



How Mentors Drive Employee Performance

The idea of a mentor, or a guide helping someone achieve a goal, first appeared in the 8th century in Homer’s book “The Odyssey.” Setting aside your flashbacks to high school English class, mentors actually play a crucial role in the business world. Check out the below to learn more about modern mentors and how they can give your bottom line a boost!

What is a mentor?



A mentor is anyone who can foster insight, identify needed knowledge, and expand growth opportunities¹ for a professional. Mentors can help young professionals further define their career path, or help an experienced worker achieve a new goal, such as a promotion or career change. According to Fran Hauser of Time Inc., mentorships “can be as simple as suggesting people to follow on Twitter to stay ahead of digital trends, or... walking someone step-by-step through negotiating an offer. What is most important is [to be] accessible and honest...”² Mentors can boost employee performance by offering guidance on how to attain a goal, execute tasks more efficiently, and increase mental focus and clarity.

Where do they come from?



Anyone can be a mentor, as long as the knowledge and skills they offer are relevant to their protégé, which usually will be a more junior employee. They should have personal experience in what they offer. The best mentors have tasted success more often than failure, but there is tremendous value from showing someone how they can bounce back from disappointment. Mentors can be found online, through business or social networks, and even through your own employees’ circle of influence. A protégé’s goals should inform their (or their company’s) search for a mentor. Only 25% of companies have peer mentoring programs, though one is Microsoft, which used their in-house mentoring program as a recruiting tool to hire 300 senior managers. Upon being hired, they’d be paired up with veterans of similar experience levels. The program worked so well that they now have more mentor requests than available mentors.³

¹ <http://www.ache.org/newclub/CAREER/MentorArticles/Benefits.cfm>. March/April, 2001.

² <http://mashable.com/2013/04/28/mentor-career/#RNhz0KN.4iqz>. April 28, 2013.

³ <http://fortune.com/2012/04/19/when-leaders-are-scarce-employees-look-to-peers/>. April 19, 2012.



Why should my organization leverage them?

Mentorship benefits company performance at every possible turn, and the writing is on the wall: 75% of private sector executives said that mentoring had been critical in helping them reach their current position.⁴ Mentorship is often called coaching, and companies who offer formal growth or development programs see a 48% increase in organizational strength, a 22% increase in bottom line profitability and 53% increase in productivity.⁵ How successful are corporate mentoring programs? In a successful case study, Sodexo found that for every \$1 they spent on corporate mentoring programs, they saw a \$2.28 return in retention and productivity.⁶



How you can start a mentoring initiative:

Organizations can easily implement mentorship programs, regardless of their current talent management tools. Prior to starting, owners of a mentorship program should get executive support, which will also encourage company-wide participation, and create a business plan that describes the different components, costs, outcomes, and business benefits.⁷ From there, Step 1 is to have a system in place to help stakeholders identify employees' goals and challenges. Something as simple (and free!) as ongoing meetings between workers and managers can identify their long-term needs. Already have a performance management tool in place? Information culled from employee profiles can shed light on their career objectives.

Step 2 is to pair team members with colleagues who can offer critical insight based on a protégé's goals. For example, does Joe in Sales really want to be in Marketing? Pair him with someone who has made a similar career switch and can provide relevant advice. Does Sally in Customer Service need a helping hand to become a high performer? Match her with a colleague who once struggled but got a boost to become a success story. Mentoring can have a profound impact on performance and engagement, but you first must identify your employees' aspirations.

Mentorships are focused on an experienced professional offering advice, insight, and hard-earned knowledge to another employee. Anyone can be a mentor, but it helps protégés the most when they receive counsel from someone who has experience that is relevant to their goals and challenges. Mentor/coaching programs lead to dramatic increases in productivity, profitability, and business potency.

⁴ <http://commongoodcareers.org/articles/detail/finding-a-guide-the-value-of-having-a-professional-mentor>. Date N/A.

⁵ <http://www.performancecoachinginternational.com/resources/roi.php>. 2012.

⁶ <http://www.diversityinc.com/mentoring/case-study-sodexo-mentoring-program/> Aug. 4, 2012

⁷ <http://www.bu.edu/questrom/files/2013/07/Forrester-Research-Report-Drive-Employee-Talent-Development-Through-Business-Mentoring-Programs.pdf>. Aug. 6, 2010

Mentorship is just one of many ways to drive workforce engagement – **download our eBook** today to learn more!



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