

The business case for mentoring

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Case study and research evidence finds that organisations reap significant value from mentoring:

1. Easier recruitment and induction

Competition for talent is severe in many sectors. Potential employees are increasingly concerned not with whether an employer has a mentoring program, but how good it is.

2. Retention

People with mentors are only half as likely as their peers to be thinking of leaving the organisation. In terms of *actual* turnover, mentees are only one third as likely to move on during the period they have a mentor.

3. Motivation and job commitment

Having a mentor reinforces the positive psychological contract between the organisation and the employee. People who have mentors inside the organisation, tend to be more loyal to the organisation, more resilient to setbacks and find more satisfaction in their work. Mentors are particularly valuable in helping people work through the "plateauing" periods, when they are waiting for the next challenge.

4. Communication

Mentoring increases the quality and quantity of effective communication wherever it crosses internal boundaries - for example, between staff and line departments, between headquarters and the field, or between levels in the hierarchy.

5. Succession planning

Without mentoring, it is hard for senior managers to gain a deep understanding of the talent pool. Mentoring conversations provide a much rounder picture of the individual.

6. Managing the corporate culture

Culture change is a permanent feature in many, if not most, organisations. Selecting mentors, who represent the values and behaviours the organisation wishes to promote, creates a positive cycle of role modelling that reinforces and speeds up cultural change.

7. Diversity

Companies aiming to harness the power of difference in their workforce, or simply wishing to achieve a greater level of equality of opportunity, typically find that mentoring is the most effective means of breaking down cultural, ethnic and gender barriers. Mentors play a critical role in ensuring that people, who come from a different background from the dominant majority of employees, are valued and are able to break the glass ceiling.

The benefits for mentees

Amongst the most common benefits are:

- Obtaining opportunities to network and advice on how to grow networks
- Having available someone sympathetic who will understand difficult situations and help you work your way through them
- Having someone believe in you and your ability
- Being given help to work out what you want from life and work, and how make appropriate choices and sacrifices
- Being given help in developing greater confidence
- Working through tactics to manage relationships with other people
- Becoming more comfortable in dealing with people from unfamiliar backgrounds
- Making sense of feedback from other sources
- Being given opportunity to challenge the organisation's thinking and be challenged in one's own

The benefits for mentors

The benefits are not all for mentees. Mentors learn and develop as well when they become mentors and report these kinds of benefits:

- The learning they take from having to explain intuitive reasoning and in listening to a different perspective
- The opportunity to take reflective space in a hectic daily schedule
- The satisfaction of knowing they have made a difference to someone else
- The intellectual challenge of working on issues for which they do not have to take personal responsibility and that may take them into unfamiliar territory
- Increased skills and reputation

The benefits for line managers

Line managers whose direct reports have a mentor can benefit from improved relationships as the mentee works through how to handle things differently with his or her mentor. The mentor can help the mentee see issues from an alternative perspective and this can be very helpful. It is important that the mentee's line manager support the mentoring relationship, and not be threatened by it.

Further reading

Clutterbuck, D, (2006) *Coaching, Mentoring and Succession Planning*, Clutterbuck Associates
Clutterbuck D, (2005) *Diversity and the mentoring connection*, Clutterbuck Associates,
Clutterbuck, D, (2005) *Retaining Talent*, Clutterbuck Associates

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs provide structure and organisation to the matching and support of mentoring pairs. The *International Standards for Mentoring Programs in Employment (ISMPE)* provide a benchmark for good practice. Critical issues for successful mentoring programs include:

- Preparation, including a sponsorship network and communication
- Maintenance of a steering group
- Recruitment of suitable participants
- Training of both mentors and mentees (mentee training is as important as mentor training)
- Matching and re-matching
- Continuing support for mentoring pairs
- Measurement at key points in the relationship

The role of the mentoring coordinator is critical in making sure all of these elements are managed effectively.

Further reading:

Clutterbuck D, (2006) *Have you succession planned your program co-ordinator*, Clutterbuck Associates
Clutterbuck D, (2005) *How formal should your mentoring program be*, Clutterbuck Associates
Cuerrier, C (2003) *Starting Point for mentoring* Fondation de l'entrepreneurship, Quebec p12
Klasen, N & Clutterbuck, D (2002) *Implementing Mentoring Schemes*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford
Clutterbuck D (2004), *Everyone Needs a Mentor* (3rd Ed), Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.