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The value of mentoring: A mutually beneficial experience for mentor and mentee

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The value of mentoring

A mutually beneficial experience for mentor and mentee

Mentoring as a learning aid

Learning is fundamental to the growth and success of any organization. And any business that fails to comprehend its importance is surely destined for a place among the also-rans.

Various possibilities exist where learning and development is concerned. One such option gaining in popularity is mentoring. It has now become recognized as having a key role in the personal and professional development of those participating in such programs.

Mentoring typically involves an older person imparting their knowledge and experience to a less worldly individual placed under their guidance. Enabling the “mentee” to learn thus tends to be the main objective of these arrangements.

Where adolescents are concerned, mentoring can prove especially significant. Support from an appropriate adult mentor can favorably impact on the younger person’s emotional, psychological and cognitive facets. It is feasible to expect improvements to attitudes and behaviors that are subsequently reflected in their engagement, commitment and performance levels within learning and workplace contexts.

The potential benefits a mentee can gain are clearly extensive. Mentoring provides him or her with a valuable opportunity to learn from the experiences gained through being actively involved in the sessions. Observation, listening and reflection during and after interaction with their mentor are equally critical to learning. As a consequence of these experiences, mentees are then much better equipped to fruitfully navigate subsequent challenges in their environment.

Mentors are expected to make a positive difference to those under their supervision. That much is widely acknowledged, but what about the mentors? What do they gain out of the arrangement? Surprisingly, this aspect has received only minimal attention thus far.

Foundations of success

For mentoring to succeed in any learning context, it is essential that opportunities exist for frequent interaction. The reciprocal nature of the relationship is a must too. With foundations like these in place, the association can mutually benefit both mentor and mentee alike. It obviously becomes a win-win situation for the company involved when such partnerships flourish in the workplace.

Trust is a fundamental part of any productive relationship. And it is certainly no different here. In its absence, a successful outcome would be difficult to envisage. However, trust does not materialize overnight. It often takes considerable time and effort to build. This means that the mentor must possess or acquire the capability to create a connection with

someone who will often be a stranger to them at the outset. That can be a pretty daunting task for anyone, regardless of their experience level.

Mentors must develop a range of interpersonal skills if they are to gain the confidence of their protégé. Those able to equip themselves with such skills also make significant progress as far as their own learning is concerned. Anyone who can effectively demonstrate care, friendliness and reassurance are showcasing qualities that can prove invaluable in the future.

Involvement in mentoring provides an ideal opportunity to become a more efficient communicator. A frequent challenge facing mentors is having to engage with mentees whose backgrounds are radically different to their own. In such circumstances, they might have to find different ways of expressing themselves, so that their message is correctly understood.

Successful interaction demands an ability to listen properly as well. Part of any mentor's development should therefore include learning to appreciate different perspectives and demonstrate empathy by becoming sensitive to the needs of others. Shrewd mentors will discern that knowledge acquisition is not necessarily a one-way process. It is highly likely that mentees will know things that could be useful to them.

Another benefit of mentoring is the opportunities it provides to enhance the skills associated with leadership. Mentors must therefore lead by example and demonstrate relevant qualities to individuals under their tutelage. A key aspect here is learning how to inspire and motivate others. This will often demand a capacity to identify new initiatives and then applying them as necessary. The diversity of challenges inherent within a mentoring context offer ideal experiences for those with leadership aspirations. Having an appropriate strategy to guide mentees is obviously important and mentors can learn how to set targets and goals which are clear, pertinent and attainable. Equally important is that they are closely aligned with those of the organization.

Mutual gain

The responsibilities intrinsic to the role ensure that mentoring offers considerable scope for self-discovery. Mentors can develop their own capabilities as well as those of the person being mentored. And his or her confidence is sure to grow as they witness their mentee progressing. The reciprocally beneficial experience of mentoring should mean that both have become much better placed to either secure a certain position with the company or make further progression. Completing the mentoring program helps equip them with the range of soft skills which complement technical capabilities and have become highly regarded by organizations today.

Firms must be aware that mentoring can simultaneously benefit those on both sides of the equation. This knowledge can subsequently help improve design of the schemes which they offer. Arranging group sessions for mentors is something else that astute companies will implement. Such get-togethers can be priceless in that mentors are provided with a chance to share their experiences and insights, so that they can learn from each other. It would be likewise useful to monitor individual mentor progress at different stages of the mentoring program, while some comparison of those with and without prior mentoring experience could likewise be informative.

As a consequence of these experiences, mentees are then much better equipped to fruitfully navigate subsequent challenges in their environment.

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Keywords:

Mentoring,
Relationship building,
Learning

Comment

The review is based on: "Do mentors learn by mentoring others?" by [Rekha and Ganesh \(2012\)](#). The authors analyze a youth mentoring program in India to illustrate how mentors can benefit from such programs as well as mentees. They identify various ways in which personal and professional development might be enhanced for mentors in a highly informative article that will provide value for any practitioner with an intention to use mentoring as a development tool.

Reference

Rekha, K.N. and Ganesh, M.P. (2012), "Do mentors learn by mentoring others?", *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 205-217.

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