



Cultivating a Mentor/Coach Mentality

Mentoring and coaching have been cemented as workplace buzzwords for years now, probably so much so that many of us tune out, confident that we already know what “it” means, and yeah, we’re pretty good at that. Well...

Maybe.

Coaching is definitely not mentoring, but mentoring sometimes involves coaching. They are two completely different animals, and if you’re with me, skim through this article for a quick refresher. If I’ve lost you—hop on this fast moving train before it’s too late. Mentoring and coaching are bona-fide staples of Fortune 500 and other people-oriented companies. But you don’t have to be a Fortune 500 company, or even a mid-sized employer to realize the benefits of coaching and mentoring. Read on to discover how implementing these seemingly common buzzwords can reawaken your culture and, in turn, beef up your bottom line.

What’s the Big Deal?

Let’s start with a few statistics on mentoring (see note at the end of the article).

- 96% of Fortune 500 companies report that mentoring is an important employee development tool. 75% said it is a key factor in their own personal success.
- 71% of Fortune 500 and private companies use mentoring in their organizations.
- 77% of companies with mentoring programs indicate that it improves both employee retention and job performance.
- A survey of college and graduate students showed that 60% said mentoring is a key factor in job selection.
- Furthermore, new employees who are paired with a mentor are twice as likely to remain in their jobs than those who do not receive mentorships (read: cost-savings to avoid rehiring & retraining).
- In one study with people who had experienced real mentors, half of them said the mentoring experience “changed my life.”
- Only 15-20% of standard formal training is relevant to employee needs because it’s designed for everyone. Mentoring allows instruction and advice to be tailored to individual needs.
- A survey reported in Fortune in January 2000 indicated that of the top 25 firms, 76% offer mentoring programs.

Hear the money talk? Mentoring and coaching are two powerful practices that do more than transfer knowledge, encourage leadership, and energize your most important resource. They also offer hiring incentives for a better talent pool, save time and money in rehiring and retraining staff, and contribute to a company’s bottom line by streamlining processes, coaxing a productive culture, and retaining your star employees.

C & M Differentiators

So what’s the difference between coaching and mentoring? The website Management Mentors (www.management-mentors.com) offers some excellent differentiators between the two processes:

Coaching is task oriented, performance driven, and short term. Think: Events. The focus is on concrete issues, such as managing more effectively or learning how to think strategically. The coach guides employees through a thinking process, helping them unlock their inner wisdom so they can solve their own problems with confidence, rather than imposing a solution. Coaching takes more time than giving orders, but it offers long term benefits and satisfaction to both the employee and the manager (Tobin). And, once an employee successfully acquires the skills, the coach is no longer needed.

“Five years from now,
you’re the same person
except for the people
you’ve met and the
books you’ve read.”

John Wooden

“Coach/Mentor,” continued from pg. 1.

Mentoring is relationship oriented, development driven, and long term. Think: Journey. Mentors focus on overall development and create, monitor and contribute to the plan to get there, including things such as work/life balance, self-confidence, self-perception, and how the personal influences the professional. Mentoring develops the individual not only for the current job, but also for the future. To be successful, this requires time for both partners to learn about one another and build trust that creates an environment in which the mentee feels secure in sharing the real issues that impact his or her success. A mentor is someone you can learn from without having to make all the same mistakes he or she did.

Tips

So now you know the difference. Sounds pretty good, right? Maybe you even want to give it a go with your people. Now what? A gazillion websites and a million wonderful books explore the individual topics of mentoring and coaching, so we obviously can't do justice to the ways and means to fully develop these practices in your organization, but we can offer a few tips to get you on your way.

To help put this list of suggestions together, we consulted John Trombley, organizational development consultant at The Village Business Institute here in Fargo. John regularly interacts with businesses in the areas of coaching, organizational assessments, group process facilitation, conflict mediation, internal investigations, and corporate training.

John points out that the biggest hurdle supervisors face when trying to cultivate a coach/mentor mentality is that they probably became a supervisor without training to become one. “If you promote Bill to head up your widget department because he's good with widgets, that doesn't mean he'll automatically be a good supervisor,” John says. “But that happens a lot.”

So if you find yourself thinking your situation sounds a lot like Bill's, read on and then don't be afraid to ask your company leaders for help (training, tools, etc.) to become a better supervisor—because that is something that *can* be learned. If, on the other hand, you're a business owner and some of your people have been promoted without any supervisory training, John advises, “Helping people recognize that one of their roles is coaching, and then preparing them for that role, enables them—and by extension, the whole company—to be successful.”

Specific Ideas for Supervisors

Be accountable and hold your staff accountable. John says this means set goals and clarify expectations. The more you define responsibilities, monitor progress, measure results, gather feedback, and formulate action plans with key steps for achieving those goals, the more ownership, consistency and commitment to action you'll begin to see in your workplace.

Ask questions. The premise of coaching is that employees already have all the answers they need—but for some reason they're stuck. These people do not need advice. They simply need you to dig beneath the surface, ask open-ended questions, listen emphatically, reframe situations, give feedback, and help them move forward to reach their development goals.

Meet it head-on. Objectively identify performance problems, behaviors, or limitations (time, training, tools) that need improvement, and try not to make it about the person. Ask for your employee's view of the situation, show confidence in his ability to resolve things, and ask for his help in solving the problem as well as determining how it can be prevented in the future.

“Coach/Mentor,” continued on next pg.

Happy Anniversary

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19 Years



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Vice President/Employer Relations
15 Years



TANIA COOK, CSP
Lead Administrative Staffing Consultant
3 Years

Meet the Staff

Kendra Goette

“Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.” This quote could have been written by Kendra Goette, staffing consultant at Preference Personnel. Three years ago, Kendra joined Darlene Brandvold and Todd Obbink in the industrial division where they handle skilled and unskilled labor, short and long-term assignments as well as same day, temp-to-hire, and direct hire arrangements. “I’m a fast-paced, type-A person, so I welcome change. My favorite part of my job is interacting with a variety of people. I like to be up, moving around, talking to people, and I don’t like them to wait.” Whirlwind, yes. Slacker, definitely not.

So what happened when all that energy first exploded on the industrial scene? “Todd and Dar had worked together for so long. Then I came in and shook things up. We laugh about things now. We’ve really matured as a team. We have fun, support each other, and really listen to each other. When someone’s out of the office, we can just pick up where they left off. It’s a great advantage for our clients and applicants.”

Darlene agrees, adding that the goal of their division is to bring out the best in their candidates. “Kendra is high energy, positive, and she responds quickly to our clients’ needs. A smile and upbeat attitude like hers immediately puts applicants at ease.” Kendra does more than contact client companies and interview and place applicants, however. She’s also involved in drug testing, Preference’s front desk, a little sales, and community-wide recruiting. Several times a year she speaks at ND Job Service, MN Workforce, Rasmussen College, and a variety of career fairs. This keeps the applicant pool swimming with talent, but even more than those venues, Preference’s best form of recruitment is, and has been for years, referrals.

“When you treat people with respect—don’t talk down to anyone—people come back to you time after time. And they bring their friends and family with them,” she says. And the jobs are there. The industrial division has expanded into delivery and cooking jobs, and is always open to visiting about different types of positions. “Applicants can be on our payroll and drive now. It’s a great addition to our offerings. We have so many talented people come through our doors, and we fill job orders so fast that much of the time we can’t even get them on our website.”

Good problem to have. Kendra’s enthusiasm for her work and team is contagious. “I think of all my co-workers as my second family. I feel like I’ve grown up here.” When not burning up the industrial division at Preference, Kendra enjoys long walks (come on spring!), shopping, telling jokes, and spending time with her husband, daughter, and other family and friends.



Kendra Goette

“Coach/Mentor,” continued from pg. 2.

Delegate more, supervise less. Or as John puts it, “Empower your people.” Once you’ve: (a) articulated the results you want, (b) set parameters, (c) determined what support employees need, and (d) set times to conduct progress reviews along the way, step back and let your people shine. It will build their confidence as well as pride in their work.

Aid career development. Collaboratively set plans that define how your employees will prepare themselves—from training to work assignments—to grow their skills and capabilities. Develop your people to their fullest potential by providing training opportunities, challenging projects and assignments as well as thoughtful feedback. Find out why the talented employees you wanted to keep left you.

Communication. See a pattern here? Don’t save feedback for the annual review. Some of the best teachable moments happen spontaneously. “It’s important to let folks know that the work they do matters to you. When you see positive performance, validate specifically what was good. When it’s bad, that’s a private conversation,” John says.

Show sincerity, ask questions to get your employees thinking, and stay positive. Finally, get to know your people. If you understand an employee’s motivators, personal talents, and the ways in which he or she is likely to behave and communicate, you stand a much greater chance of effectively coaching an employee to success within your organization.

“Coach/Mentor,” cont. on back page.

For more information
on the types of coaching
opportunities John offers
at The Village Business
Institute, you are welcome
to call him at
451-4953.



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information for future newsletters.

And be sure to call us with
your next hiring need.

"Coach/Mentor," continued from pg. 3.

Your people will not likely stretch to their full potential without dedicated guidance that inspires, engages, and facilitates. Whether you want to develop careers, solve problems, overcome conflicts, or re-motivate staff, good coaching and mentoring practices are a highly effective way to help people increase self-direction, self-esteem, efficacy, and accomplishments. And while you can't force anyone to change, you can provide an environment that makes it more likely your staff will want to learn, grow, and succeed.

The big push in both categories, then, boils down to expressing confidence and investing in your people. And your company is only as strong—as energized—as your people. Give them the tools and experiences to soar, and your business will rise above the competition.

Author's note: The mentoring statistics come from a very informative Word document free-floating on the internet with no specific web address. It's a virtual treasure-trove of information, applications, sample evaluations, etc. If you Google "mentoring in the workplace statistics" it should be the first result—a Word document by the state of NH mistakenly spelled, "What it workplace mentoring." Check it out.

RESOURCES:

- "Coaching strategies and tactics." <http://www.exforsys.com/career-center/coaching-mentoring/coaching-tips-and-techniques.html>
- "The differences between coaching & mentoring." <http://www.management-mentors.com/resources/coaching-mentoring-differences/>
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