



**CORNERSTONE CONSULTING**

**Mentoring Matters:  
Briefings for Business Leaders**

**Topic:  
Mentoring and Leadership Development**

**QUESTION: HOW DOES MENTORING HELP LEADERS AND MANAGERS GROW AND DEVELOP?**

Growing leadership expertise in a short period of time within an organization is a continual challenge. The speed of projects and the speed of the need for innovation has increased so that we are shoving people into positions of management and leadership in an ever-increasing pace.

How are they going to learn? But more important, how are they going to be able to *quickly* apply what they have learned within their organizational culture and business environment?

In the past, an individual would learn skills and knowledge through training, education and experience, and the organization could afford to wait around for him/her to come up to speed. But today, with the fast pace, organizations need to have their people learn – and be able to apply that learning – more quickly.

Studies have proven that there are limits as to how fast you can drive education and training and have it be effective. Also, due to economic constraints within organizations, many times the problem is not *how fast* to drive the education and training, but how to even find available dollars and resources to get it to individuals that are destined to lead the organization now and in the future.

What can organizations do to help solve this dilemma and assist in the transition between “education” and “experience”?

The answer is **Mentoring!**

By definition a **Mentor** is an individual with the experience, knowledge, and/or skills of a specific content area who is able, willing, and available to share this information with another individual.

There is nothing in this definition that denotes that the Mentor must be older, of a higher job grade level, or have been with the organization for a longer period of time. The most important aspect is that the Mentor has “experience”, “knowledge” and “skills” that he/she wants to share with someone who needs them. In many cases, it may not even be the “knowledge” or the “skills”, but the “**experience**” – the application of that knowledge – that is important.

We have learned that under the direction of the Mentor, the learner is given immediate access to valuable insights and past experiences. Within mentoring relationships, individuals are learning by *doing*. Individuals are able to *practice* what they are learning.

Another advantage of mentoring to an organization is that it showcases those individuals that have the necessary skills/competencies to coach and develop others. Many times these are the same types of skills/competencies that an organization wants displayed in its leadership. Even individuals that do not wish to take on a “managerial” or “supervisory” role within the organization can satisfy a need to “lead” through a mentoring relationship as well as allowing the organization to tap into a greater pool of talent/skill.

Many times individuals do not get any experience in specific coaching roles until after they have been given the title of “manager” or “supervisor”. This means they are in a *reactive* mode of learning these skills/competencies. If individuals have the opportunity to learn and practice these skills/competencies as a Mentor before they obtain the title of “manager” or “supervisor”, it is *proactive* and much better for them as well as the organization.

**BUSINESS ISSUE: WE ARE STRUGGLING TO DEVELOP OUR MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM BUT THEY'RE TOO BUSY TO ATTEND ANY TRAINING.**

We hear this as a common problem facing many organizational training and development functions.

Previously, when the economy and organizations were struggling, most of the training and development budgets were cut and therefore trying to provide the necessary learning and development for managers and leaders was not only difficult, but sometimes impossible. But because it was well known within the organization that budgets had been slashed, this lack of training and development was not only accepted but reasons were “understood”.

Now organizations find themselves with a somewhat more robust economy, but continued budget limitations as organizations are trying to be more cost cautious.

Add to this the fact that during this time of renewal, managers and leaders are working *double time* to make up for previous losses as well as take advantage of the “good times”.

How do you ensure that your leaders and managers continue to obtain the learning and development that they need under these two constraints – time and money?

Mentoring relationships can be the answer.

***Mentoring relationships allow individuals to learn while they are doing.***

Mentoring is one of the most cost-effective and efficient tools an organization has for the development of its employees.

There is a wealth of knowledge and talent within an organization and the challenge is to “tap into” that knowledge and make it available to other individuals that need it.

A mentoring relationship is beneficial in that it provides for an individual (Mentee/Protégé):

- individualized attention from someone (a Mentor) who has a great deal of knowledge and experience and many times a degree of success and respect within the organization
- direct information and experiences from a Mentor which builds a degree of confidence through guidance, assistance and support
- specifically tailored, developmental activities that allow a Mentee the ability to take risks, display skills/competencies and reinforce self-confidence in a type of “controlled” set of circumstances
- the ability to practice obtained learning in his/her own job position as a Mentor can illustrate how specific learning transfers to “real life” experiences on the job.
- a champion that many times can provide clear direction to positions in the organization that match the interest and skills/competencies of the Mentee.

But most of all it uses internal talent and creates a true Learning Organization where individuals are responsible for the learning and development of each other and the sharing of information.

This can be accomplished with a minimum disruption to an individual's job, projects, assignments or responsibilities.

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

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