

### **How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program?**

No matter what your organization's current goals are, developing a structured mentoring program is a powerful way to improve employee performance and bring your company closer to its objectives. Successful mentoring programs drive greater employee satisfaction, stronger retention rates and increased diversity. They're also instrumental in helping management groom high-potential employees at all levels, whether they're new hires straight from undergrad or they're mid-level professionals.

While relationships between mentors and mentees sometimes develop organically, organizations will reap the greatest benefits from creating structured mentoring programs. Based on the expertise of UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, we use the following steps to build a mentoring program that's designed to support the success of your employees as well as your entire organization.

#### **Determine Objectives**

Every organization has a different set of needs and your mentoring program should focus on your company's specific objectives. List your goals for the mentoring program using specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART) as a guide. Keep these objectives top of mind while planning, implementing and improving your program.

#### **Create a Structure**

Once we're clear on your objectives, we design a mentoring structure that supports each of your goals. Consider the following questions:

- ◆ How long will the mentoring program last? (One year should be the maximum).
- ◆ Which employees will be involved?
- ◆ What metrics will you use to measure success?

This is also the time to decide whether you'll use one-on-one mentoring, e-mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, reverse mentoring (in which a younger mentor provides a fresh perspective for an older mentee)—or a combination of these approaches.

#### **Introduce the Program**

Sharing news about your company's mentorship program helps build interest from employees, so be sure to communicate the program's development, progress and successes. This information—as well as details on eligibility and participation requirements—should go out to employees at all levels to generate awareness and support, even among employees who can't join the program yet.

#### **Train Participants and Launch the Program**

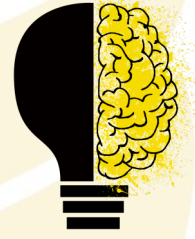
Providing sufficient training for all mentorship participants is one of the most important steps in building a program with long-term success. We try to where possible, train mentees and mentors together to promote a shared understanding of both roles and to lay the groundwork for mentees to become strong mentors in the future.

During training, all participants should:

- ◆ Make a list of goals
- ◆ Connect every goal to a larger organizational objective
- ◆ Set dates for mentor/mentee meetings
- ◆ Learn to provide constructive criticism

#### **Assess Mentorship Progress**

As mentors and mentees develop their relationships and make progress, we check in regularly to make sure everything is going well. For a year-long mentoring, for example, touch base every month to start with & ask whether participants are hitting their milestones and making good Progress, If the participants are on track we then touch base every two months, however if they're off track we help them get back on it.



You can expect that some partnerships won't be a good fit, so it helps to have a procedure in place for dissolving dysfunctional relationships and matching mentees up with new mentors.

#### **Evaluate Effectiveness**

After the mentoring session is complete, we take quantitative measurements such as surveys and interviews, as well as qualitative measurements such as mentee retention, advancement rates and the percentage of successful matches. Remember that the successes and shortcomings of the program provide valuable information for employees and leaders at many levels including:

- ◆ Future mentors and mentees
- ◆ Senior leaders who are interested in how the mentoring program affects organizational goals
- ◆ HR and talent management professionals invested in making the mentoring program more effective

Your evaluation should aim to provide valuable insights for all of these groups.

With the proper planning and structuring, a mentoring program can help your organization do everything from attracting better talent to improving your bottom line. We use these steps as an outline for setting up a strong mentoring framework and improving the program to fuel better results with each new class of mentors and mentees.

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