



EXAMINING THE CASE FOR MENTORING



Provided by:
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In the past decade, there has been a dramatic shift from the traditional workplace to one that is mobile, global, and continuously evolving. To attract, retain, and engage a high-performing

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workforce, today’s employers will need to create an environment where employees can pursue their career and personal life goals while increasing their contributions to their organization.

In an interview conducted by Federal News Radio, Ron Sanders, a Senior Executive Advisor for Booz Allen Hamilton and former Chief Human Capital Officer at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence laid out the issues that organizations must address to bolster

their positions as desirable employers. During the interview, Mr. Sanders referred to a recent report entitled **“Keeping Talent: Strategies for Retaining Valued Federal Employees”** that was developed by Booz Allen and the Partnership for Public Service. The two-part report addressed the critical issues of attrition and retention. In his interview, Mr. Sanders noted that intangibles are the most important factors in helping employees decide to stay with an organization. *“If the employee has a connection to the agency mission, if they have a connection to his or her co-workers, if there’s a great relationship with the boss - those kinds of intangibles trump whatever else may be going on in the agency or in government at large; things like pay freezes and hiring freezes.”*

In addition, the study’s authors say retention is an indicator of the health of an agency. *“Retention of newly hired, top-notch employees means that recruiting and hiring investments are paying off and new skills and energy are flowing into the workplace,”* the study found. *“Retention of high quality, mid-level and senior-level employees means an agency is benefitting from the judgment and experience of seasoned professionals.”*

Mentoring is a crucial developmental process that helps organizations address the vital issues addressed in this study and others conducted over the last decade. Including a mentoring component in a developmental strategy helps organizations keep up with, and even get ahead of, the known and developing issues that challenge the continuation of the organization’s mission effectiveness.

WHY MENTORING?

CONNECTING EMPLOYEES TO THE MISSION

One of the main objectives will be to provide mentorees with a greater understanding of the organization’s mission along with expanding their knowledge about the organization’s structure, environment, and culture outside of their own areas of expertise. This promotes unification across the organization that directs focus toward a single compelling mission.

The mentoring relationship is the ideal channel through which participants on both sides of the relationship learn to deliver the highest quality of service to the organization. As Dan Tangherlini, Acting Administrator of the General Services Administration commented:

“Agency effectiveness in delivering mission and employee satisfaction are directly correlated. If you have an agency that is not particularly effective and has a less than fascinating mission, you can probably



get people to be satisfied working there, but it's going to cost you a lot. I think the real issue comes down to figuring out ways that you can maintain sustainable connections between the employees and the work, the employees and the mission,

and giving them some sense that, if the place is effective, it's because they made some kind of contribution to that outcome."

In a variety of studies conducted by The Training Connection, 76%–88% of the mentorees agreed that their mentor helped them understand the mission of the organization and why their work mattered.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION

The percentage of managers who are eligible for early or regular retirement is increasing, making the need to development the next generation of leaders a crucial aspect for continuing the effectiveness of the organization's mission. Benchmark studies ¹ clearly indicate that the best leadership training programs in the country include mentoring as a key component, which typically results in building the required internal capacity to meet organizational needs. The studies reveal that mentoring is a critical component of any employee's leadership development.

From the studies conducted by The Training Connection, **76%–100% of the respondents (mentorees and mentors) concluded that their organization's mentoring program was helpful in building a well-rounded cadre of employees.** That is, the programs helped mentorees master the expertise required of their jobs, promoted the development of effective relationships, and helped mentorees learn to better navigate the

organization. In addition, **76%–100% of the mentorees in these same studies agreed that their mentors shared insights and techniques that increased their technical expertise.**

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The Mentoring Program design promotes the expansion of professional networks, which leads to knowledge transfer and preservation throughout the organization. Expanding networks begins with the formal mentor and mentoree relationship, which in turn cultivates new opportunities for open interaction among employees across organizational boundaries.

From studies previously cited by The Training Connection, **76%–100% of the mentorees and mentors reported that the mentoring program helped them expand their networks to include employees at different levels throughout the organization.**

Accentuating the value of helping program participants expand their networks, **private sector data ² shows that the loss and placement of employees has a financial cost that can range anywhere from 50%–200% of salary depending on the employee's position and the investments made in the employee's development.** The costs are comparable in the public sector. The inclusion of a mentoring strategy in any developmental program has proven to have a significant positive impact on curbing the effects of attrition within an organization.

¹ Harvard Business Review, 2011.

² "Partnership for Public Service," 2011.

VIRTUAL MENTORING TOOLS AND SUPPORT

Because mentoring partners can be based in different geographical locations, a viable initiative has been incorporated into the program design to overcome the challenges of long-distance mentoring. The design begins with a dedicated website called The Mentoring Connection (TMC) that expedites the administration of the program, allows for an easier and more direct matching process, and facilitates the tracking of the individual mentoring partnerships. The design also includes a variety of virtual program components that reach out to a broader target audience. The virtual mentoring approach facilitates distance learning and mentoring relationship support while accommodating budgetary constraints. By coordinating with local offices, the program supports a more flexible and sustainable initiative that can be leveraged by all employees.

WHAT RESULTS WILL INDICATE SUCCESS?

A meaningful evaluation and tracking system is dependent upon how well focused the program's purpose and goals were in the beginning. The evaluation process includes short-term measures, such as suitability of matches and time commitment. It also includes long-term measures, such as the effectiveness of the program helping employees gain new tools and techniques that improve job performance and productivity, along with increasing job satisfaction and strengthening the connection with the organization. Common indicators for successful mentoring programs include:

- Creating an acceptance of mentoring as a valuable tool for personal and professional development.
- Helping mentorees recognize the skills they

need for success as outlined in their Mentoring Action Plans (MAPs).

- Helping mentorees find the developmental opportunities they need to develop skills and knowledge as outlined in their MAPs.
- Creating an environment where skills learned in the mentoring program can be applied on the job.
- Helping mentorees develop useful connections and partnerships.
- Helping mentorees take responsibility for their own careers and professional development, and creating realistic MAPs.
- Helping employees feel more engaged and committed to the organization.
- Improving employee morale and perceived quality of work life.
- Helping employees gain new tools and techniques to improve job performance and productivity.
- Creating and retaining a well-rounded cadre of employees reflective of workforce diversity.
- Motivating mentors and mentorees to recommend the program to peers and colleagues.
- Inspiring mentorees to return as mentors when given the opportunity.

