

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINAL QUESTION

What forms of mentoring programs are available at other big companies? And who are the sponsors and participants for these programs?

INTRODUCTION

A well-structured formal mentoring program helps to build loyalty among new employees, provides an opportunity for employees to test their skills and challenge themselves, and mentors could gain greater confidence and have a sense of greater job security and job satisfaction as well. ¹ Especially during the transitional period, whether it's for a company or for individual person, mentoring could ease the uncertainty associated with change.²

LATEST TRENDS IN MENTORING PROGRAMS

As millennials enter into workforce and are expected to be the next generation of leaders, companies are establishing innovative ways of mentoring this new cohort.

1. Reverse Mentoring

Reverse mentoring is defined as the pairing of a younger, junior employee acting as mentor to share expertise with an older, senior colleague as the mentee.³ Senior employees could benefit from this nontraditional form of mentoring by getting to know new technology, latest professional trends as well as the new generation, and at the same time, younger workers are offered a window to the leadership roles of the organization, and are better prepared to take over the business once needed. Reverse mentoring is an innovative and cost-effective professional development tool that capitalizes on building bridges between generations.⁴

Examples:

Burson-Marsteller, DELL, Procter & Gamble, Time Warner, GE

Procter & Gamble's "Mentor Up" program pairs mid- or junior- level female managers with senior-level male executives, which significantly reduces turnover among female managers.⁵

2. Group Mentoring

The company sets up a technology platform that allows employees to define mentoring in their own term. This is a less resource-intensive method which requires least amount of HR intervention, and can overcome physical constraint, and it's particularly popular among telecom companies.

Examples:

AT&T: Leadership circles. Typically, three executives advise a group of nine to ten employees on an internal social networking platform, which has features such as community forums, document-sharing spaces, group polling, and calendars that announce events and mentor availability. ⁹

BT: Dare2share. A social collaboration platform which allows employees to share their knowledge through short audio and video podcasts, RSS feeds, discussion threads, as well as traditional training documents to their peer colleagues.⁹

3. Anonymous Mentoring

This method uses psychological testing and a background review to match mentees with trained mentors outside the organization or certified experts inside the organization.⁹ The company finance the program, and the anonymity of the program provides participants with a safe environment to share their personal experience and it's very flexible. This is an approach worth exploring.

In all, these new programs are particularly created to satisfy millennials' needs for mobility, collaboration and immediate feedback. But they could also be extended to other generations in the organization because all employees want to feel valued, empowered and engaged at work.

KEY ELEMENTS IN CREATING A SUCCESSFUL REVERSE MENTORING PROGRAM

1. Leadership support. Visible and sincere support from upper management team signals the significance of the program, and encourages the commitment of participants.
2. Matching process. Participants' perceived input into the matching process are critical to the success of a mentoring program.⁶ Source of input could include HR peoples' personal knowledge of participants, interviews of participants, soliciting choice lists from participants, organizing mutual activities, and pair the subjective data with standardized assessment tools.
3. Training and development. Training can assist participants in getting the relationship started, help participants understand their roles and responsibilities, and enable both participants to manage their expectations.⁷
4. Technology. The administration and implementation of a mentoring program, especially a large volume one, needs an individual technology platform to constantly communicate information to participants, generate the most suitable mentor-mentee matches by housing and analyzing data, and also track, measure and demonstrate program success by running customized report.⁸
5. The role of HR department. Typically, the HR department coordinates mentoring programs and functions as program manager. This involves ensuring leadership support and resources needed, preparing written guidelines, sending out notices describing the program, facilitating the data gathering and initial pairings of mentors and mentees, and offering trainings. HR people should also be responsible for the evaluation procedure from the beginning, and if the individuals are not comfortable with one another or are not satisfied with the arrangement, HR should work as a mediator to adjust the pairing.

CONCLUSION

It is important for companies to evaluate developing goals for their employees in order before crafting a mentoring program. Both mentors and mentees should be actively involved into the whole process with senior leaders acting as key stakeholders and HR department as the administrator and coordinator. It's also important to keep in mind that these programs should not violate nondiscrimination requirements by discouraging certain protected groups.¹⁰

References

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Appendix

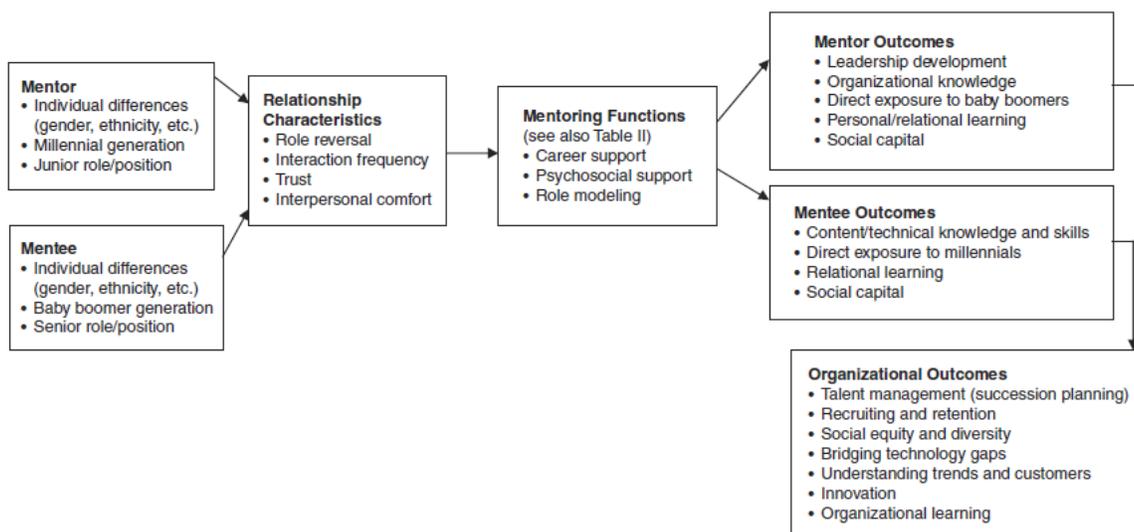


FIGURE 1. Key Variables in the Prototypical Reverse Mentoring Relationship*