BRIDGING DIFFERENCES for BETTER MENTORING

LEAN FORWARD, LEARN, LEVERAGE

LISA Z. FAI N and LOIS J. ZACHARY
Praise for *Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring*

“While our similarities give us comfort, it is our differences that give us growth. In many ways, embracing differences is the very essence of learning. *Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring* provides solid guidance through profound wisdom, practical tools, and case examples on how to leverage differences for rich, mutual growth. Mentors and mentees alike will find this book a potent and enjoyable gift.”
—Chip R. Bell, coauthor of *Managers as Mentors*

“There are rare times when a book is written that expands your mind, opens your heart, and touches your soul. This is one of those books. Fain and Zachary, who have a deep knowledge and understanding of the context and processes of mentoring, confront us with our need to view the world and those within it with a broader focus on the breadth and beauty of varied perspectives, which in turn will bring richness to our own perceptions and abilities. If we are to mentor and be mentored in ways that can foster growth and understanding in all involved and in our world, we will take their knowledge and make it our own.”
—Frances Kochan, Wayne T. Smith Distinguished Professor Emerita, Auburn University

“Alas, all too often mentoring relationships occur through happenstance, and sometimes they work and sometimes they don’t. This excellent book cuts through the ‘luck’ part and guides mentor and mentee into excellent conversations that build their connection and their impact. Yes, there are many mentoring books available, and if you think you’ve seen it all, give this one a try. Lois and Lisa meld their experiences, know-how, and backgrounds to provide a vast amount of ideas and concepts that are research based and practice tested.”
—Beverly Kaye, bestselling coauthor of *Love ’Em or Lose ’Em*

“Research has shown that mentoring is a wonderful tool, especially for groups that have historically been underrepresented in the workplace. *Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring* is a much-needed resource to build career-enhancing strategies.”
—Mary-Frances Winters, President and CEO, The Winters Group, Inc.

“*Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring* is a highly accessible and well-written guide for all those interested in upping their mentoring game across cultures and differences. I was particularly impressed by how practical the book is and how carefully the authors ground their insights in social science research. Very useful book!”
—Andy Molinsky, PhD, Professor of International Management and Organizational Behavior, Brandeis University, and author of *Global Dexterity and Reach*

“Building on years of working with individuals and organizations to improve their experiences with mentoring, Lois Zachary and Lisa Fain have created an invaluable resource for those who want to enhance their experiences of mentoring in an increasingly diverse workforce. They have provided a compelling and simple structure for building self-awareness, becoming an outstanding mentoring partner through demonstrating genuine curiosity, asking good questions, and establishing routines in a mentoring partnership that lead to deep trust, growth-enhancing conversations, and transformational outcomes. At the core, the structure and methods presented in this book enable the reader to become culturally competent and to lean in to differences and leverage them, rather than deny or minimize their potential value.”
—Kathy E. Kram, PhD, Shipley Professor in Management Emerita, Questrom School of Business, Boston University
“Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring is a nuanced and instructive reflection of the modern workplace and a necessary resource for today’s leaders. Equipped with invaluable experience and universal strategies, Fain and Zachary offer insight into connecting across differences and leveraging everyone’s unique strengths—a critical skill set that every inclusive leader should develop. Complete with real stories and actionable steps, this book will resonate with both mentors and mentees alike.”
—Jennifer Brown, founder, CEO, and President, Jennifer Brown Consulting

“Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring is a road map for building successful mentoring relationships. Every chapter illustrates examples of how key concepts play out in real life and introduces the reader to reflective exercises to assist in integrating the wisdom into practice. This insightful book also adeptly addresses issues of bias and power positions to help establish inclusive and more comfortable relationships. Combining experiences and generational perspectives, Lisa and Lois have written the ultimate go-to guide on how to bridge differences in a mentoring relationship.”
—Marcia Reynolds, PsyD, global expert in executive coaching and author of The Discomfort Zone

“A rare and much-needed contribution, this timely book brings leaders and educators down-to-earth advice on a pressing and little-understood aspect of mentorship. Using fresh and accessible language and blending practical ideas with current research, the authors demonstrate their deep experience on every page. Essential reading for mentors—aspiring and experienced alike.”
—Laurent A. Daloz, author of Mentor and coauthor of Common Fire

“Lisa Fain and Lois Zachary have used their world-class expertise to provide a road map for leaders to more effectively connect, learn, and grow through mentoring. Highly recommended!”
—Doug Bruhnke, founder and CEO, Global Chamber

“Regardless of where you are in your career’s trajectory, this unique guide offers the wisdom and real-life applications for the furtherance of empathic leadership skills of both mentors and mentees.”
—John Hensing, MD, FACP, retired Chief Clinical Officer, Banner Health

“Fain and Zachary's book expands, integrates, and elevates their previous work in mentoring and cultural competence, using case studies and interactive exercises to engage and challenge readers to explore ways to create more inclusive mentoring relationships in their own contexts. I look forward to applying the valuable insights I have gained through this book to our Young Innovators Project, in which we are training K–12 educators nationwide to more effectively mentor the diverse and creative students in their schools.”
—Ruth V. Small, PhD, Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor Emerita, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, and Director, The Young Innovators Project
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Lean Forward, Learn, and Leverage

Lisa Z. Fain
and
Lois J. Zachary
To David and Ed,
our wonderfully supportive spouses, wingmen, cheerleaders, and supporters.

To Talia and Emily,
our respective children and grandchildren, for your patience with the sacrifices of time and energy this process has demanded. You inspired us to write a book to create a better workplace for you.

To Lois (from Lisa),
whose leadership in the field of mentoring I have only come to appreciate as an adult, but from which I benefited throughout my life. What a joy, an honor, and a privilege to have created something with you and to share this passion.

To Lisa (from Lois),
whose creativity, grit, and smarts added so much to our collaborative endeavor. I’ve learned so much from you. Thank you for all you’ve done and will continue to do to make this a better world.
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We have known about the importance of mentoring for developing people and organizations for several decades. Organizations are more frequently turning to mentoring as a solution for a range of their needs, from early socialization to talent management to leadership development. Despite acknowledging the power of mentoring, few organizations have successfully leveraged it as part of their overall strategy. Many individuals report not having access to the benefits of mentoring, and this lack of access is especially true for women and people of color. There is also an ongoing debate over the value of “formal” mentoring, with many arguing that it is less effective than informal, self-determined types of mentoring. Thus, despite its popularity, organization-sponsored mentoring often lacks inclusion, leaving out those individuals who should benefit the most from these powerful developmental relationships.

My own research and work with organizations over the past three decades has focused on the importance of mentoring as not only a tool for developing people and organizations but also a transformational process for creating understanding, strengthening relationships, and sharing knowledge among diverse groups of people and cultures. This work has convinced me that there is no more powerful tool than mentoring to unleash the power of diversity and inclusion in ways that benefit people and organizations. Thus it was a pleasure and honor to read this unique work and offer my insights and perspective.

*Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring* is a timely, evidence-based, and practical discussion of the power of mentoring to support, leverage, and advance diversity and inclusion across all different types of organizations. Lisa Fain and Lois Zachary leverage their combined research and practical knowledge with hundreds of mentors and mentees to provide insight into how we can better utilize mentoring as a transformational tool for individuals and organizational leaders. *Bridging*
Differences is not merely a book title, but a call to action for scholars, leaders, and management practitioners to unleash the power of mentoring for creating a more inclusive organizational culture and social system. The work that provides the foundation of this book reminds us to move beyond the ease of one-shot mentoring efforts that are based on the myth of a single mentor or sponsor and toward developing effective and sustainable efforts as the key to success that are grounded in both research and best practice.

Bridging Differences is a strategy that can be used to support individual development as well as organizational transformation. To accomplish this, the authors examine the ways in which individuals should prepare for the work of mentoring. The book is organized into three parts: lean forward into differences, learn from differences, and leverage differences. Each section includes knowledge that the authors have gained from organizational practice, individual coaching, and research on mentoring. Each section of the book gave me valuable insight into three keys to unlocking the power of mentoring as a tool for diversity and inclusion: purpose, process, and participation.

In Part 1, “Lean Forward into Differences,” the authors signal that we need to prepare ourselves for the work of mentoring. They remind us that we must first focus on the purpose for mentoring: to cultivate meaningful relationships. Although this may seem obvious and perhaps easy, it becomes more complicated as individuals attempt to build relationships across differences. Through their mentoring framework, the authors challenge us to not simply “accept” differences but to actually see them, acknowledge them, and understand how these differences impact our mentoring relationships. This means building our knowledge around culture and identity, especially for those whose experiences are vastly different from our own. It also means developing the capacity to face barriers that interfere with the purpose of mentoring, such as all forms of bias and privilege.

The model presented by the authors prompts us to understand the link between mentoring purpose and the specific mentoring tool or program that can best fit the needs of the organization, team, or workplace culture. Too often, we think of mentoring in a homogeneous fashion that takes the power out of the diversity of mentoring structures, types, functions, and methods we have at our disposal. Bridging Differences means spending a significant amount of time preparing ourselves for mentoring, which begins with clarity and consensus on its purpose.

“Learn from Differences” is covered in Part 2, where the authors guide us
through the ways in which mentoring unlocks knowledge about commonalities, diversity, worldviews, and innovative perspectives. Then we explore how we share and transfer this invaluable knowledge. This means paying attention to the process of mentoring both from an individual and especially from an organizational perspective. The process of communication, exchange, and knowledge transfer can either be facilitated or blocked by how we engage in the process of learning across differences. Here the authors spend necessary time with practice tools in a deep dive into the impact of effective communication across differences. In my work with organizations it has become clear that communication as process also must fit with the organization’s culture. Understanding how decisions are made, how successful initiatives have been done in the past, and gaining clarity on the “unspoken rules” within the organization is always part of the work that must be done for effective mentoring across differences to take place. The authors remind us that there is no universal solution to learning across differences. We can’t merely do “some mentoring,” copy what has worked for other companies, or purchase a predesigned product. Learning from differences means committing to developing understanding within the mentoring relationships, which also means developing our ability to deal with the inevitable conflict resolving from diverse relationships. Each chapter within Part 2 provides valuable and practical tools for how to learn from differences as a commitment to the mentoring process.

In Part 3, “Leverage Differences,” the authors explore what it takes to get full utilization and impact from diverse mentoring relationships. This section offers practical guidance and tools that can be customized for our own unique mentoring relationships. The authors examine such key issues as understanding and agreements among the mentor-mentee, goal setting, and outcomes. These practical tools remind us that effective mentoring across differences requires that we put forth effort to ensure that there is mutual participation. Perhaps this is where some formal programs lose their impact. We match individuals together, have a flashy program rollout, then leave mentors and mentees on their own to navigate these complex relationships without guidance, tools, or ongoing support.

The chapters in this part of the book provide tested tools that can be accessed across many different relationships that one will have over time to help them navigate, learn, and leverage mentoring. I found the space for reflection, case studies of mentoring pairs, and “Your Turn” exercises to be essential tools in helping to develop and maintain meaningful mentoring relationships across differences that
can be used repeatedly across time and experience. These practical tools remind us that participation is the essential building block of meaningful diverse mentoring relationships and requires our knowledgeable engagement.

I learned many valuable lessons from reading this work by Fain and Zachary. The authors reminded me that mentoring is most effective when individuals (and organizations) make a total commitment that moves beyond merely discussing diversity and toward bridging differences. This means taking advantage of the practical knowledge and tools they have provided to develop a personal portfolio of tools and strategies that can build and sustain meaningful mentoring relationships, promote collaboration across differences, and link mentoring to such core values as diversity and inclusion. The valuable lesson I learned is that mentoring is most effective when there is also a total commitment to both mentoring and diversity. There is no quick fix, single design, or magic technology for mentoring to be effective. However, Fain and Zachary have provided an evidence-based set of tools, techniques, and approaches to assist with the vital work of mentoring as we build bridges across our differences.

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Professor of Business Administration, Psychology, Public and International Affairs
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Welcome! You are about to begin an exciting and eye-opening process during which you will explore your own cultural lens, recognize the myriad of differences you and your mentoring partner bring to the table, and build skills you can use to bridge differences in your mentoring relationships.

_Bridging Differences_ builds on coauthor Lois Zachary’s mentoring philosophy and four-phase mentoring model, and draws from many of her other mentoring publications.¹ Although she has devoted sections of each of her books to understanding difference (especially in _The Mentor’s Guide_), none have explored the topic of cultural competency in mentoring in depth. Coauthor Lisa Fain brings her expertise in coaching and cultural competency, and her passion for creating inclusive work environments to her role as CEO of the Center for Mentoring Excellence. Her work focuses on assisting companies to create more inclusive workplaces through mentoring by helping leaders to become more aware of their own cultural framework, to show up authentically, and to lead diverse teams that achieve better results.

_Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring_ represents a marriage of the authors’ shared passions for mentoring and diversity and inclusion. It especially reflects our experiences with the hundreds of mentors and mentees and multinational clients we work with at the Center for Mentoring Excellence.

_This Book Is for You_

This book is, of course, for mentors and mentees, both novices and experts. It is also for learning and development professionals, and anyone involved in leading, supervising, or managing the mentoring and diversity process in an organization. We have designed the examples and framework to stimulate your thinking about