

Boundaries

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Absentee Training is not Mentoring; Experience is not Expertise

Land Surveying has traditionally been based on mentoring. Generally speaking, people are proficient in what they love to do; it makes them happy. Likewise, we tend to love to do what we are proficient in. A complementary relationship between self and love is pervasive within the human ego to the extent that the human ego maps its "self" directly back to the "self". But what about your "self" in the annals of history?

Among my professional peers, ego-centrism is profoundly and proudly displayed in the form of professed knowledge and expertise in the industry. Many of them are protective of what they perceive to be a secret of the trade / profession or something else that may separate them from the herd. Many others realize that this approach is counterproductive. Professional knowledge, when shared and built upon, becomes the foundation for the future of any profession.

In consideration of the technological advent of single-user surveying equipment, such as robotic total stations and GPS systems, it appears that a proper mentoring system may have been replaced with a disconnected relationship between mentor and apprentice. Autonomous is the technician in the field with great knowledge in the use of equipment, and, autonomous, ironically, becomes the would-be mentor who becomes the student of his own apprentice. In a sense, this response by the would-be mentor to the inefficiencies of his apprentice can be construed as lack of planning bordering on indifference. What ensues is professional stagnation rather than upward mobility.

A land surveyor in training cannot be trained by his equipment or his own experience in using it, alone. He can only be properly trained by another experienced land surveyor. This means years of working alongside, and following in the footsteps of, a proper mentor who is able to quiz the mind of the apprentice and offer advice in a particular situation at a specific time (yes, while it's happening). So long to calling the office because there is a conundrum or technical dilemma in the field. So long to hiring a technician to be the "eyes" in the field for the would-be mentor. And so long to those who practice land surveying to this degree without considering the future of the profession and the future professionals who may be ill prepared in following the footsteps of the would-be mentor. Training is not mentoring, and experience is not expertise.

