

**FOCUS ON** p. 16  
training and  
development

HR  
Metrics

Legal &  
Compliance  
Issues

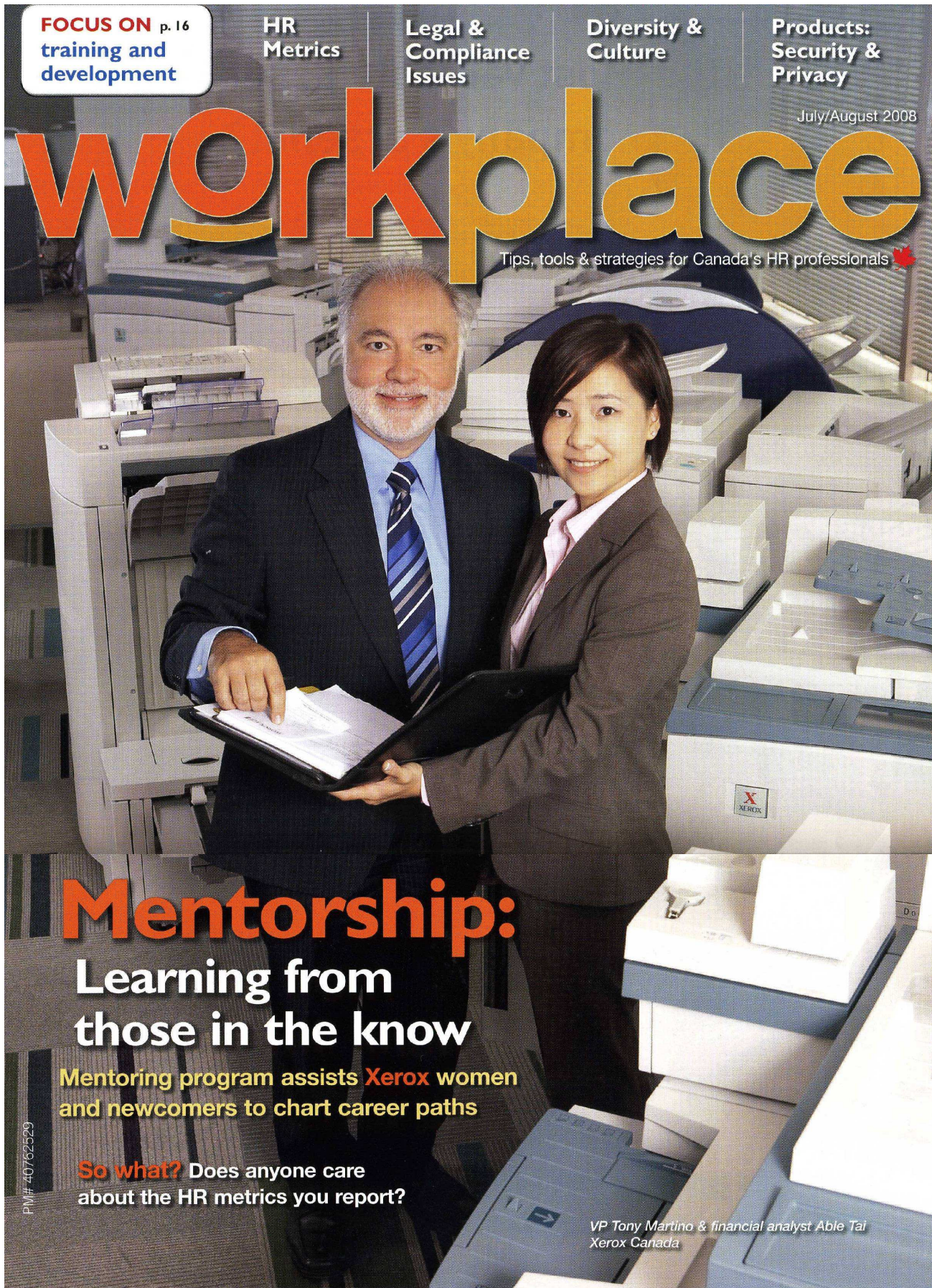
Diversity &  
Culture

Products:  
Security &  
Privacy

July/August 2008

# workplace

Tips, tools & strategies for Canada's HR professionals 



## Mentorship: Learning from those in the know

Mentoring program assists Xerox women  
and newcomers to chart career paths

**So what?** Does anyone care  
about the HR metrics you report?

PH: 40762529

VP Tony Martino & financial analyst Able Tai  
Xerox Canada



focus on: training and development

# Mentorship:

## Learning from those in the know

Mentoring program assists Xerox women and newcomers to chart career paths

By Laurie J. Blake

**A**ble Tai is a personable young woman who knows where she wants to go — and how to go about getting there. Fresh out of university with a degree in biochemistry, it didn't take Tai long to realize that she wasn't suited to working in a lab every day. Turning back to her first love, business, she earned her MBA at Halifax's Dalhousie University and started looking for a technology company to join.

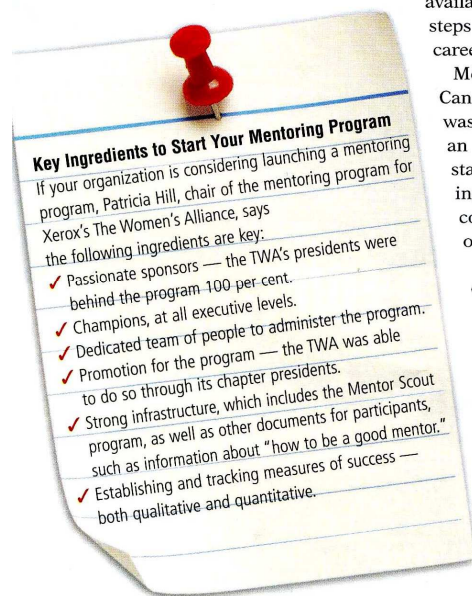
"I took a position at Xerox in inside sales in 2006 and learned Xerox's core business," Tai says. In March 2007, she started her current position as a financial analyst in Halifax, but reporting to a manager in the U.S. When personal reasons compelled her to move to Toronto in late May 2008, her manager saw no reason why she couldn't take her job with her.

One of the reasons Tai says she pursued opportunities at Xerox Canada Ltd. was its strong support network, which includes The Women's Alliance (TWA), an employee caucus group that's been active at the multinational company for more than two decades. And, thanks to The Women's Alliance's recently launched mentoring program, Tai was able to move to Toronto with not only a job but an established contact in senior management.

A few months ago, while still in Halifax, Tai created an online profile of herself through TWA's mentoring program. Along with outlining Tai's qualifications, the profile also included the attributes she was looking for in a mentor to guide her as she learned about Xerox, the types of careers available within the company, and the steps she could take to develop her career path there.

Meanwhile in Toronto, Xerox Canada vice president Tony Martino was filling out his own profile — as an available mentor to those just starting their careers with the printing and document-management company. As it turns out, Martino offered just what Tai needed.

Formerly the vice president of human resources, communications, and corporate affairs, Martino is currently Xerox Canada's vice president of business operations and chief privacy officer. Working primarily from one of Xerox's Toronto offices, Martino has mentored a number of individuals, but mentoring through the TWA program and via long distance were new, and positive, experiences for him.



“I was surprised it worked so well, given the distance between Toronto and Halifax,” Martino says. During the first contact, Tai and Martino set out the mentoring objectives; after that, pretty well all contact was by phone. Even though Tai is now in Toronto, Martino works from a different office location and telephone conversations still satisfy most of their mentoring objectives.

“How do you build a career?” Martino asks. “One way is to create a network of contacts. Mentoring is a great way to expose someone to a company and the people within it. And it gives participants a different perspective than they might otherwise get.”

### **Mentoring matches made easy**

Mentoring is not a new concept for Xerox. In fact, The Women’s Alliance had made attempts to start up a program in the early 2000s. TWA quickly found that the process of manually matching up mentors and mentees too labour-intensive for this volunteer group to get the program off the ground.

Yet, over the years TWA members had repeatedly expressed the need for a formal mentoring program to help them understand how to advance their careers, as well as how to deal with issues such as work/life balance or networking across a global enterprise. While Xerox offers multiple divisional programs for grooming high-potential hires, these tend to be focused on specific divisional areas of operations, such as sales or supply chain.

So, in 2005, a TWA working group was established to develop a more practical strategy. Several TWA members had previously been involved with e-mentoring and suggested that this might be a method of choice at Xerox. In mid-2006, the group investigated different commercial tools and evaluated three different programs.

The group chose Mentor Scout, from Hawaii-based Nobscot Corp. Mentor Scout is a web-based program designed specifically to match up mentors and those wishing to be mentored, in an almost entirely self-service/self-driven fashion.

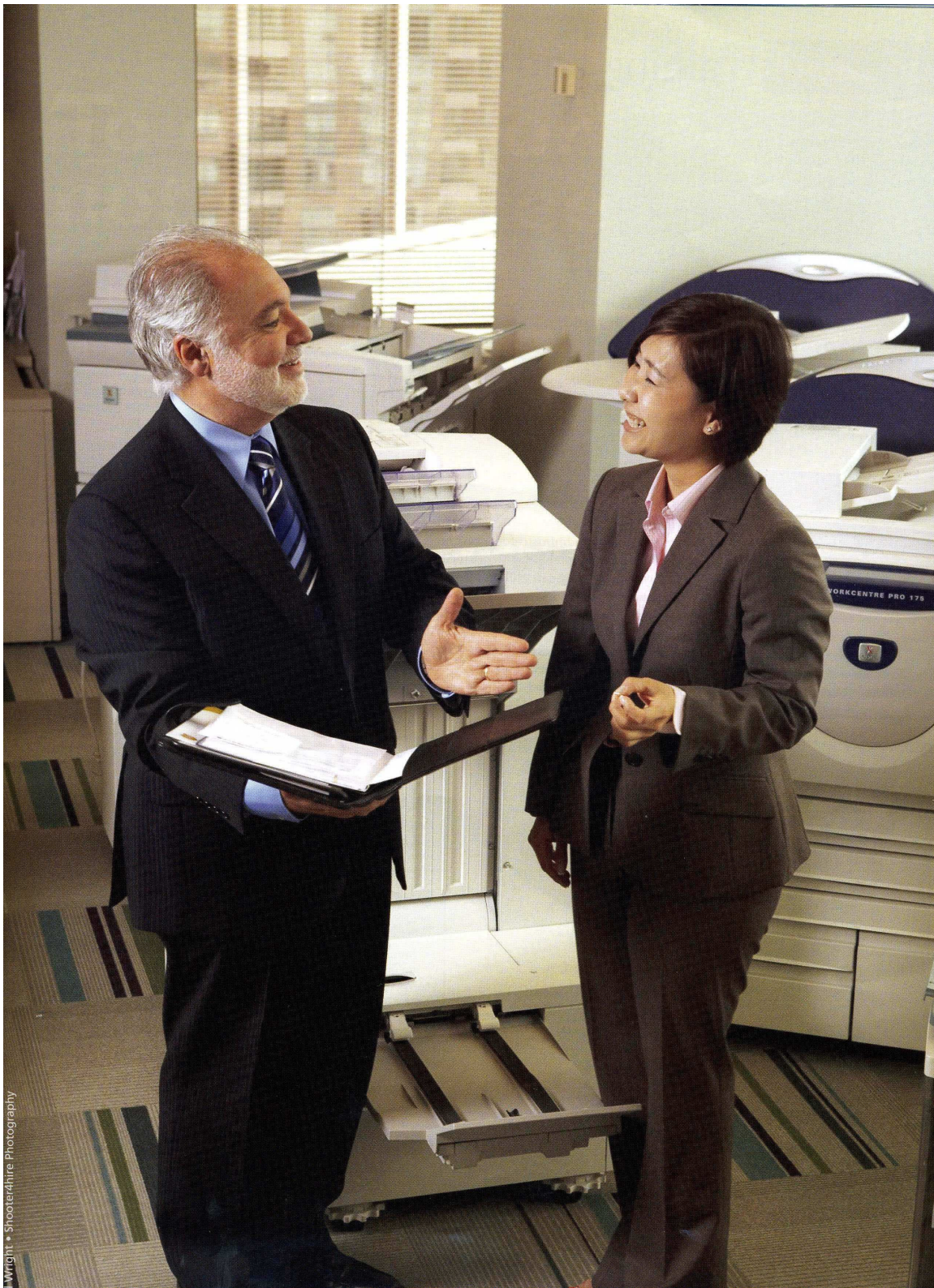
“We chose Mentor Scout because it is so easy to work with and administratively light,” says Patricia Hill, chair of TWA’s mentoring program.

### **Success requires little admin time**

Almost like a social networking platform, both those seeking mentors and those wishing to become mentors fill out online profiles. The product vendor, Nobscot, customized the profiles to the needs of women, as well as to Xerox’s business, adding fields including work/life balance, hardware engineering, software engineering, Lean Six Sigma, and working in the global economy. The software also gives participants a secure space for communication and goal setting.

According to Nobscot president and CEO Beth Carvin, the program can be self-driven not only by the mentoring partners, but by the organizations. For instance, while Xerox prefers a more hands-off approach, some of the program’s users decide to include senior management input on the mentorships for some high-potential employees.





Wright • Shooterhire Photography



## focus on: training and development

### Mentor Scout developed through grassroots HR consultation

Surprisingly, Nobscot's Mentor Scout wasn't originally developed as a product, but as a result of president and CEO Beth Carvin's involvement with the SHRM bulletin board service, HR Talk.

Several years ago, there was chit-chat on the board about members connecting to and/or networking with other members of the board. They discussed posting information on each other's backgrounds and then trying to develop matches. Carvin thought there must software to do the matching, but there wasn't much out there.

Being the president of software company, she brought the problem to Nobscot's chief technology officer, Bruce H. Daly, who basically said, "Tell me what you want and we'll do it."

Working with input from HR Talk members, that's what they did, and Carvin donated the software for the board's use. Within two weeks, there were approximately 150 enthusiastic mentorships lined up.

With this success, Nobscot tied in Mentor Scout with its main product, WebExit. They released Mentor Scout independently in 2003, and companies started finding them. They did no real advertising, finding that sales were made based on word-of-mouth.

While either party can initiate the mentorship, it's generally the potential mentees who conduct a search for a mentor who meets their criteria and then make contact. Both parties then determine if there's a fit. In the TWA/Xerox program, most of those seeking mentorships are women, but mentors come from both genders.

"Sometimes, it's hard to start-off the first contact — the mentor and mentee may not know what to do or say," says Carvin. So, the program has also been developed to help get the mentorship off to a good start by asking the participants to answer 15 questions about such things as the objectives of the mentorship, how to handle personal information, meeting setups, etc.

"This gives them something to talk about," Carvin says. And, while the program offers the ability for secure communication, it also encourages participants to meet face to face, or over the telephone as Tai and Martino have done.

### Metrics

Mentor Scout comes complete with measurement capabilities built right into the program. The mentoring program administrators don't have to do much work in terms of matching up mentoring partners, but if they want to they can pull off all sorts of metrics to determine what's working, and what may not be.

As a quick snapshot, Hill provided the following metrics:

- The program includes 178 participants — 57 mentors, 76 mentees, and an additional 45 who are both.
- Since the program started, there have been 77 mentorships established.

- Thirty-five mentorships have ended, either because the process was complete, or for other reasons.

Hill notes that mentorship cannot just end; the administrator is contacted and participants are sent a survey to complete. So far, the program has a satisfaction rate of approximately 92 per cent. TWA is currently in the process of measuring how long it takes mentors to accept or decline a mentorship — the control is two weeks — as well as whether some mentees are having trouble finding suitable mentors.

Meanwhile, Tai's and Martino's mentoring partnership continues, though the phone calls or meetings have now decreased to once a month or so, as many of Tai's objectives have been met. Tai has been very satisfied with the process, noting that she has learned much about how to manoeuvre around the large company, as she and Martino have explored ideas and opportunities.

"Mentors don't do the work, though," Tai warns. "They ask open-ended questions like, 'Have you thought about...?' and it's up to the mentee to go from there."

TWA's mentoring program went into full operation in June 2007. In January 2008, Xerox's Asians Coming Together caucus group began to pilot the program, with 25 participants. At least three other caucus groups have also expressed an interest, including Xerox's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender group, as well as the Hispanic and black women's leadership caucuses. ●

*For more on Nobscot, visit [www.nobscot.com](http://www.nobscot.com).*

*To learn more about Mentor Scout, visit [www.mentorscout.com](http://www.mentorscout.com).*