Sage Wisdom
May 2004 - Volume 1

Sage Mentors Inc.
MENTORING CAPABLE PEOPLE INTO LEADERSHIP

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Dozens of books, journal articles and Web sites have been written on how to structure a work-based mentoring program. Why? Because researchers agree that structured mentoring programs are simply more effective than non-structured programs.

Consider this*:*
"formally mentored employees reported greater job satisfaction than non-mentored employees" and "mentees in programs that offered guidelines for the frequency of meetings reported that the programs were more effective than mentees who were in programs lacking such guidelines" (Ragins, Cotton and Miller, 2000, p. 1187)

Mentoring Best Practices: Program Design Part 1

Written by: Debra McAdam and Catherine Mossop

Presentation: May 21, 2003 at ASTD International Conference, California./ First published: ICE Website & ASTD "Get Connected" e-newsletter, 2003.

One by one, organizations are discovering that while mentoring might "just happen", it won't happen effectively enough or on a large enough scale to be useful in the work environment. Again, research and the experience of others prove this statement:

> *What do AT&T, Johnson and Johnson, Merrill Lynch, Federal Express, the Internal Revenue Service and the US Army have in common? All have abandoned the hope that mentoring relationships would develop by themselves and have implemented policies to actively develop mentoring programs.* (Zey, 1985, p. 53)

Structure provides mentors and mentees with a clear understanding of what the mentoring program is all about, why it has been implemented, what its goals are, who can participate, when the mentoring interactions take place and for how long, where the program operates, how mentoring works and how mentoring teams can be successful.

When all the questions about the program structure have been answered, everyone benefits:

- Everyone buys into the program's objectives and works to reach them;
- Mentors and mentees find it easier to build and maintain trusting mentoring partnerships;
- Program coordinators have streamlined procedures for recruiting, screening, matching, managing and supporting mentors and mentees;
- Executives, sponsors and advisory boards have a clear understanding of the program's goals, operations and benefits and therefore can more easily comprehend why they should support the program.

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Mentoring Best Practices: Program Design Part 2

Written by: Catherine Mossop FCMC, January 2004

ALIGNING MENTORING PROGRAMS WITH BUSINESS STRATEGY

Mentoring programs become another "flavour of the month" unless linked with the business strategy. Of all best practices identified in the Canadian research on Mentoring programs, as well as the International Standards for Mentoring Schemes, the alignment of the mentoring program with the business strategy is the most critical factor for success. Yet very few of the Canadian programs researched (Mentoring and the World of Work in Canada, Courrier, Mossop et al., 2003) had linked the program goals to business strategy. In identifying how programs floundered, the bottom line was they were not linked to the essentials involved in people-capital management or HR strategy management.

Organizations that perform well have sustaining mentoring programs that see their people as a source of competitive advantage and contributing to optimal business performance. By designing a program that is linked to business strategy, employees become intimately aware of the organizational goals, plans, and strategies and of how they contribute to the attainment of the goals.

As all career development activities are two-fold, the gains to the individual are at their intrinsic motivational levels. Intrinsic motivations are the psychological rewards people derive directly from their work. It is through meeting intrinsic needs that people contribute the greatest value to the organization. Extrinsic factors include pay, benefits, titles, physical location, etc.; but their overall contributing value will only go so far in providing effective motivation.

The new psychological contract in the employment relationship: as long as we (employer and employee) are equally prepared to invest in our relationship to meet our collective needs, we shall continue to work together. This changed psychological contract has precipitated the need for organizations to be far more aware of the intrinsic motivators of employees as they are the greatest influence on attitudes, commitment and value contribution to the organization. Equally, employees must take greater responsibility for their own learning and development – in simple terms – to be much more aware of what their own motivations are, identify pathways to meet their needs, while still contributing to the organization's success.

Career development has changed from the old-fashioned, steps up a layered hierarchy of increasing responsibility to a different mantel: one of individual learning, development and growth. With this new view of career development comes flexibility and adaptability to change – new market situations, new roles, and new responsibilities. It increases the employability of the individual – broadens their ability to contribute in different roles and increases their ability to add value to the organization.

Formalized mentoring becomes an excellent mechanism to address the unique career development needs of the individual AND the productivity needs of the organization. Mentoring programs that are linked with talent pool development strategies and the business strategy, demonstrate outstanding Return On Investment (ROI).

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How to align the program objectives to business strategy:

Step 1: Climate Review
- assess the forces that are impacting your organization today and in the near future: economic, social, political, environmental
- synthesize the risk factors to the organization

Step 2: Business/organizational strategy review
- this information is typically available in the organization's annual report or President's letter to employees
- synthesize the organization's strategy into the 2-3 most significant goals to be addressed

Example:

A manufacturer of technology based equipment has as a business objective to be a world-class leader of this technology based product, in order to grow to meet world demand for the product through internal development as well as acquisition.

In assessing their internal talent pool needed to attain the business objectives, they realized retention of key engineering talent was a significant problem with a 37% turn-over level. Retention problems were due to a number of factors: over-promotion before the individual was ready for increased responsibility and not providing the support resources needed for them to be successful; lack of cross development opportunities due to the crisis of talent losses and perceived need to leave specialists in their current positions; highly competitive hiring market leading to significant time lags in the hiring process.

One of several strategies was to create a 1-year high-potential development program which included mentoring for each individual in the program. The program objectives were to: reduce annual turnover of high potential talent; and reduce the time to prepare a person for a management position from 5 years to 2 years.

The results of the 18 months program were a reduction of turnover from 37% to 1% and the successful retention and productivity of those who were promoted. (Measure was based on observations of successful performance on-the-job by superiors; significant reduction of costs due to performance problems when people are over-promoted; measurable productivity improvements as participants applied learning and new capabilities on-the-job).

Overall ROI was calculated at 190%.

Step 3: Human Resources strategy review
- what factors or forces are impacting your organizations staff today and in the near future: demographics; reward systems; current level of staff capabilities, career development and mobility systems; business cycle changes that will impact competencies and capabilities of staffing, do you have the staff capabilities needed to meet the organization's goals
- synthesize these and link into the organization's goals

Step 4: Development Plan creation
- establish how the development plan will address or meet the needs/goals of the organization
- design the program and operations to meet the various needs of individuals and organization
- establish performance measures to be employed to assess if business goals are being met through the development process

Step 5: Evaluate and Revise
- analyze the performance date and determine who needs to receive reports of the results
- document possible program changes and feed these back to the program designers

In conclusion, many mentoring programs are introduced in organizations with great fanfare, energy and enthusiasm as it is one of the most rewarding means of human development. The excitement can be contagious and far reaching. However, the Canadian researchers of mentoring best practices in Canada identified that programs which are not linked to the organizations' strategic direction will lose their momentum and die. Taking the time to think through how a mentoring program is connected to the organization's strategies and goals is the most important step to the design and implementation of a high-impact learning initiative. ■

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For information on Sage Mentors programs, contact Catherine Mossop, cmossop@sagementors.com or visit www.sagementors.com

Here's an example of how formalizing the structure of a mentoring program can impact the program, participants and community:

The Muskoka Community Futures Development Corporation (MCFDC) is a not-for-profit community-based organization in northern Ontario, Canada. Their mandate is to encourage orderly economic growth and job creation by facilitating projects that strengthen the region's economy and by empowering entrepreneurs to succeed through experienced guidance and financial investment in their ventures. The program's ultimate goal is economic development for the area. The MCFDC aims to reach that goal with business mentoring from successful individuals who are willing to share their business skills and experience with their younger mentees.

The MCFDC mentoring program is currently undergoing a process of formalization. Formalizing the program is expected to be beneficial in a number of ways. Most importantly, the MCFDC believes a formal program will be more successful in attracting mentors from the community at large, since a formal mentoring program will be more recognized and trusted. It is also hoped that a more structured program will encourage shy loan clients to come forward and participate in mentoring, knowing they will receive training and support. Further, in their loan applications, loan clients are asked to identify their business advisors and, if they are participating in the mentoring program, to find their own mentor. Formalizing the program would see these business advisors drawn into a permanent pool of mentors, with the potential creation of a regional mentee/mentor network. Finally, it is believed that clearly defined goals, objectives, policies and procedures could only enhance the program already in place by encouraging increased commitments from both mentors and mentees.

At this point you may be thinking: "That's all very well, but I have no idea how to structure a mentoring program that would work in my organization!" Relax! The knowledge you seek is now available from a pan-Canadian study on best practices in work and career-based mentoring. During the summer and fall of 2002, researchers in six provinces across Canada studied structured mentoring programs in 94 corporations, professional associations, academic institutions and not-for-profit, community and governmental organizations. Using questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, we asked program coordinators to describe their programs and divulge their successes and challenges. Our goal: to identify the best ways to plan and implement work or career-focused mentoring programs.

Happily, our research was successful. We have been able to pinpoint what works, what doesn't and why, and we're ready to share what we've learned. In our ASTD Conference 2003 presentation, we will present the final "Pan-Canadian Mentoring Program Model" and give delegates the tools they need to develop an effective mentoring process for their own organizations. We invite you to join us as we explore how a structured mentoring program can give mentors and mentees the support and freedom to do what they long to do: ***learn.***

References

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