Mentoring Employees

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What Is Mentoring?

- **Mentoring** is the process of sharing your knowledge and experience with an employee.

- Mentoring can be informal or formal:
  - Informal mentoring takes place spontaneously between senior and more junior employees.
  - Formal mentoring occurs through a program with an established structure.

- A mentor can be an employee’s manager or not:
  - Management typically involves at least some employee mentoring.
    - In acting as a mentor for an employee who reports to you, think of yourself as an **advocate** for that employee—not for any particular behavior, but for the person—for their personal growth and career. Discipline can then become a matter of helping an employee out of a difficult situation.
  - In formal mentoring programs, the mentor is typically **not** the employee’s manager, nor even in the employee’s chain of command.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations in a Mentoring Relationship

The Role of a Mentor

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<th>Teach</th>
<th>Encourage</th>
<th>Counsel</th>
<th>Befriend</th>
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<td>Model</td>
<td>Affirm</td>
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- The role of all mentors:
  - Promote honest, confidential sharing.
  - Support learning process with feedback.
  - Share unique experience and knowledge.
  - Guide, counsel, support, coach, encourage.
  - Meet with employee on a regular basis.
  - Do **not** do the work of the employee.
The additional role of mentors in a formal program:
- Negotiate the mentoring contract.
- Complete the commitments in the contract.
- Communicate with the program administrator.
- Complete forms and provide ideas.
- Communicate with the manager if permitted.
- Do not do the work of the manager.
- Do not sponsor the employee for a particular position—but help with career development in general.

The Role of the Employee in a Mentoring Relationship

- The role of all employees in a mentoring relationship:
  - Maintain confidentiality and assist in creating a climate of trust.
  - Follow through on any commitments made.

- The additional role of employees in a formal mentoring program:
  - Obtain opinions from the manager in identifying areas for further development.
  - Help develop a mentoring contract.
  - Inform the manager of the mentoring meetings.
  - Communicate with the program administrator.
  - Participate in the program-evaluation process.

Responsibilities of a Mentor

- The responsibilities of all mentors:
  - Assist the employee in developing talents.
  - Maintain objectivity and balance.
  - Allow the employee to grow and become more independent.
  - Foster a sense of risk-taking and independence.
  - Balance the responsibilities you take on for the employee.

- The additional responsibilities of mentors in a formal program:
  - Listen to and acknowledge the employee without undermining the role of the manager.
  - Encourage the employee to resolve problems directly with the manager.

Reasonable Expectations in a Mentoring Relationship

- Mentors can expect employees to:
  - Accept the relationship.
  - Meet as often as appropriate.
  - Ask for suggestions and advice.
  - Listen, apply advice, report the results.
  - Keep any commitments made.
  - Maintain confidentiality.
  - Give opinions on the relationship.
  - Work out any minor concerns.
  - In a formal program: evaluate the program and select the next steps.

- Employees can expect mentors to:
  - Have regular face-to-face meetings.
  - Provide sound advice.
  - Maintain confidentiality.
- Follow through on any commitments made.
- Help resolve conflicts with the employee.
- Be honest, caring, and diplomatic in giving feedback.

- In a formal program, employees can also expect mentors to:
  - Communicate with the manager only with the employee’s permission.
  - Evaluate the relationship near the end.

- Employees should not expect mentors to:
  - Perform job responsibilities.
  - Help extensively with personal problems.
  - Spend more time on the relationship then the mentor is willing or able to give.
  - In a formal program: provide personal introductions unless offered.

**Mentoring Techniques**

**Communication within Mentoring Relationships**

- Active listening:
  - Pay attention to the employee’s needs, wants, desires.
  - Make sure you understand the words and concepts.
  - Listen to how it’s being said.
  - Use open-ended questions.
  - Seek clarification, restate, summarize.

- Perception checking:
  - A description of the behavior you noticed.
  - At least two possible interpretations of the behavior.
  - A request for feedback about how to interpret the behavior correctly.

**Common Problems in Effective Listening**

- Listening only for facts, not affect.
- Interrupting.
- Faking attention.
- Distractions.
- Hearing what you want, not what’s said.
- Saying you understand when you don’t.
- Planning your response.
- Doing something else.
- Need to be right.
- Belaboring a point.

**Tips for Giving Effective Feedback**

- Give with care and attention.
- Give only what the person can handle.
- Be direct; cite specific incidents.
- Express yourself.
- Keep clear of evaluative judgments.
- Make it timely.
- Make it readily actionable.
- Check and clarify your perceptions.
Tips for Receiving Feedback
- Avoid defensiveness: be open to hearing.
- Seek specific examples.
- Check your understanding (summarize).
- Share your feelings about the comments.
- Be who you are, but consider the comment.

Mentor’s Feedback Profile

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<th>Improvability</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
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<tr>
<td>Specificity</td>
<td>Volume</td>
<td>Locale</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verifiability</td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Impact on receiver</td>
<td>Two-way flow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Empathetic aspects</td>
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Seven Conditions for Learning
1. The employee chooses, wants to learn.
2. You create a climate in which the employee can learn.
3. How you attempt to develop the employee affects the results.
4. The employee learns actively.
5. The learning process connects to the employee’s experience.
6. The employee shares in the responsibility.
7. The employee progresses toward goals.

Tips on Mentoring
- For all mentors:
  - Let the employee learn from you.
  - Whenever possible, give encouragement.
  - Point out alternatives.
  - Remember that mentoring also takes place in phone calls, e-mail, etc.
- For mentors in a formal program:
  - Introduce the employee to people who would be helpful.
  - Keep your program administrator informed, and seek assistance when needed.
  - At the end, allow the employee to keep in touch.

Mentoring Approaches
- Role modeling—Demonstrate behavior that the employee observes and then tries out.
- Role playing—Both enact a scenario to gain insight on how to be effective in a situation.
- Empty chair—The employee addresses an empty chair representing the other person in the role play; the mentor sits next to the employee and coaches.

Stages of Mentoring
- Early stage:
  - More structured advice.
  - Specific information.
- Middle stage:
  - Less specific advice, more employee input.
  - Eventually collaborative.
- Late stage:
  - Employee takes initiative.
  - Mentor supports employee’s decisions.
More About a Formal Mentoring Program

Objectives of a Mentoring Program
- To retain and advance talented employees.
- To retain and advance women and minorities.
- To give mentors satisfaction and a rewarding experience.
- To open up new channels of communication, information, and education.
- To demonstrate that the organization invests in people and encourages opportunity for a diverse workforce.
- Nongoal: The program is not intended for sponsoring anyone for a particular position in the organization.

Typical Structure of a Mentoring Program
- All employees are eligible.
- There is a minimum gap of two grade levels between the mentor and the employee.
- The mentor is outside of the employee’s chain of command.
- The program has an administrator.

Process of Formal Mentoring
- Regular communication—meet once a month or more.
- At the beginning, write a contract defining the objectives.
- Write a review each quarter.
- The relationship lasts about 1 year.
- There is no access by the mentor to the employee’s personnel records.
- The interaction is confidential.
- There is no interference in the management relationship.

Typical Steps in Implementing a Mentoring Program
1. Organize a committee of employees to design the program.
2. Announce the program, and invite mentors and employees to separate meetings.
3. Pitch the program to managers and senior employees.
4. Train mentors and employees separately.
5. Circulate mentor biographies.
6. Hold a “meet your mentor” meeting.
7. Have employees fill out forms on themselves and their mentor preferences.
8. Pair mentors and employees.
9. Mentors and employees hold an initial meeting and negotiate a contract.
10. Mentors and employees evaluate the relationship quarterly.

The Role of the Program Administrator
- Oversee the mentoring program.
- Match mentors and employees.
- Work with mentoring pairs to provide resources and resolve any issues that arise.
- Communicate as needed with mentors, employees, and managers.
- Provide training.
- Conduct an evaluation process.
- Communicate results of the program to participants and to upper management.
- Review and modify the program guidelines.
Responsibilities of Participants to the Program Administrator

- Inform the administrator if training is needed.
- Inform the administrator if help is needed in resolving issues.
- Turn to the administrator first with questions or comments.

The Role of the Manager in a Mentoring Program

- Provide information to the employee concerning developmental areas.
- Support the mentor’s and the employee’s participation.
- Respect the confidentiality of the mentoring relationship.
- Participate in program evaluation.
- Give appropriate credit to employees and mentors for participation.