



21st Century Shifts in Workplace Mentoring

By Ann Rolfe

It's time to make big shifts in how we use mentoring. Here's why:

- The 70:20:10 model places responsibility for employee development on leaders at the business unit or work-group level, so every leader needs to mentor their team.
- Chronically low employee engagement levels continue, despite organizational efforts. Mentoring allows engagement to be addressed within business units or work-groups.
- Organisations invest in recruitment and onboarding talent, yet there is huge untapped potential amongst existing employees. Mentors can help identify and develop the talent within.

21 st Century Shifts in Workplace Mentoring	
Strategic	Operational
Program	Integrated
Development	Engagement
Targeted	Holistic
Capability	Potential

Figure 1: 21st Century Shifts in Workplace Mentoring

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Strategic -> Operational

For the last 20 years I've been encouraging people to think more strategically about mentoring, to link mentoring to high-level organizational objectives and needs as well as individual ones. This is still vital, but mentoring is now an operational necessity.

For clarity, strategy is the plan and guiding principles that enable an organization to fulfill its mission and achieve its objectives. It determines what the priorities are and how resources will be allocated. That's why we must continue to think of mentoring as a strategy, get buy-in from senior management and be able to demonstrate results. Operations are the core business activities – production, sales, service delivery etc. - what employees do, day-to-day.

Managers are responsible for the performance their direct reports. They influence retention, productivity and learning and development. The best way they can make a positive impact is by mentoring their team.

Program -> Integrated

Currently, mentoring happens informally or as part of a program and these types of mentoring will continue. However, learning and development is becoming less centralized and HR driven. Aspirational employees invest their own personal learning networks (PLNs) that include mentoring. Savvy workers seek mentoring groups, reciprocal and peer mentoring as well as more experienced or senior people to guide them. Smart leaders will integrate and support this proactive approach, mentor their own staff as a matter of course and find time to mentor others.

Development -> Engagement

Mentoring has always been about developing people and that will not change, but there is a new imperative for giving personal attention to each employee. Gallup research shows that employee engagement is linked many bottom line metrics. They found a significant relationship between a supervisor caring about the employee as a person and organisational results. So we need to position mentoring in the engagement arena and help managers adopt a mentoring style.

Targeted -> Holistic

Typically mentoring programs target specific groups such as new hires, diversity groups, emerging leaders or high potentials. These may still deserve special attention and additional resources, but mentoring needs to go mainstream. Every employee has more talent than they are using at work. Taking a holistic approach to mentoring means including every part of the workplace, valuing all your people and making development a natural part of the organizational culture.

Capability -> Potential

Recruiters hire people with the qualifications and experience, or people that they can easily train, to do the job. In other words, people are hired for their capability, but the very nature of work is changing. We know 40% of jobs will disappear in the next decade, replaced by many different types of work. Roles and expectations evolve, success depends on agility. So it makes sense to

start looking at potential. Capability is applicable to the present, potential is required for the future. We must get much better at spotting hidden talent and unlocking potential.

Recommendations

1. Ensure engagement and productivity responsibilities are written into the role descriptions of leaders
2. Make mentoring a performance indicator for every leader of every business unit and work-group.
3. Assist leaders to develop their mentoring skills
4. Educate leaders and employees about 70:20:10 and new modes of learning. Help them build personal learning networks (PLNs).
5. Forget performance appraisals. There is widespread agreement that they are a waste of time and money. Instead, require leaders to have regular (monthly) mentoring conversations for feedback and development of their team, around personal and team goals
6. Use the Gallup Strengths Finder to identify potential for development.
7. Let me help you with all of the above! Set up a time to talk now. Set up a time to talk, phone (02) 4342 2610 (in Australia) or email ann@mentoring-works.com

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