



CORNERSTONE CONSULTING

**Mentoring Matters:
Briefings for Business Leaders**

**Topic:
Team Mentoring**

QUESTION: I KEEP HEARING A LOT ABOUT *TEAM MENTORING*; WHAT IS IT REALLY?

The concept of TEAM MENTORING has evolved due to historical incidents involving mismatches, the problems associated with male/female mentoring relationships and diverse cultural mentoring relationships.

It is conceivable that a given Mentee may have more than one Mentor (being sure that each Mentor addresses a different aspect of the Mentee's professional needs and pursuits). Team Mentoring can also mean that one Mentor has several Mentees. This is primarily utilized in short-term transitions where the number of Mentees in need exceeds the number of available Mentors or when the sharing of knowledge or insight of one particular person is critical.

Team Mentoring is based on accomplishment as a team effort. One Mentor may work with the Mentee in a specific skill/competency area, while another Mentor may be working with the Mentee in a networking and career pathing area. It is also conceivable, with the Team Mentoring concept, that at the same time an individual is a Mentee receiving one focus of mentoring, the same individual might also be playing the role of a Mentor for another individual with another focus of mentoring.

Usually mentoring is a one-on-one relationship. But by using team Mentors, each Mentee will have several "experienced, well-established members of their profession" who can fulfill the various mentoring roles.

In informal, one-on-one mentoring, an experienced, well-established person picks out a promising Mentee. Often the choice of Mentee is, at least partially, determined by a sharing of interests and backgrounds.

Unlike the one-on-one mentoring relationship, Team Mentoring can involve a diverse group including experienced, well-established people as well as newcomers. Newcomers have the opportunity to gain access to a network that will offer support, important information, and contacts. This "Team" helps socialize newcomers to the corporate culture.

Participants may develop close ties and friendships with members of the group, but the emphasis will not be on the relationship, but on the functions of the relationship. From the Team Mentoring perspective, mentoring for a Mentee, is a team effort.

The Mentee is responsible for his or her development and learns to use Mentors as resources. While the Mentors may act as guides or coaches, the burden of learning, and the time commitment involved, is shared.

MENTORING WITHIN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Traditional Mentoring programs, where an individual Mentee is paired with another single individual, a Mentor, provides a golden opportunity for employees to learn new skills. But what about Mentoring programs in a team setting? Can they still be beneficial if team 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 groups of individuals have been dubbed a team, but they haven't been brought together with a collaborative amount of skills that actually make 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 the 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. And this true team situation provides an incredibly supportive environment in which to share knowledge and experience through Mentoring

HOW TO MAKE IT EFFECTIVE

- **Determine the goals.** Define what you want to accomplish with mentoring. Teams 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 what is expected of Mentors as well as Mentees.
- **Choose the right people.** It is best to capitalize on the knowledge and experience that exists within the team. But, if the expertise simply isn't there, members must also be open to bringing in Mentors from outside the group.
- **Develop an action plan.** Effective mentoring begins by outlining objectives, assessing existing knowledge, and determining the best method of learning. For example, some individuals learn more quickly when they are shown how to do something and then are allowed to practice on their own. Others prefer to first read about the subject and follow up with questions. Still other individuals learn best with a combination of practice and reading.

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

Questions or feedback - please contact us:

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