

BEST PRACTICES IN GLOBAL MENTORING PROGRAMS

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Why Mentoring?

According to the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, “Research on a 1,000-participant mentoring program at a high-technology firm throughout a five-year period found that **mentees were promoted five times more frequently - and mentors, six times more often - than those who were not in the program**” (ASTD, 2009).

To uncover the reasons why mentoring is such a major factor in talent development for global organizations, iLead Consulting & Training conducted research on the topic to learn about best practices.

In the mid-1990s, labor economist and former research director of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), Laurie Bassi noticed a correlation between the money companies spend in training to the price of corporate stocks. From 2004 to 2008, Bassi studied the ROI (return on investment) on leadership training by tracking 30 publically-traded banks, comparing the money spent on training to the stock price.

Bassi discovered “that training investments (as well as changes in those investments) remain a powerful predictor of subsequent stock prices.” (Bassi and McMurrer, 2009). The study showed that the banks that invested more in training witnessed an increase of stock price the subsequent year. Banks that cut their training program expenditures experienced a drop in stock prices.

With training and development budgets under continued scrutiny, what is the best option for companies in combating these challenges? Our research shows that often the most effective solution is actually one of the most efficient – mentoring.

According to a survey from the Center for Creative Leadership, 77% of companies reported that mentoring programs helped with employee retention (Weinberger, 2012). The cost to implement a mentoring program can be as low as \$20 per new employee “to take a (rising) executive out for coffee on a monthly basis” (Greenlees, 2011). In addition to the minimal expense, numerous studies showed that mentoring programs dramatically reduce employee turn-over.

Sun Microsystems is a good example of a global company successfully implementing a mentoring program. Between 1996 and 2009, about 7,300 mentoring pairs participated in a formal mentoring program at Sun. The conclusion from this program: mentoring returns good value for the time and money it takes. During this time, Sun Microsystems found that a return on investment (ROI) on mentoring was as much as 1,000% gaining the highest results as the program matured (Dickinson, 2013).

Cisco Systems' Global Talent Acceleration Program is another example of a corporation effectively utilizing a global mentoring program. Under the charge of Wim Elfrink, Cisco's globalization chief, the company set up a second headquarters in Bangalore, India in 2007.

Elfrink's idea was to implement a local approach in recruiting people who truly understand their specific marketplace instead of sending expatriates to various parts of the world. In order to properly train these new recruits in a short period of time, Elfrink launched this global mentoring program in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and other locations. Once the new hires received basic sales and finance training, the company then paired these individuals with Cisco veterans (Burrows, 2009).

According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), mentoring "makes good business sense" (SHRM, 2012). The NOVA/Dulles chapters cited the following benefits of mentoring in their comprehensive study. Specifically they found that mentoring:

- Encourages mutual loyalty between employee and employer
- Increases employee retention and promotes diversity
- Helps new employees acclimate to job and company culture more quickly
- Improves organizational performance and increases productivity
- Supports innovation and collaboration

Difference between a Mentoring Program and Coaching

As noted in training materials developed by SHRM, "Coaching is a training method in which a more experienced or skilled individual provides an employee with advice and guidance intended to help him or her develop skills, improve performance and enhance the quality of his or her career" (SHRM, 2012). Coaching is different from mentoring in that:

- Coaching typically happens during the first few months of employment in training a new employee. Mentoring may occur at any time during an employee's tenure.
- Coaching is between a manager and his direct report whereas a mentor is not the mentee's boss.
- Coaching is often used for progressive discipline or performance refinement (correction) whereas a mentoring relationship is more about growth and training.

Current Best Practices in Mentoring

In comprising a list of current best practices, the iLead team interviewed Joe Jordan, director of services sales training, Dell, Inc., and Donna Manchester, vice president of human resources, Atrium Windows & Doors. Both of these seasoned professionals have experience in leading mentoring initiatives in large international organizations. Not surprisingly, their advice was very similar to that of experts such as Dr. Susan

Weinberger, an international expert on internal and external business mentoring and coaching programs (Weinberger, 2012).

Here are the common best practices in corporate mentoring programs:

- ***Understand the desired outcomes and have an end in mind***
 - Is the goal to develop more potential mid-senior level managers? Fill a gap in talent? Create a sales force specific to the various markets as in the case of Cisco? Accelerate talent development? In any case, the specific goals of your mentoring program must be clearly defined.
- ***Design a plan that measures outcomes***
 - The goals need to be realistic and tied to performance for BOTH the mentor and mentee. According to Jordan, “The focus needs to be on the outcome and not the process. Says Jordan, ‘There are many roads to Shanghai.’ “Some pairs meet over coffee, some over dinner, some in the office and some on the golf course.” In other words, it doesn’t matter how a mentor/mentee team works together as long as their goals are successfully met.
- ***Must be a top-down initiative and supported enthusiastically with money AND time***
 - A reoccurring theme with our panel of experts is that an effective mentoring program cannot be driven by human resources alone. Successful programs are championed by senior management who are willing to commit the time and energy to make the program work.
 - Sarah Kessler, associate editor of *Fast Company* and contributing author of *Inc. Magazine* suggests, “Have leaders in your company make it clear that they think the program is important, and make sure that they participate in the program themselves as a way of encouraging other people to participate” (Kessler, 2010).
- ***Establish ground rules and stick to them***
 - According to Tammy Allen, a professor of psychology at the University South Florida and co-author of *Designing Workplace Mentoring Programs: an Evidence-Based Approach*, “You really need to manage expectations with these programs because the word, ‘mentoring’ has a lot of connotations associated with it. People might think, ‘this is the person who is going to get me promoted, get me this, get me that,’ so it’s really important to identify to participants what the objectives are and what to expect, as well as not to expect, from it” (Kessler, 2010).

- In addition to establishing expectations between mentor and mentee, it is important to set guidelines and limitations. Tim Knox, owner and CEO of Digital Graphiti advises, “It is important that you [mentors] create an actual meeting schedule and stick to it. Without a set schedule, life will get in the way and you will cancel more meetings than you attend.”
- Knox also suggests establishing guidelines as to how often and when a mentee can call. “Is it OK for them to call your cell phone, or should they go through your secretary? Can they drop by the office anytime? Can they call you at home after 5 p.m.?” (Knox, 2006).
- **Set goals for mentee**
 - Once expectations are set, Knox recommends setting goals for the mentee. “Assign them homework. Give them a task. The relationship must be much more than chewing the fat.” (Knox, 2006). The role of the mentor is to help the mentee grow both professionally and personally. Often, but not always, the more structured, the better.

How to Set Up a Mentoring a Program that Will Succeed Over Time

As companies grow larger in size and complexity, professionals begin to see themselves as “merely cogs in a wheel...disenfranchised and alienated.” (DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees, 2008). Harvard professors, Thomas J. DeLong, John J. Gabarro, and Robert J. Lees, co-authors of *When Professionals Have to Lead: A New Model for High Performance* (Harvard Business School Press, 2007), conducted a seven-year, in-depth study of over 30 professional service firms (PSFs) ranging in sizes from large global-organizations to small firms.

In this study, the Harvard team goes on to say, “in order to survive, PSFs must revive mentoring, an institution that has been the chief casualty of hyper-competitiveness and rapid growth in these types of firms.”

Here are some of their suggestions and observations:

- **Who receives mentoring?**
 - Mentoring should not be exclusive to the employees on the fast track to senior management. The Harvard team suggests that it is just as important to develop the B players as the A players. “In the typical PSF, A players constitute only 20% of the professional staff and C players another 10%. Therefore, B players make up the remaining 70% -- a large group we call the ‘solid citizens.’
 - Even at top-tier firms, B players are the heart and soul of the organization. If they are mediocre, the firm will be mediocre; if they are high performers, the firm will follow suit. A players, relatively small in number, will never make up for the

solid citizens, regardless of how good the A players are.” (DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees, 2008).

- In creating a new mentoring program, Laura DiFlorio, regional director of sales at Nobscot Corporation’s Mentor Scout Division, suggests starting with a target group such as specific department or group of employees. DiFlorio states, “A targeted pilot program provides an excellent opportunity to get it right with a smaller group and pick up lessons learned along the way. You then can build on that enthusiasm to expand the program.” It is important not to start with the largest group but a department large enough to generate tangible results such as increase in productivity, increase in sales, etc. (DiFlorio, 2011).

- ***Timing and organizational maturity is critical***

In order for the program to succeed, it is crucial to pick the right time to start a program. Joe Jordan of Dell suggests it would be foolish for a company to start a mentoring program during a time of reorganization. He encourages organizations to ask these important questions:

- *Does the company have adequate resources to fund the program appropriately?*
- *Can the organization sustain the output? Can you really manage the energized talent the program puts into your company?*
- *Will you lose talent if not engaged? Will your people go to the competition?*
- *Will mentoring drive the outcome we want? How will the program affect ROI, increase of sales, higher retention, competitive edge, etc.?*

- ***Make program’s successes visible***

- Donna Manchester of Atrium emphasized, “Making the program’s success visible so that the program remains desirable and relevant. Make it known that promotions result from the participation in the mentoring program.”
- The results should be tangible. In 2008, i4cp (the fastest and largest growing network focused on the practices of high-performance organizations), conducted a *Mentorship Programs Survey* to determine the success rate of mentorship programs. The results demonstrated that, “Over 80% of organizations who have such programs say they are moderately to highly effective. The number climbs to above 90% for high-performance organizations” (Samdahl, 2010).

Best Practices in Assigning Mentors and Mentees to Gain Maximum Impact

Matching the mentors to the mentees is the most important and challenging part of administering a mentoring program. DiFloria points out in her *10 tips to help ensure your new program’s success*, “research suggests that the greater the involvement of the mentee in the match, the better the outcome of the mentorship. Therefore, look for ways to allow mentees to select their mentor or at least provide input” (DiFlorio, 2011).

Below are the primary points in assigning mentors and mentees based on our research and interviews:

- **There are two types of mentors: formal (mentors are assigned – less effective) and informal or personal (occurs naturally – most effective)**
 - According to DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees, mentoring *is* personal, and believing that a “standardized mentoring system will solve your problems is an illusion” (DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees, 2008). In surveying staff from various consulting groups, the Harvard team found that “formalized” mentoring created a forced situation on both sides of the mentoring relationships.
 - Weinberger states, “They [mentors] must be patient, caring, committed and confidential. Good mentors have an outstanding employment record and truly enjoy assisting another employee to share what they know. Selection of the appropriate mentees who could benefit from such a program and who are willing and eager to participate is another important consideration” (Weinberger, 2012).
- **A perfect match is when both parties benefit from the relationship**
 - Jordan recommends matching mentors and mentees according to compatibility which he defines as “the potential for the mentees to develop strengths and the mentors to gain new insight or learn new technology from the relationship.”
 - Sylvia Ann Hewlett, an economist and founding president of the Center for Work-Life Policy in New York, along with Laura Sherbin and Karen Sumberg, vice presidents at the Center for Work-Life Policy write in the *Harvard Business Review* about how Gen Y and Boomers working together are changing the workforce.
 - In their article, they highlight Time Warner’s mentoring program: “Time Warner developed a mentoring program that engaged people on both ends of their careers. The company’s senior executives were challenged to stay up in the world of rapidly evolving, news-tech-savvy college students. The students mentored senior executives on emerging digital trends and technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, and other Web 2.0 applications” (Hewlett, Sherbin, Sumberg, 2009).
- **The key in selecting participants is to understand that not all employees make good mentors -- the best programs create a process to make the selection process personal**
 - Work with a selection process that concentrates more on the personal than formal by obtaining input from BOTH potential mentors and mentees (DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees, 2008).

- There are a variety of tools that can be utilized from low cost (labor intensive) to state-of-the-art technology (think of eHarmony for mentoring):
 - McGraw-Hill utilizes extensive questionnaires, phone interviews, and committee recommendations for each mentor and mentee. “Some companies offer a mentor or mentee several options for a partner and allow them to choose one” (Kessler, 2010).
 - Some companies take the process a step further by adding personality assessment testing such as the DISC profile in lieu of the interviewing or committee recommendations.
 - Companies such as Xerox acquire on-line technology to assist with the matching process as well as track progress. In 2005, Xerox launched a mentoring program for an employee caucus group known as The Women’s Alliance (TWA). After trying to match mentors manually, the group turned to Mentor Scout, a web-based program which included an on-line profile to be completed by both parties.
 - After completing the profiles, the mentee was sent profiles of potential mentors to make a selection. In 2007, TWA conducted a pilot program of 34 mentorships utilizing Mentor Scout and conducted a survey at the end of the program. All participants (100%) said they would “enthusiastically recommend” the mentoring program (Kessler, 2010).

Mentoring Programs in a Global Context

During our research, we discussed the challenges international companies face in establishing and maintaining global mentoring programs. Ideally, mentors and mentees should spend face-to-face time which becomes more challenging in a global context.

Below are suggestions in making a global program work:

- **Focus on what is realistic utilizing current technology**
 - Lucy Hooberman was charged by TED (a nonprofit devoted to ideas worth spreading in *Technology, Entertainment, and Design*) to implement a voluntary mentoring program pairing experts from the around the world with individuals in developing countries to teach much needed skills. Her budget was \$1,000 which included the cost of creating a database and website for this project.
 - By utilizing inexpensive or free Internet tools including Skype, emails, blogs, etc., Hooberman was able to successfully launch the TED mentoring initiative which gained worldwide support from CEOs, Nobel-winning scientists, well-known architects to artists (Giussani, 2006).

- **Recognize the differences between authority driven and expertise focused cultures**
 - According to Jordan, challenges in global mentoring programs often center on cultural differences between participants and mentors. The target audiences for mentoring programs often place value on ABILITY and EXPERISE – NOT authority. Mentors are often people in authority and expect to be respected regardless of competencies and knowledge. “It may take someone longer to open up to the mentor if the mentor emphasizes their authority over ability. In cultures where organizational authority is respected, emerging leaders are often cautious, and will go to go to great lengths to avoid appearing disrespectful to a person in authority.” Jordan emphasizes that organizations may need to allow more time for programs involving cross-culture partnerships to see results.
 - Manchester offers this advice in working with cultural differences:
 - Mentees must be grounded in their home country business-practices before they can successfully benefit from expanding his/her knowledge to that of another country. In other words, does the person understand their local business climate well enough to be able to draw parallels to another culture?
 - Mentees must also be open-minded about accepting business and social practices that differ from the home country. Manchester suggests that companies should encourage BOTH mentors and mentees to learn the cultural differences of their partner before entering into a mentor/mentee relationship.
 - Mentors must also demonstrate patience in helping the mentee adapt to a new set of ground rules tied to both the program and the new relationship. It will take time to develop the trust across cultures.

Develop Training – Critical for Success

Throughout our research, we learned that many of the experts emphasize the need for thorough training and orientation for both mentors and mentees. Below are the elements needed in an effective mentorship training program:

- **Provide an orientation process for both mentors and mentees to fully understand expectations, program overview and goals**
 - According to Kessler, a big key to success is to properly communicate the benefits of a mentor program and that the corporate leadership is participating in the program (Kessler, 2010).
 - Effective communications start with a comprehensive orientation covering guidelines, expectations and challenges for both mentors and mentees. On their

website, SHRM provides a template of an orientation workshop that can be customized to meet the needs of an organization.

- **Conduct extensive training on problem solving, cultural diversity, communications and leadership skills**
 - In 2005, Cisco recognized the need for an effective onboarding program for their sales department focusing on emerging markets. After conducting extensive needs analysis, Cisco created the Global Sales Onboarding (GSO) program. This initiative started with a three-day technical-workshop known as The FastTrack Workshop providing the foundation for the three-six month mentoring program.
 - The goal of the mentor program was to accelerate quota goals by matching new hires to experienced sales employees. The program was so successful that the company has now expanded it to include all sales geographies.
 - “Controlled studies suggest that attrition is 16 percent lower and employment contentment higher for GSO participants. About 89 percent of participants assert that GSO contributed positively to job readiness and faster time to productivity. Sales deals closed have increased (\$6.2 million) and opportunities in the pipeline (\$39.6 million) are related to participation in GSO” (Laff, 2009).

Conclusion

Creating and establishing a mentoring program inside an organization makes good business sense. As we have seen, mentoring:

- Has a proven ROI -- as shown in companies like Cisco Systems, Sun Microsystems, and Dell, the cost of the program is returned many times over.
- Significantly increases employee retention as shown by the Center for Creative Leadership.
- Increases productivity and performance as demonstrated at Sun Microsystems.
- Accelerates new hires in their understanding of how-things-get-done-around-here.
- Improves corporate culture by supporting innovation and collaboration.

In a recent survey of Fortune 500 CEOs, the participants listed having a mentor as the number one component of their success (Weinberger, 2012). If your organization doesn't have such a program, or if it has one that's not working effectively, perhaps now is the time to start building a strong program which will serve your organization well for years to come.

For more information regarding establishing a mentoring program inside your organization, contact Tom Pearce, President of iLead Consulting and Training at tompearce@ileadusa.com 972-569-8822.

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SHRM PowerPoint -Orientation Presentation can be downloaded at:
(www.shrm.org/templatestools/samples/powerpoints/documents/08-ppt-mentoring%20programs_final.ppt)

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