

Finding a better way to learn

Author develops peer mentoring program

BY JEROME WATT
Staff Writer

For Thornhill's Cy Charney, there's always a better way to learn.

Mr. Charney is a keynote speaker at conferences and offers workshops to corporations around the world to boost their performance using a process he calls the peer mentoring system.

"I want to revolutionize the way people are given the opportunity to learn," he said. "This is my passion. I hope when I die people are going to say the best way to learn in an organization is peer mentoring."

Mr. Charney is also author of five books that act as a guide for people in various aspects of their professional lives.

Mr. Charney, who previously worked as a teacher, studied and developed what he says are better ways to learn.

For the past 21 years, he has worked as a management consultant with various companies. He developed peer mentoring five years ago as a training system for a company's employees.

When he offers his peer mentoring system, Mr. Charney lets his clients do most of the work.

People only remember 10 per cent of what they read, he said, but when people teach each other something, retention goes up to 95 per cent.

Using his system, Mr. Charney forms groups of six to 10 people from any part of a company. After initial training, the group gathers at regularly scheduled meetings to learn one topic at a time, following a lesson plan set out by Mr. Charney. Each member takes turns facilitating a session.

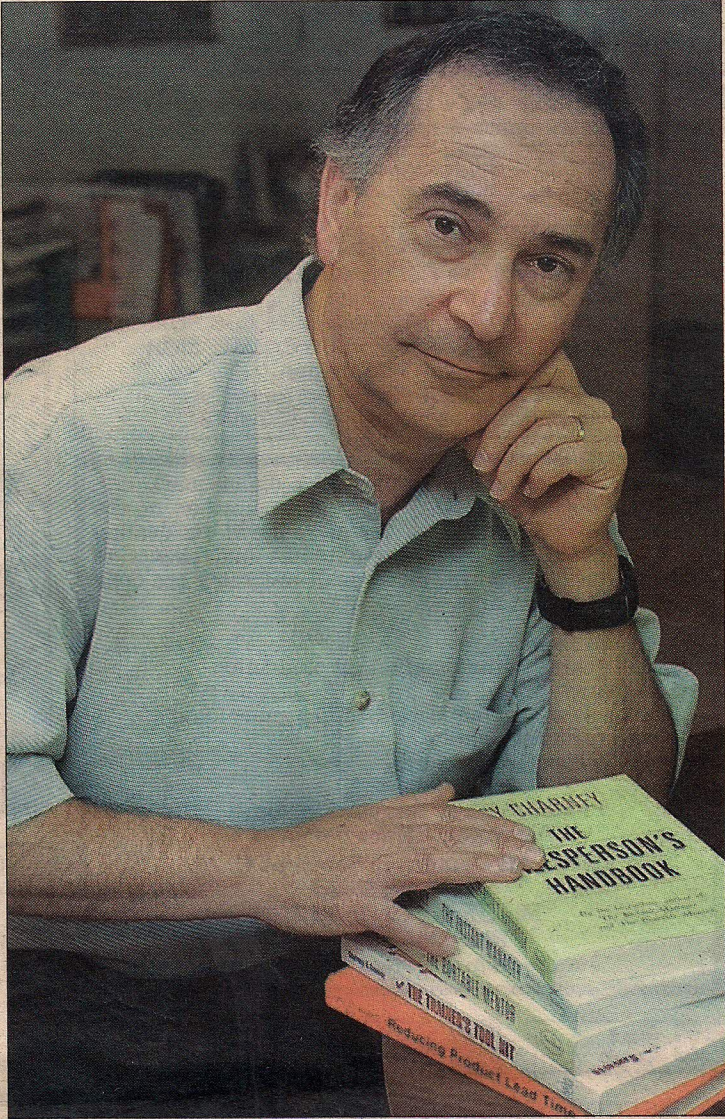
"The pressure is on them to teach each other," Mr. Charney said. "The pressure should be on them, not on me."

Mr. Charney has worked with the RCMP, the City of Toronto, Nortel and York Region.

He admits his training meets with its fair share of skepticism.

"In the U.K., it has found a lot of resistance," he said, adding he's not sure why, but it may be because British society is more conservative.

Mr. Charney said the feedback he gets from companies



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

AUTHOR CY CHARNEY

FACES AND PLACES

where he has applied his system is overwhelmingly positive.

"People speak volumes of what they've achieved," he said. "Everything I do has measurable effects."

Allan Wagner, a land survey assistant with the City of Toronto, found Mr. Charney's system very effective when he took it in 2000.

"I have a fear of public speaking," Mr. Wagner said, adding he got over that fear when he had to give lessons to other employees.

"It gives us all a sense of responsibility. We all learned as we went along."

Mr. Wagner said the program took about 10 months to complete and when Mr. Charney returned the next year, more city employees joined up for the learning sessions. If the program is to work, Mr. Wagner said, employees should be committed to going to each session.

To learn more about Mr. Charney, go to www.askcharney.com