future.
- They learn from the mentors' presentations.
- They get the questions they brought to the event answered personally by the mentors.
- They meet new PMs and PM students.
- PMI-certified PMs get 2 PDUs for attending the session.

And as side-benefits:

- They learn more about the PMINYC Chapter's resources
- They learn more about the educational opportunities for PMs at the university hosting the event.
- They get a "sneak preview" of some of the mentor/instructors' presentation styles, which helps them decide who they would like to take classes with in the future.

Q. And how do the *"mentors"* benefit?

A.
- This is a very satisfying challenge for the mentors.
- The mentors' names and short bios appear in a printed brochure (and also eBrochure) for each event they participate in.
- Good for their personal growth and leadership path.
- The mentors grow their network with the PMs who attend their sessions.
- They also network by meeting their fellow mentors and also the chapter leaders and university people hosting the event.
- PDUs are also granted for the mentors.
- The mentors are invited to the chapter's annual *"Volunteer Appreciation Dinner,"* where they meet volunteers from the chapter's other programs.

Q. How does speed-mentoring compare to traditional mentoring?

A. This is a unique kind of mentoring opportunity that can enhance your career. PMs come away from the speed mentoring events feeling like they've been to a good party! In a very easy setting, highly-conducive to networking, they connect with their fellow-attendees at the sessions, and they meet four speakers/mentors in their four sessions, who they will feel comfortable reaching out to again in the future.

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I would like to personally thank **Suzan Cho** for creating this excellent program for the PMI NYC Chapter, and also the many chapter volunteers who consistently help Suzan make these events a success.

I would also like to especially thank two of the managers at NYU's School of Professional Studies (SPS) who do a great job planning, organizing, publicizing and co-hosting the Speed Mentoring events with PMI NYC:

- **Tatiana Rivera**, *Training Coordinator*, and
- **Jennifer Schaperow**, *Event Planner* for these programs.

And one more big thanks goes to **Cornelius Fichtner**, host of The Project Management Podcast. Cornelius recently published PM-Podcast Episode #325: *"Project Management Coaching and Mentoring - A How-To Guide,"* where he interviewed me about my 'Top 10 List' of mentoring opportunities for PMs.'

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Jeff currently teaches six project management courses for NYU's School of Professional Studies, and also teaches *PMP* Prep for the U.S. Army, on bases around the United States.

He has led many software projects for Fortune 100 firms in the NYC area. And for many years he managed a mission-critical I.T. change management system, which handled application changes 24 x 7 for a large brokerage in Manhattan.

The 2nd Edition of his book, *"The Project Management Answer Book"* was just published by Management Concepts Press in January, 2015:

- Amazon Link   (Paperback & Kindle Edition)
- Publisher's Page (for more about the book)

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