

**CORNERSTONE CONSULTING**

**Mentoring Matters:  
Briefings for Business Leaders**

**Topic:  
Group Mentoring**

**QUESTION: I'VE BEEN HEARING A LOT LATELY ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF "GROUP" MENTORING. WHAT IS IT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?**

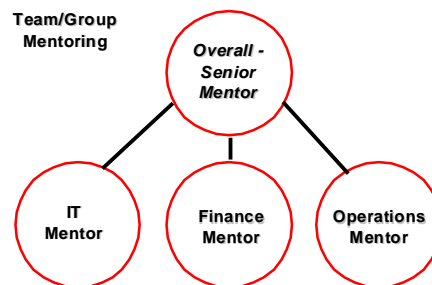
For years, we have been talking about the concept of "Team Mentoring". Recently we too, have been hearing the phrase "Group Mentoring" and what we have found is that the concepts of both are the same – it's just the difference in title/verbiage. So for the benefit of the readers of this Newsletter, we will use the terminology Team/Group Mentoring to ensure clarity.

When an organization desires to roll-out a mentoring initiative, two things happen in the beginning stages. First, the organization feels that this is a great idea – this is something that it would like to do. In fact many times the response is, "We should have done this before!" The next thing that happens is that individuals, when approached about acting in the role of Mentor, have an initial, big concern about "time".

"Time"

It is the number one challenge of implementing any mentoring initiative.

But with a Team/Group Mentoring focus, the "time" factor is shared by several individuals. Look at the following example:



This illustrates how a Team/Group Mentoring relationship works. Let's say that I have an *Overall Senior Mentor* that is helping and guiding me in my career as I move through the organization. As a Mentee, I trust this individual and his/her guidance and instruction and I am fortunate that his/her focus is targeted towards my development. But as my Mentor and I are looking at areas where I might need some additional assistance, we find that it would be very beneficial for me to receive guidance and instruction in other areas – Operations, IT, and Finance.

So what I really need are additional Mentors – one in Operations, one in IT and one in Finance. I respect my *Overall Senior Mentor* and all of his/her skills/competencies, experiences and knowledge, but these are not areas of expertise for my Mentor.

What this offers to me as a Mentee is that I have the *best of all worlds!* I have a targeted and focused development plan that is designed to meet my needs. There is a "team" or "group" of individuals that is working together to foster

my development.

What this offers to each of the Mentors is that they can provide guidance and instruction in each of their areas of expertise. No one Mentor has to be “all things” to me as the Mentee. By using a team or group of Mentors, I will have several experienced, well-established members of their profession who can fulfill the various mentoring roles. In addition, the time that each Mentor spends with me is much less than if any one of them was solely trying to fill all my needs.

Another added benefit, is that unlike the one-on-one mentoring relationship, Team/Group Mentoring can involve a diverse group of Mentors. Many times we choose Mentors who are similar to ourselves. With Team/Group Mentoring I have access to various and diverse thoughts, ideas, visions, ways to tackle problems and creatively view possibilities.

The real goal in a mentoring relationship is individual development tailored to the individual. Team/Group Mentoring can make that happen as well as mitigating the number one concern – time.

### **BUSINESS ISSUES: WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN GROUP MENTORING BE IMPLEMENTED?**

In addition to the benefits of time and a targeted, focused development plan for an individual Mentee, this focus of mentoring can also be beneficial when there are more Mentees than available, qualified Mentors. This is primarily utilized in short-term transitions or when the sharing of knowledge or insight of one particular person is critical.

**But what about Mentoring initiatives in a “team” or “group” setting? Can they still be beneficial if team/group members are paired with other team members?**

The answer is **yes**. In fact, a true team environment with all members' sights set on the same goals and objectives is ideal for Mentoring.

Many times a group of individuals is dubbed a “team”, but they haven't been brought together with a collaborative set of skills that actually make them a team. Even the reward systems that are set up for the team may actually still reward the individual rather than the group as a whole.

But if all things are in place to make a true team, then the goal of the members will be to support and help one another so that each person is the best he or she can be -- ultimately making the entire team stronger.

This true team situation provides an incredibly supportive environment in which to share knowledge and experience through Mentoring.

### **WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN MENTORING WITHIN A TEAM/GROUP ENVIRONMENT**

Many of the same elements that must be considered with any mentoring initiative should also be considered when addressing mentoring that will take place within a team/group environment.

- **Determine the goals of the Mentoring program.** Define what you want to accomplish with mentoring. The team/group should clearly identify what should be achieved, how achievements will be tied to specific business objectives, the way in which results will be measured, and specifically what is expected of Mentors as well as Mentees.

- **Choose the right people.** It's best to capitalize on the knowledge and experience that exists within the team. But don't make decisions on who is going to “mentor” based just on *expertise*. We all know individuals that are *good at what they do*, but could not teach or mentor others. Be sure that you not only consider an individual's area of expertise, but consider if they have the pre-requisite skills/ competencies to be a good Mentor (i.e., oral communication, listening, coaching, interpersonal, etc.). Putting someone in a Mentor role just because he/she has expertise in an area and not considering the qualifications to be in the Mentor role, is asking for disaster.

Based on the way that the team/group is constructed, each individual member has areas of expertise to share with others. Other team/group members may need assistance in these areas or it's possible that no one needs assistance in these areas. Therefore there may be some individuals in the Mentor role that may have more than one Mentee and

at the same time this same Mentor may be in the role of Mentee while learning an area of knowledge where he/she is deficient.

- **Develop an action plan.** After ensuring that you have qualified individuals that understand their roles, the next step is to have a PLAN. Effective mentoring relationships begin by outlining objectives, assessing existing knowledge, and determining the best method of learning.

If the environment is supportive, and all participants are eager to make it work, mentoring within a team/ group environment can be an ideal structure to reinforce skills and to foster continued learning -- making team/group-member mentoring a winning situation for everyone involved.

**Questions or feedback - please contact us:**

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