

Professional Life: The Importance of Workplace Mentors

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Abstract— Mentoring is a valuable strategy to provide employees with the emotional and instrumental support they need to achieve the goal their life. By providing information, guidance, and encouragement, mentors can play an important role in nurturing mentees' aspirations, helping them prepare for their successful future. Mentorship programs are offered to support employees in confidence building mainly. This paper addresses the salient features needed for mentoring at workplace for employees.

Keywords: Mentoring, Professional Life, Workplace Mentors

I. INTRODUCTION

Most adults can identify a person who had a significant and positive impact on them. Whether it was a teacher, a coach, a boss, a scoutmaster or a parent, chances are always there that someone, somewhere along the line acted as a mentor to them. Today, more and more businesses are embracing the concept of mentoring as a professional development tool. Through mentoring, organizations are seeing dramatic improvements in efficiency, productivity and, of course, the passing of institutional knowledge and leadership skills from one generation to the next.

Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of influence and knowledge sharing. It started with the Ancient Greeks; Mentor was Odysseus' trusted counselor and advisor. Mentoring is when one individual actively and willingly passes his/her knowledge and wisdom onto another person. A mentor is an individual -usually older, but always more experienced- who helps and guides another individual's development. This guidance is done without the expectation of personal or monetary gain on mentor's part. Mentors can be friends, relatives, co-workers, teachers, supervisors, etc. There is no official title.

II. MENTORING VS COACHING

As both mentoring and coaching have become popular tools in the field of employee development, the two are often confused. While both utilize many of the same skills, a mentor implies some specific organizational or industry knowledge that helps or guides the follower's career. Coaching, on the other hand, is more about bringing an objective process to help someone articulate and achieve his goals.

In general, to be a coach, one does not need particular organizational or industry expertise and, in fact, most coaching is more about personal perspective and personal impact than specialized knowledge. Coaches are process experts. Mentors are task experts. Coaching is about skill development. Mentoring is about skill development and specialized knowledge transfer.

III. WHY MENTORING IS IMPORTANT?

Mentoring is a tool that organizations can use to nurture their people, and it's gaining in popularity. As organizations strive to retain hard earned experience and wisdom, they are turning to mentoring programs as a form of interpersonal knowledge management. Followers observe, question and explore, while mentors demonstrate, explain and model.

While coaching can definitely help individuals become better leaders and managers, it doesn't really tap into the collective wisdom of people who have succeeded inside specific organizations or industries. Mentoring, on the other hand, can help employees navigate organizational culture, solve problems and advance their careers. Mentoring is a great way to make sure the talent pipeline is filled with people ready to manage and lead. Additionally, organizations are using mentoring as a way to retain and recruit talent. As new generation hits the workforce in huge numbers, mentoring has become a key tool for both recruiting and retention.

IV. WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

A good mentor needs to be more than just a successful individual. A good mentor must also have the disposition and desire to develop other people. Being a good mentor requires more than just experience. It requires a willingness to reflect and share on one's own experiences, including one's failures. Great mentors are often those who are constantly trying to learn themselves. Essential qualities for an effective mentor include:

- A desire to develop and help others. A good mentor is sincerely interested in helping someone else without any "official" reward. Good mentors do it because they genuinely want to see some-one else succeed.
- Commitment, time and energy to devote to the mentoring relationship.
- Current and relevant knowledge, expertise, and/or skills.
- A willingness to share failures and personal experiences. Mentors need to share both their "how to do it right" and their "how I did it wrong" stories. Both experiences provide valuable opportunities for learning.
- A learning attitude. The best teachers have always been and always will be those who remain curious about learning. Because a mentor is more like a teacher than a coach, this becomes an important characteristic in a mentor.
- A skill in developing others. This includes the very real skills of listening, asking powerful questions and being able to tell stories, which includes personal anecdotes, case examples and honest insight.

V. WHAT MAKES A GOOD FOLLOWER?

Just as there are specific characteristics of a successful mentor, there are attributes that make a good follower. And

this is important, because follower's must remember that mentors are doing this from the goodness of their heart, so being a good follower is the best way to ensure the relationship enjoys a healthy purposeful existence.

Follower's need to be:

- Committed to expanding their capabilities and focused on achieving professional results.
- Willing to ask for help.
- Open and receptive to learning and trying new ideas.
- Able to accept feedback—even constructive criticism—and act upon it.
- Willing to experiment and apply what they learn back on the job.
- Able to communicate and work cooperatively with others.
- Be personally responsible and accountable.
- Ready, willing and able to meet on a regular basis.

VI. HOW TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS?

Mentoring is a joint venture. Successful mentoring requires that both parties share responsibility for learning and sustaining the relationship. Successful mentoring begins with initiating the relationship, and then, to steal a coaching term, "designing the alliance." This means all parties need to be clear about what this relationship is going to look like and how it will be managed. Mentor and adherent should discuss things like, contact and response times, meetings, confidentiality, focus, feedback, goals and accountability.

VII. CONCLUSION

There are lots of ways to find a mentor. Check with your organization first; they may have a program or a structure in mind. The best place to look for a mentor, however, is right in front of you. Look around your workplace. Who do you admire and respect? Who has always impressed you with his/her insight and perceptiveness? And finally, who do you feel drawn to?

Consider your boss or your boss's boss. Consider executives in other divisions. Consider older individuals who may not be top executives but who have tons of experience. Approach that individual and ask if they would consider being your mentor. Let them know why you selected them and what you hope to learn from them.

It is really significant to bring into line our goals with their expertise and experience. Be prepared to talk about what the relationship might look like and how much time might be involved. There is a big difference between meeting someone for lunch on a quarterly basis versus a weekly phone call. Be clear what you want out of the mentoring process and structure your relationship accordingly.

The success of any mentoring programme today largely depends on understanding the attributes, of a mentor and mentee. Understanding the relevance of mentoring programme at workplace have long way to go. No one today talk about meeting global competencies without creating globally competitive workforce. In this regard implementation of mentoring programme becomes a key for success in future in all sections of society.

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