

MENTORING – AN ENRICHING ALLIANCE



Successful mentoring relationships can be a boon in both personal and professional life. You may have been mentored by a teacher at school who helped you understand different careers, or a sports coach who assisted you in building your teamwork skills, or even a colleague/manager at work who helped you identify your true areas of interest. These fundamental relationships helped determine or refine your passions and strengths.

While the purpose of mentoring may seem like a simple concept, it is surprising to know how beneficial mentoring relationships can be, especially in the workplace.

(This tutorial is part of our [IT Leadership & Best Practices Guide](#). Use the right-hand menu to navigate.)

Why Workplace Mentoring?

According to [Forbes](#),

- Almost all Fortune 500[®] companies engage in active mentoring
- In fact, companies with under 5,000 employees have recorded a 200%-300% increase in interest in mentorship
- In 2019 and forward, mentoring-led approaches by leadership are perceived as smart investments

In the **workplace, mentoring** is an effective way to help people identify their true interests, practice time-management, and/or facilitate progression on their chosen career path. Moreover, strategically developing an individual's talent not only contributes to the company's growth and innovation, but

also lets him/her succeed in their career and life goals.

In my opinion, mentoring adds value, irrespective of where you are in your career. We can all use help and guidance from those we trust. In fact, the mentoring cycle comes full circle when your mentees start passing on the lessons learned to their mentees.

How Does It Work?

Many young, **up-and-coming leaders** desire mentorship in the workplace. When you talk to great leaders and thriving individuals, you learn that behind their journey towards their goals, stands a mentor (or maybe a few) who helped them get there. If you're lucky, you will find mentors who may last throughout your career. *An effective mentor encourages the mentee to venture down a path that was otherwise closed or unknown, and achieve something they thought was unachievable, or never really thought about.* Mentors inculcate habits or good practices that many-a-times stick with the mentee for the rest of his/her career.

In turn, learning to **serve as a mentor** is a personal and professional development experience, challenging you to reflect on your own actions and shortcomings over time.

Moreover, the mentors must share sincere, constructive feedback that outlines the benefit/outcomes and ensure the feedback is shaped in a way that suits the individual (for example, celebrate wins, correct quietly, etc.). Mentors need to keep in mind that whenever something goes wrong, they must encourage the mentee to analyze and fix it and learn from the experience. While such situations may lead to difficult conversations, these are imperative to the learning process.

As a mentor, I remember once one of my mentees and I spoke about the next steps in his career. A few weeks later, this person called me to let me know he was leaving the company, and why. He had quickly acted upon our conversation and made a move that was right for him. While he left my team and I was disappointed to lose a top performer, the role he selected has paid huge dividends for him professionally and filled multiple skill gaps. We continue to talk frequently and provide each other advice.

In another scenario, an individual and I spoke regularly and he shared that he was tired of doing the same job and felt bored in his role. We discussed his true passion and the type of work he wanted to do. While it took time and we had multiple conversations, he eventually found the right role and today, has taken on significantly more responsibility. Sometimes your role as a mentor is just to listen and let your mentee work through the process on their own. In this case, patience won over making a short-term decision simply to change roles.

As a mentee myself, I have been lucky to have multiple mentors in my career, who have helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses. Each has provided me with sage advice that has impacted me both professionally and personally. Each of my mentors has challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone and take calculated risks. Without their guidance, I would not have achieved what I have, nor been able to serve as a mentor to others.

But Does Mentoring Really Matter That Much?

Mentors can help mentees learn the culture of the company and develop relationships across the group. For new employees, these difference-makers can prove to be a crucial resource during their learning curve. Given that mentors have the experience and battle-scars young employees

have not yet cultivated, they can very well come up with concrete strategies and decision logic to educate and enrich others.

Mentoring significantly improves employee retention as mentees feel more engaged, leading to a happier and more committed workforce. Most importantly, **it helps the company identify future leaders at an early stage.**

Once you have cultivated your employees into key, confident, sought-after team players, it is easier to transition them in larger, more strategic positions.

When an employee feels like they have had time invested in them, they will be more likely to invest their time back in the company. The more engagement and investment employees have in a company, the more likely it is that they will stay with the company longer.

Relationship building requires time, but mentor/mentee interactions are some of the best times at the workplace and often the highlight of your day—or career!

Read this another interesting post from Mike - '[The Center of Excellence: Necessity or Fad?](#)', to understand how many organizations are establishing corporate Centers of Excellence (CoE) to provide best practices and drive innovation.'