

BUILDING AND MENTORING NEW LEADERS

Mentoring is one of many tools that is available for management and an employee to enhance their professional opportunities.

Deliberate learning is a cornerstone of success

Failures and successes are powerful teachers

Leaders need to share their experiences

Development of the mentoring relationship matures over time

Mentoring is a joint venture

The term “mentor” has its origin in Greek mythology. Mentor was the loyal friend and advisor of Odysseus (also known as Ulysses) and teacher of his son Telemachus. By current definition it means a wise and loyal advisor; a coach; a wise and trusted counselor and teacher.

Mentoring has many dimensions, limited by the commitment and creativity of the participants. But in all cases it entails three components: a mentor (the coach or teacher), the mentee (the recipient of the advise) and effective two-way communication between them.

Evolution of the mentoring relationship

On-going communications

Mentoring can be a management tool to develop leadership skills of employees and can be used by employees to learn how to improve their leadership effectiveness.

Mentoring is a tool through which wisdom based upon experience is shared, while at the same time providing insights to questions and issues confronting the mentee. These questions can range from:

What is an appropriate career path for me to become an outstanding leader in the field of conservation?

to

How do I handle a difficult situation with a co-worker, supervisor, client or assignment?

Benefits for the mentee

Benefits for the mentor

In the development of the mentoring relationship both mentor and the mentee must engage each other in an appropriate manner for the experience to be effective. From a mentor's perspective, consider your ability to aid or facilitate but not to assuming the responsibility of the mentee's decision-making process. The mentor is most effective if one can focus attention on the goal or issue recognizing that there may be a need to build a foundation on which to grow. Often background information is needed before the mentee can adequately understand the issue or circumstance. Not only can the mentor advise but can aid the mentee to develop analytic skills and confidence by leading them through a thought process that helps them make good decisions. The Socratic questioning process can be very effective. A challenge of the mentor is to accurately assess the needs and the context of the mentee and to provide useful information, insights and often alternatives at the correct level and in an orderly sequence.

Characteristics of a good mentor

In summary, the effective mentor gives the mentee roots, well implanted where they can receive sustenance, but also wings so that he or she may attain greater heights.

The mentee, on the other hand, is challenged to understand their own situation and the potential/limitations of their mentor or mentors. They must clearly assume the responsibility for their use of the mentor by recognizing that only they can fully integrate

the mentor's insights into their individual set of responsibilities and circumstances. The mentee must evaluate the mentors input and utilize the guidance that fits the circumstances.

Characteristics of the mentee

Strategic and tactical balance

Alternative mentoring approaches

A cardinal rule of mentorship is that the mentee builds on the experiences of the mentors, not hides behind the mentor. The mentee is responsible for their choices and actions. Often the mentee, aided by the development of an appropriate relationship over the short or long-term, can achieve more than the mentor by strengthening his or her own professional fabric with strong strands of insight from experience.

From an organizational standpoint there can be significant value to building a mentoring process into your strategic plan.

Develop your vision

Consider what you call the mentoring program

Identify specific purposes of the initiative

Analyze organizational support

Choose appropriate champion(s)

Consider positioning

Decide levels of formality

Choose delivery modes

Identify roadblocks

Mentoring is a powerful tool that when effectively used enhances both the mentor and mentee.

The mentoring process

Potential pitfalls

Ethical guidelines

Resources available:

Mentoring Toolkit

Be strategic about mentoring by Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones

Reaping the Benefits of Success

Gordon Wenk, Director
Michigan Department of Agriculture
Environmental Stewardship Division

Joseph L. Lomax, President
Lomax Morey Consulting, LLC
Executive Board, NACD
Supervisor, Cape Atlantic Conservation
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