



Mark Sheridan receives his Long Service award from David Blunkett MP

Mark Sheridan – Mentor, HM Revenue & Customs

Back when I was entering the world of employment, we didn't have mentors. Developing individuals, teams, talent didn't have the focus it does today. But I was touched by someone who saw me as an individual with talent. I was given the ability to learn, to express and to challenge myself in ways that I might otherwise not have been able to do. That encouragement was certainly the inspiration for me to move forward in my career and I have been very lucky to meet others along the way who have continued to act in that way towards me.

Now, I am a mentor, and it is that same encouragement, freedom to question and to challenge that I try to give to the students that I work with. For me, it is an opportunity, even a responsibility that has kept me coming back. I'm now in my 11th year, each unique, some more successful than others but all with their own reward. Reward in the development that I have seen - in some it has been almost physical - and the satisfaction of knowing that I have made a difference however small.

I have been fortunate to also be recognised twice as mentor of the year for my universities. As the recipients are recommended by their opposite partner in the relationship, it is a personal expression of the impact you have made. Recipient or not, I would recommend the awards ceremony to anyone who wants to understand why the NMC is as crucial today as it was when it started and the difference that mentors and students can make to each other.

This year was no different. I was mesmerised by Baroness Scotland, was happy to share in the reflected success of those individuals recognised for the efforts and was re-inspired by those who spoke of their experiences over the previous year. In the afternoon the speaker was David Blunkett. With tremendous openness, warmth and great wit

he spoke of the challenges that he has faced and overcome - a second role model of the day.

At that point, the NMC announced a special award for long service. They spoke of dedication, inspiration, gratitude....and then call my name. Talk about surprise! I was honoured to meet the man who had just filled me with the inspiration and received a beautiful engraved plaque.

On the way home I was in a reflective mood. Besides wondering where the time has gone and realising that sadly I really am now that old, I asked myself if I was the person they had described? Why did I keep going back? It made me think back those 25 years to the person who had inspired me and I suddenly felt incredibly proud. Proud to have known them and then humbled to think that others might see in me what I saw in them.

Do I feel like a role model? - No. Sometimes I don't even feel like a grown up! I do however carry a debt of gratitude to those in my life who have and continue to inspire me. If, in working with the NMC I can inspire just one other person, then I know I am on track to repay that debt - and I would recommend to anyone who has either been similarly affected at some stage in their life, or wishes that they had, to come and share the mentoring experience. You can be that person too.