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Blue Papers



# Mentoring for Success

# Mentoring for Success:

## Benefits of Mentors in the Workplace

Whilst mentoring is probably most widely associated with a large company providing mentors internally to support and guide less experience staff members, it can also be initiated by an individual who acknowledges the need for personal or professional support in order to develop their career. There is a third strand though: mentoring for business owners and leader and this area is very much in the news at the moment with the launch in July of a business mentoring scheme set up by the UK's five largest high street banks and backed by the Business and Enterprise Minister Mark Prisk.<sup>1</sup>

The scheme , which is aimed at start ups, established companies or those looking for a sounding board, will offer support on a range of issues faced by businesses, from finance to marketing and HR.

This Blue Paper looks at all three areas, with general advice and discussion about the mentoring process as well as specific advice for companies wishing to establish a mentoring scheme within their organisation.

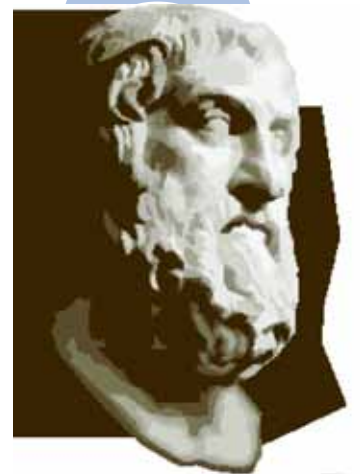
### The Odyssey

The word *mentor* derives from Homer's epic poem "*The Odyssey*." Odysseus left Ithaca to fight in the Trojan War and asked his good friend Mentor to watch over and guide his son Telemachus. Mentor was a wise person who served as both teacher and guardian to Telemachus during his father's long absence.

Today's mentors look similar. They can take several forms, becoming friends, role models and advocates for one or more less experienced employees.

While some mentors serve a structured role as a formal advisor complete with written mentoring agreements and career planning, others simply act as a sounding board, helping the mentee explore ideas and get clarity in new situations.

In fact, 71% of Fortune 500 companies rely on mentoring for employee development.<sup>2</sup> Organisations such a General Mills™, Microsoft®, and Procter & Gamble™ have found that mentoring programmes lead to greater employee engagement, improved retention, and greater productivity.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.betterbusinessfinance.co.uk/news/entry/mentoring-scheme-launches-for-british-businesses>

<sup>2</sup> *Workplace Loyalties Change, but the Value of Mentoring Doesn't.* (May 16, 2007) Knowledge@Wharton. Accessed April 1, 2008.

## Mentoring vs. Coaching

Years ago, when employees tended to stay in one job for most of their career, they could be sufficiently guided by internal managers and supervisors. Today, as people adopt not only multiple jobs but multiple careers during their lifetime, effective mentors must take on a bigger-picture role, independent of company loyalties.

Some scholars describe this as the difference between mentoring and coaching. Mentoring is relational while coaching is functional. Technically speaking, a mentor may coach, but a coach does not mentor.



Here's what we mean.

- Mentors guide out of a mutual consent between mentor and mentee. Managers coach their staff because it is required.
- A mentor provides both professional and personal support. A coach focuses on developing individuals within their current role.
- In a formal programme, mentoring relationships have a set period of time (usually nine months to a year). The mentor-mentee partnership can continue informally after the period of time is over. In contrast, coaching relationships are finite and specific; they end when the individual has resolved a particular issue.

In-house mentoring programmes can still be effective—especially when the opportunities for internal advancement are great. Such mentors, however, should be open to developing young talent, even when the mentee expresses a desire to move beyond company parameters.

## Benefits of Mentoring

Many studies have demonstrated the benefits of mentoring. As reported by the Wharton School at University of Pennsylvania, employees who are mentored “earn more money, are better socialised into the Organisation and are more productive... They experience less stress and get promoted more rapidly.”<sup>3</sup>

But the employee is certainly not the only one to gain. Both the employer and the mentor also realise benefits. Consider the upcoming upheaval in the workplace as millions of workers retire taking a wealth of experience with them.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

In America the largest 500 companies are expected to lose half of their senior managers in the next five - ten years.<sup>4</sup>

As these workers retire, decades of experience and skill development go with them.

One proactive way to retain this experience is by transferring it to younger generations. Mentoring speeds up the learning process as mentors provide real time short cuts and best practices that can't be readily learned from a book or lecture.

Turnover is another challenge in today's workplaces, as younger generations are much more apt to hop from job to job. Studies have found that continuing education programmes, including mentoring, are among the top reasons younger employees will stay with an employer.



For example, according to the 1999 Emerging Workforce Study, 35% of employees who do not receive regular mentoring will look for another job within 12 months.<sup>5</sup> A five-year study by Sun Microsystems found, among other benefits, that retention rates were higher for both mentees (72%) and mentors (69%) than for employees who did not participate in the mentoring programme (49%).<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, a March 2008 article in *Training + Development* indicated that mentoring and coaching programmes are among the top 10 ways companies are trying to retain their talent.<sup>7</sup>

In their book *The Manager as Mentor*, Marquardt and Loan cite several ways that Organisations benefit from mentoring<sup>8</sup>:

- Increased access to an Organisation's expertise
- Increased efficiency and productivity
- Improved communication
- Succession planning
- Greater training with less cost
- Retention and development of minority workers

A successful mentoring programme builds capacity across all levels of the Organisation. Mentors often find the experience energising, as they expand their own horizons and review their skills. Mentees develop stronger ties to the Organisation, realise enhanced

<sup>4</sup> Ryan, Rebecca (2007). *Live First, Work Second*. p.26-27. Madison, Wisconsin: Next Generation Consulting.

<sup>5</sup> Marquardt, Michael & Peter Loan (2006). *The Manager as Mentor*. p.20. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.

<sup>6</sup> *Workplace Loyalties Change, but the Value of Mentoring Doesn't*. (May 16, 2007) Knowledge@Wharton. Accessed April 1, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> ASTD.org. Newsletter. (March 2008). Accessed March 27, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.22-23.

self-esteem, and find valuable satisfaction in being more effective in their roles.

## In-House Mentoring Programmes

Mentoring provides opportunities for both professional and personal growth. Mentoring programmes focus on more than just improving professional practices, they also encourage reflection of the mentee's skills, knowledge and professional values.

As such, in-house mentoring programmes create a healthy work environment where communication is encouraged and diverse perspectives are valued. Employee turnover decreases and productivity increases. New leaders emerge and previously unrecognised skills are developed.

## Get Started

Here are nine basic steps to get you started on your own company mentoring programme:

### 1. Examine your motivations.

This will determine the type of programme you create. Are you looking to build skills and retain younger workers? Or, will your programme be about developing leadership potential in key managers?

### 2. Talk to your team.

Find out who is interested in mentoring and what they'd want from the relationship.

### 3. Set parameters.

Participants need to know their obligations. Provide minimum expectations (e.g. monthly meetings, weekly communication), and identify how long the initial programme will last.

### 4. Get mentor training.

Effective mentors help their mentees identify personal goals, creating intrinsic motivations for change. Provide your mentor team with resources and education to help them to be effective.

### 5. Start small.

Begin a pilot programme with a small section of the workforce. Look for individuals who are not only interested in personal growth but who will help grow the programme



with candid feedback and suggestions.

## 6. Reward

Recognise participant involvement with thank you gifts such as a paperweight, golf umbrella, or Parker pen. A small gift reflects appreciation for their time commitment and their willingness to grow.

## 7. Evaluate

Find out how the programme is going. Spend some time informally talking to participants. Send out surveys so people can share confidentially as well.

## 8. Adjust and Expand

Update your programme as appropriate and begin expanding to more employees. Consider using the company intranet to post profiles of potential mentors and mentees and allowing people to self-select their matches. Continue to reward participation and evaluate.

## 9. Resource

Consider creating a company library filled with relevant books and audio books so that mentors and mentees can read and discuss together. Set aside some money from the training budget for mentor-recommended learning opportunities.

Start small and aim for incremental successes. Once a few people have a good experience, other employees will want to benefit from a mentoring experience.



## Personal Mentoring Relationships

If you are personally considering finding a mentor, you probably have a vague understanding of the benefits that come from having a seasoned person to guide you. But do you understand just how much mentoring can do for you?

According to Johnson and Ridley<sup>9</sup>, research consistently shows mentoring results in faster promotions, higher salaries, career mobility, greater professional competence, increased career satisfaction, greater acceptance within an Organisation, and—perhaps best of all—decreased stress.

Identify what you'd like to get out of a mentoring relationship. Are you looking for targeted career growth or personal insight? Do

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, W. Brad & Charles R. Ridley (2004). *The Elements of Mentoring*, p.xv. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

you want the regimented routine of monthly meetings, or are you simply looking for an occasional sounding board?

Consider carefully before choosing anyone in a direct supervisory role, as you might encounter conflicts of interest between your career goals and the company's.

## Finding a Mentor

Ideally, you'd find your mentor naturally, identifying a seasoned professional you 'click' with through shared professional or personal activities. But, if you don't know anyone who stands out or has the experience you're looking for, you'll need to get proactive about your search.

- **Referrals**  
Enlist help. Ask friends, managers, parents, and neighbours to recommend people who might have the experience you're looking for.
- **Industry Leaders**  
Read trade journals and investigate professional associations. Don't be limited by geography. Initiate a phone or email correspondence with potential mentors from outside your region.
- **Chamber of Commerce and your University Alumni**  
Sometimes these Organisations will already have formal mentoring programmes in place. If not, contact the alumni office or business recruitment centre to get their recommendations. Review member directories and committee members to identify potential mentors.
- **Service Groups**  
Charities and nonprofit boards are filled with engaged, active leaders. Review board rosters and then volunteer to sit on a board subcommittee that would allow you to interact with these mentor prospects.
- **MentorSME<sup>10</sup>**  
This free site offers Britain's first online gateway for small and medium-sized enterprises looking for mentoring services. Visitors can access a list of quality-assured business mentoring organisations across Britain and an easy-to-use search engine allows them to refine their search according to the life stage of their business and their location in Britain.



<sup>10</sup> [www.mentorsme.co.uk](http://www.mentorsme.co.uk)

Once you've identified someone who might make a good mentor, initiate a relationship. For the cautious, this can be as simple as sending an email to introduce yourself and/or ask a relevant question. For the bold, tell your potential mentor you'd like to learn more about them and their career success, and ask them out to lunch.

After a few meetings or phone conversations, you may know the person well enough to request a formal mentoring arrangement. Move on if the fit isn't quite right.

Be aware that your target mentor may not be interested in building new relationships. He or she may decline your invitation due to time limitations or lack of confidence in his/her own coaching skills. Don't take it personally. After all, the best mentoring relationships provide benefit for both the mentor and the mentee. Before you let your would-be mentor go, however, ask for recommendations for other potential advisors.



## Making the Most of your Match

Mentoring relationships require attention and care—no matter which role you are in. Devote some time to self study and determine how you give your best effort to the partnership.

## How to Be a Good Mentor

An ideal mentoring relationship is not a one-way-street but a joint learning opportunity for both parties. As a mentor, you will develop your own leadership skills and have the satisfaction of helping someone advance his or her career. However, you will also be exposed to new ideas. Allow and encourage your mentee to challenge you, and you may come away with equal benefits from the relationship.

- Give your mentee time and attention. Keep scheduled appointments and turn off your mobile phone.
- Open doors. Introduce your mentee to colleagues and connections. Sponsor their participation in exclusive industry Organisations. Leverage your network and your personal recommendations to help them achieve key milestones such as a position on a non-profit board, a speaking engagement, or an interview.



- Listen.
- Challenge your mentee to identify internal motivations for growth. Your mentee will succeed not because you said she should do something, but because she wanted to do it.
- Provide constant affirmation. Johnson and Ridley describe two types of affirmation—one that acknowledges inherent personal worth and another that recognises professional achievement.<sup>11</sup> Show confidence in your mentee. Praise both their achievements and their efforts. Validate your mentee as a person of value, worthy of success.
- Commit to honesty. Encourage your mentee’s lofty aspirations, but be honest if this person lacks the necessary training or is somehow impeding his or her own goals.



While an old adage suggests imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, being asked to be someone’s mentor is a far greater honour. When someone chooses you as a mentor, they’re looking to do more than copy you. They want to learn and develop their own personal identity—with your guidance.

## How to be a Great Mentee

Being a good mentee is equally as important as finding a good mentor. Be considerate of your mentor’s time by preparing for your meetings and following up on any agreed tasks. Look for opportunities to make the meetings convenient and comfortable for your mentor:

- Have a written agreement indicating the responsibilities and commitments of both parties. Begin with a statement of your goals. The mentor, for example, may commit to providing leadership, skills analysis, identifying networking needs, and accessibility. The mentee commits to following this guidance to the best of his/her ability.
- Allow at least a six month timeframe. This gives both parties adequate time to achieve effective communication.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, W. Brad & Charles R. Ridley (2004). *The Elements of Mentoring*, p.xv. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. P.10.

- Meet at least once a month.
- Have a set agenda for each meeting. Mentees should advise mentors as to what they would like to discuss/what challenges they are facing.
- Try teleconferencing. The partnership doesn't have to meet face to face.
- Meet in a location that suits the mentor. Find favourite locations (coffee shops, library).
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Be creative and find ways to assist your mentor without being asked. Send relevant news clippings, refer new business, nominate him/her for an award, or treat their staff to a box of chocolates.



Mentoring relationships come with plenty of perks: industry insight, new connections, and valuable relationships. Show appreciation by dedicating yourself to professional improvement.

In the end, mentoring is a win-win situation for everyone involved. For mentors and mentees, the relationship stretches personal development, expanding both perspectives and aptitudes. For companies, these relationships result in higher skilled employees with greater ties to the organisation.

Whether you are just embarking on your career or you are a seasoned professional with lessons to share, consider making mentoring a part of your own professional Odyssey.

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