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HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL ***MENTORING PROGRAM***

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MBA@UNC



A Framework for a Successful Mentoring Program



It is often said that the most important work of a manager is the development of his or her employees. In addition to managing and motivating people, it is equally important to provide the resources and guidance people need to learn, grow and become more effective at their jobs.

Implementing a mentorship program in the workplace can be a powerful way to offer leadership guidance and the resources your employees need while simultaneously enabling your organization to meet defined operational goals. Whether your objective is to “retain employees in sales,” to “create more inclusive work environments” or to “promote more people from within the company,” mentoring programs can benefit all parties involved. Moreover, mentoring programs utilize important resources your company already has—your employees—to create a positive impact.

In a recent white paper, Horace McCormick, who is the program director of Executive Development at the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School, creates a case for mentoring and provides a framework for launching a successful mentoring program. This resource guide provides an in-depth summary of the white paper with clear, actionable steps HR and talent management professionals can use to launch effective and sustainable mentoring programs.

Mentoring Programs Are on the Rise

When preparing to launch the program, communication is key.

According to a Corporate Executive Board survey, **25 percent of U.S. companies now host peer-mentoring programs**—compared to before the 2007 recession, when only 4 to 5 percent of companies reported such programs.

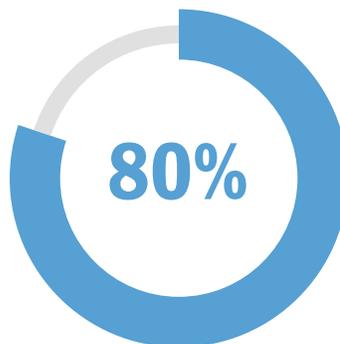
Mentoring enhances employee satisfaction, retention and recruitment in an organization. It can also be used to:

- Promote and increase diversity in the workplace
- Help new hires acclimate to their new roles quickly and more confidently
- Assist companies in identifying and grooming high-potential employees

Perhaps the biggest reason that mentoring is being embraced by more organizations is that the largest population in the workforce—the millennial generation—craves it. In fact, by 2020, **46 percent of all U.S. workers will be millennials.**



TWO-THIRDS
of responding millennial
workers want a mentor.



want regular feedback
from their boss.



feel it is important to
constantly learn at their job.

Types of Mentoring Programs

There are several types of mentoring programs, which include:



One-on-One Mentoring

is the most common. In this approach, the mentor may act as a sounding board, role model and source of support for the mentee.



E-Mentoring

allows a mentee to benefit from a mentor regardless of their physical location. The pair may communicate through social media, e-mail or video chat.



Reverse Mentoring

encourages communication between generations and allows a younger mentor to share knowledge with an older mentee. The younger mentee may explain a new, cutting-edge technology, for example.



Group Mentoring

allows one mentor to provide advice to multiple mentees.



Peer Mentoring Groups

can offer a supportive forum for individuals to discuss common issues and learn from one another.

An organization may choose to use any combination of these approaches.

Regardless of which type is selected, the overall approach must align with defined operational goals and have a clear strategic purpose.

A Framework for a Successful Mentoring Program

Despite the rising popularity of mentoring programs in the workplace, developing and maintaining a successful mentorship program can be challenging. Below are a series of steps to avoid common pitfalls and launch a successful, enduring mentoring program:



1

Lay the groundwork

2

Prepare for the launch

3

*Launch the program
and train participants*

4

*Build relationships and
assess progress*

5

*Evaluate program
effectiveness*

Step 1: Lay the Groundwork

Laying the groundwork is a time-consuming but critical step that can be broken into two basic stages:



STAGE 1

Recognize the need and set program objectives.

Whether the underlying purpose is onboarding, leadership development, more effective succession planning or technical training, a successful mentoring program should address a specific organizational need or skills gap. Identify what you want your program to target. Once that has been defined, objectives can be set.

HR and talent management professionals should be as specific as possible when articulating program objectives. Use SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goal formatting and link these SMART goals to the company's defined business objectives.

Organizations should form a governing committee that is comprised of a range of stakeholders that include HR and talent management professionals as well as senior leaders and representatives from different departments or business locations. This committee can provide initial input about the program in its early development stages, but in the long term, the committee should serve to help identify mentors who meet the necessary criteria. Committee members should serve on a 12-month rotation to prevent stagnation and allow for new viewpoints.



STAGE 2

Determine the program's structure.

The structure of a mentoring program should be dictated by three factors:

- An organization's culture
- The metrics that flow from the program's identified objectives
- The people needed to achieve those objectives

As part of this process, it is important to define how long the program should last—usually a maximum of 12 months. Establishing the duration of the mentoring experience helps participants stay focused and goal-driven.

Metrics should also be identified during this stage. For example, if a goal of the mentoring program is to increase the promotion rate of high-potential employees, a metric should be proposed to determine if that goal was achieved. In order to evaluate this metric, a control group of non-participating employees should be compared to employees who participated in the mentoring program.

Once the goals and objectives are identified and the structure and scope are defined, you are ready to plan the program launch.

Step 2: Prepare for the Launch

When preparing to launch the program, communication is key.

Communication is important in order to obtain initial and ongoing buy-in and support—not only from upper management, but also the company at large. The program’s progress and metrics for success should be reported at every step, from the needs assessment stage to the conclusion. In addition to enlisting people’s support, ongoing communication will also help identify interested mentors and mentees.

The program should be introduced to employees at all levels. Every member of the organization should understand the mentoring program’s goals and objectives. All employees should know whom the program targets, which employees are eligible and how someone can sign up to participate. It is important to be transparent about why a specific section of the workforce population was selected for mentoring. This communication helps enlist people’s support of the initiative, even when they are not part of the targeted group.

The program should be introduced to employees at all levels.



This stage is also an opportunity to develop a process to match mentors and mentees. It can be a formal or informal process.

For example:

- Include a questionnaire, an interview and a committee recommendation for each mentee.
- Have mentors and mentees fill out an information sheet about what they hope to offer to or obtain from a mentoring relationship.
- Offer the mentor or mentee several options for a partner and allow them to choose one.

Regardless of which approach you use, build in some level of participant choice in the selection.

From trust and communication to process and feedback, a number of other ingredients should be considered to help facilitate a successful mentoring relationship:

1

PURPOSE

Both participants must take the relationship seriously. The relationship should be a high priority and have clear, mutual goals.

2

COMMUNICATION

Both participants must engage in two-way communication. They should meet regularly (monthly for one to two hours) using whatever method works best—in person, by phone, via e-mail or Skype, etc.

3

TRUST

Both participants must agree to protect confidential information and understand that trust is an integral part of the relationship.

4

PROCESS

Both participants must make an effort to ensure that meetings and other interactions move along at an appropriate speed.

5

PROGRESS

Both participants must understand the defined goals and actively work to reach them.

6

FEEDBACK

Both participants must provide constructive and honest feedback, as well as listen to and respond to feedback that is given.

It is also important to consider how to deal with situations where a pair just doesn't click. Be sure to build in a way for people to dissolve the relationship and find another match without hurt feelings. One approach might be to set up a "check-in" soon after the relationship begins. If the two participants don't seem to mesh, it might be best to find the mentee a new mentor.

Step 3: Launch the Program and Train Participants

Talent management professionals must provide adequate training and guidance because it's rare to find natural mentors in any organization. The first step in launching a mentoring program is to train all participants. Consider training both mentors and mentees together in pairs, as it helps to build organizational capacity. Combined training provides mentees an opportunity to learn more about their responsibilities and to understand the skills and behaviors of great mentors so that they, too, can one day become great mentors.

Mentors and mentees should be trained in a formal, classroom-style setting under the guidance of a professional trainer who has expertise in mentoring. During training, mentees and mentors should complete the following:



Identify goals and milestones.



Link each goal to broader organizational needs.



Decide how often they will meet and for how long.



Learn how to provide constructive feedback.

Step 4: Build Relationships and Assess Progress



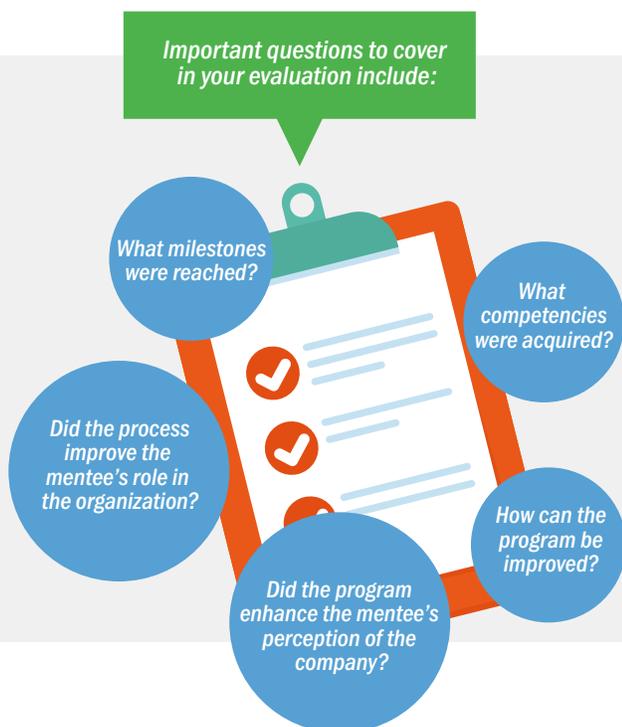
In this step, a bulk of the work—building relationships—falls on that of the mentor and mentee. However, it's also HR's responsibility to ensure that these relationships are on the right track. They should be checking to see that goals and objectives are being met, milestones are being recorded and progress is being made. Establish check-ins at the two, four, six and eight-month marks—and then a final meeting upon completion of the mentorship experience.

Step 5: Evaluate Program Effectiveness

Upon completion of the program (typically 12 months), there will be a number of people within the organization who have a vested interest in the mentoring program's effectiveness:

- Senior leaders will want to know how the program met organizational objectives.
- The governing committee will be interested to hear if participants met their personal objectives.
- HR and talent management will need to learn how the program structure worked and what might need to be tweaked in order to be more effective.

Use a mix of both qualitative measures, such as surveys and interviews, and quantitative measures, which include metrics for measuring the number of mentor/mentee applications received, applicants who began a mentorship program, successful matches, mentees retained in the organization and mentees who advanced in their positions.



By analyzing these different metrics, the success of the program can be adequately assessed. For example, if a key organizational objective is to improve time-to-proficiency for new hires, it should be identified in the preparation phase and specified through a SMART goal. At the end of a mentoring relationship involving a new hire, the time-to-proficiency should be measured and compared to the time-to-proficiency for new hires who did not join the mentoring program.

Mentoring Matters

In order to succeed, mentoring programs require planning, structure, organizational buy-in and follow-through.

Done right, a mentoring program can be a valuable and strategic tool that can benefit the needs and objectives of any organization.



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