

Mentoring: Best Practice for Leadership Development

If you are considering implementing a mentor program, here are some frequently asked questions:

How does mentoring impact leadership development?

Experienced leaders provide their insights and experience to inexperienced future leaders to help them be successful now and in the future. Mentoring builds on the success of current leaders provides a solid foundation to build relationships and a culture that values coaching and feedback.

Leadership Training puts the ownership and responsibility on the individual for personal growth and development, however, mentoring creates a culture that identifies good leaders and involves senior leadership in developing others.

What is the impact of mentoring on the organization?

In the early eighties, mentoring was very successful in many organizations like Uniroyal Tire. Due to increased competition and a recent downsizing of the business, the leaders realized a new leadership model was needed. Many of the senior leaders aged and retired, the succession pool was limited. Their main concern was where to find talented managers with experience in their industry who were ready for succession. Many current managers had worked in manufacturing since high school, and had the business knowledge but lacked a college degree. Another issue they faced was a new succession group comprised of college educated blacks and women being hired for entry level management positions (aka: affirmative action requirements of the 80's). As a result, the typically white male senior group was faced with a difficult dilemma - How to train a diverse group of high potentials for succession readiness. Mentoring was the answer. This required leaders to introduce a culture change to embrace mentoring and be committed to mentorship. Thus, a House in Order Policy was drafted that required all leaders to be accountable for coaching and mentoring lower level managers. All senior level managers were required to become mentors. You could be assigned a mentor for succession planning purposes or be requested to become a mentor. You had the right of refusal but had to give a business related reason with an apology to the individual and his boss.

The mentoring program was very successful and provided results in several areas: Build a culture of high level trust and commitment, provide new managers an opportunity to quickly learn their responsibilities, and business practices and norms, develop a culture where coaching, support and feedback is valued and accepted, satisfy high performers need for personal growth, retention pool, identify leadership development needs and provide coaching for improvement.

What are some of the unique ways that the mentoring benefits organizations?

Mentoring can benefit organization by providing a solutions for developing high potentials, identifying developmental needs, coaching for improved performance or developing new competencies; supporting diversity, new hires, teams, performance management, and career development.

Why is mentoring the latest "buzz"?

Mentoring is regaining popularity due to the decrease in spending in professional development training, interest in e-learning which has yet to replace face to face communication and relationship building. And the need to develop leaders cost effectively with results. If you have top leadership talent, why not leverage their talent and pass it on to those new leaders stepping into the role.

A new way to manage leadership development is through on-line Software which is critical to success of any Mentoring Program. Mentoring can be time consuming to administer, however with on-line software and learning portals, implementing large scale mentoring programs can be very effective. Corporate Mentoring Solutions, Inc. offers an on-line program that can provide web based tools for a large scale mentoring program with up to 10,000 participants. They offer a state of the art program with on-line assessment tools to match mentors and proteges, training materials, developmental plans, feedback reporting, measurement and evaluation.

When is mentoring not advised?

Mentoring should not be considered if top management is not willing to support it or model effectively leadership behaviors. If your top level management lacks the interpersonal skills to mentor others, the program will be a disaster.

Organizational culture readiness - You need to communicate how Mentoring will help, what the roles are and what the benefits are. You will need to prepare participants to provide effective coaching and accept feedback. Also, individual development plans must be supported and tracked. Development results should tie to performance and reward systems. Measureable outcomes must be identified to determine how a mentoring program will achieve results. These outcomes must be tracked and measured.

How do you know a good mentor?

A good mentor is a good role model and coach. Someone others look up to and respect. A good mentor is a high performer who not only talks the talk but walks the walk. Someone who is willing to share, be open honest and enjoys helping others grow and develop. Someone who is willing to spend the time to provide support, guidance, direction and collaboration needed to help others achieve success.

What type of organizations implement mentoring programs?

Many top organizations from a variety of industries have bought into mentoring programs in the last five years. For many organizations, this is not a new concept, maybe one that has been gone unnoticed as a way to grow your own. Speaking of ROI, why not maximize your investment in top management talent and leverage it to the rest of the organization. Measure that!

Nancy Rehbine Zentis, Ph.D.

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Providing clients with Leadership Development and Team Development Programs for over 25 years. Our client list represents major global corporations and non-profits organizations. Our programs impact performance results and ROI on five levels – organizational culture, business results, leadership, team and individual performance. For more information, contact Nancy RehbineZentis@hrtalentpro.com