

Becoming a Mentor

It is often said that the best way to learn is to teach, but this idiom extends beyond the traditional classroom image of learning. Individuals can continue to develop vocational skills by teaching and coaching others through mentoring relationships.

While it is true that mentors provide expertise to help less experienced individuals advance their careers, enhance their education, and build their network, many benefits also accrue to the adviser, all of which are achievable without a huge time commitment.

Mentoring as a Networking Tool

Mentoring promotes greater congeniality among professionals within an organization and across the industry, and support networks often build from these relationships that are mutually beneficial to mentors, as well as protégés.

Mentoring as a Skill Builder

Think a Baby Boomer can't learn anything from a Gen-X or Gen-Y? Think again. Mentoring creates opportunities for experienced professionals to hone their skills in such disciplines as leadership, coaching, recruiting, teaching and communications. It also exposes mentors to divergent styles, personalities, thoughts, and cultures. All of this induces internal reflection, which in turn enhances your own skills.

Mentoring as a Tool for Keeping Current

You wouldn't teach someone antiquated ways, would you...? Mentoring forces you to stay current in your field by keeping abreast of the latest developments, even if only to avoid embarrassment of being corrected by your protégé. Sometimes still, mentoring leads to better ways of doing things. Like a child's annoying question, "Are we there yet?" protégés are famous for questioning status quo and asking "Why?" These types of questions trigger critical thinking about products and processes, and often lead to improvements.

Mentoring as a Promotional Tool

Experience gained through mentoring facilitates the professional growth of the coach as well as the apprentice, and makes that person more valuable to the organization and the industry. Knowing that you need to lead by example, mentoring provides you with the motivation to work harder and more successfully, which in turn will lead to greater recognition and advancement.

Mentoring as an Energizer

Mentors are rewarded with invaluable personal and professional satisfaction by simply sharing their knowledge and skills, and imparting their wisdom and experience in helping others succeed.

Mentoring rejuvenates your career and gives you greater satisfaction on the job.

Mentoring as a Development and Retention Tool

Mentoring is an effective tool for addressing succession planning and retention issues. Regardless of whether your organization has a formal mentoring program (some do), coaching up-and-coming talent not only grooms promising employees for advancement to the executive ranks - it avoids costly hiring expenses associated with going to the outside, and also ensures a better cultural fit by building talent that allows promotion from within. By benefiting your own organization or industry, you further your own development by demonstrating leadership and commitment.

Mentoring as a Legacy

Finally, coaching others enables you to bequeath lasting effects on your protégés, your organization, and your profession. Mentoring imparts knowledge in protégés that inspires them to think of even newer ideas for future generations, and mentoring relationships within your own organization allow you to pass on the corporate culture and values to your successors.

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