



## **Five Reasons Your Organisation Needs Mentoring** **By Ann Rolfe**

How much does it cost you to hire the talent you need? How much does it cost when talent walks out the door? How much does it hurt when employees take your investment in their development elsewhere?

Retention of today's career-oriented employees, the loss of vital knowledge and experience when workers leave and the demand to continually build organisational capability, drive the need for mentoring.

Four of the five reasons your organisation needs mentoring impact on retention. Three reasons deal with satisfying the needs and wants of employees. All five benefits of mentoring provide the organisational advantages of building capability and saving money.

Mentoring, when well designed, properly implemented and adequately resourced can:

1. Attract and retain talented employees;
2. Develop people – those who mentor as well as those mentored;
3. Facilitate career planning and progression;
4. Reduce "silo mentality" and increase cross-organisational communication; and
5. Increase the return on your investment in learning and development and reduce turnover costs.

### **Mentoring Retains Talent**

Attracting and retaining talent is a key issue for most organizations. Most invest in effective recruitment. Return on this investment is not guaranteed, as even the brightest new hire takes some time to become fully productive. When employees depart within two or three years, their development is an expense that leaves the organisation in deficit. Investing in keeping people, who wanted to work for you to start with, makes sense. The Center for Creative Leadership tells us that 77% of companies report mentoring to be an effective retention strategy.

People don't leave jobs, they leave environments that don't support and satisfy them. Maslow identified that once basic survival needs are met, people seek a sense of belonging. Effective mentoring caters to that need. By establishing a relationship, both parties feel connected, personally valued and increase their self-esteem.

## **Mentoring Develops People**

Mentoring is about building relationships in the workplace. As well as a being source of knowledge and skills transfer, mentors guide decisions about workplace issues, personal goals and ongoing professional development. They are a professional friend, a colleague to share the rough times and the good and a sounding board for ideas.

Those who are mentored enhance communication skills, assertiveness, decision-making, problem solving and planning. They can gain more control over their career and take responsibility for their own professional development.

It's not just the mentoree who benefits from mentoring. Mentors get a real sense of satisfaction from their contribution. They also build skills. Interacting with someone who is not a subordinate, taking a collaborative rather than directive role in decision-making or problem solving, and taking time out to really listen can allow managers to evolve a whole new level of interpersonal skill. They may increase their understanding of other groups, reducing cultural, gender and generational issues.

The Mentoring Conversation is a process that utilises reflective and active modes of learning as well as facilitative and assertive communication. Both parties gain insight and can produce tangible outcomes from their relationship. A well-designed mentoring program sets up methods for measuring these results.

## **Mentoring For Career Development**

A survey of 6000 Australian organizations, identified lack of career development as a primary influence on staff turnover. Loyalty to organizations has been wiped out by three decades of downsizing and restructuring. Bright people are savvy about managing their own careers and don't stick around where they perceive no interest, opportunity or support for progress. They're not just looking for money or promotion, though these are important. Some are looking for excitement and challenge. Others want status and perks. Many are looking for balance and life style. However, most want personal and professional growth.

A mentor can point out hidden opportunities. They can show the pathways, support the plan and, when needed, provide a reality check. They can also enable connections that build networks, access information and stimulate sound decisions.

## **Mentoring Breaks Down Barriers**

Large organizations are compartmentalised. This reduces cross-organisational communication. A "silo mentality" means that, often: "the right hand doesn't know what the left is doing". Furthermore, a sense of isolation, or of being just a cog in the wheel can overwhelm a new employee. Mentoring can help people see the bigger picture. Especially, when mentors and those mentored work in different parts of the organisation. Mentors have often moved around and have established networks. They have a broader perspective of the organization. Knowing what other parts of the organization do is often cited as beneficial by mentorees.

## Increasing Return on Investment on Learning and Development

ASTD has reported that managerial productivity increased by 88% when mentoring was involved compared to only 24% with training alone.

What sort of return on investment does your organization demand for its development dollar? Seems it will get more than 60% better results by incorporating mentoring.

Mentors can work with people before, during and after learning events to ensure that they are receptive to, and see the relevance of, the development opportunity. Discussion and questioning can improve retention of information and insight. Finally, and most importantly, mentoring can increase the likelihood of transfer of learning into work practices.

## Conclusion

The potential impact on the bottom line from reduced turnover, satisfying the needs and wants of employees and building organisational capability, far outweigh the cost of mentoring.

To achieve significant results, mentoring needs to be well designed, properly implemented and adequately resourced. It is not a quick fix and outcomes are not easily measured. However, the overwhelming feedback from mentors and people who are mentored is that is very worthwhile, not only personally and professionally but also in adding real value in achieving strategic, organisational objectives.



**Ann Rolfe** is the author of:

- *The Mentoring Conversation*
- *The Mentoring Guide*
- *The Mentoring Journal*
- *Take a Minute To Mentor*
- *How To Design and Run Your Own Mentoring Program*
- *Mentoring Demystified*
- *Mentoring Tips*

## Ann Rolfe

Australia's most published author on mentoring, has over twenty-five years experience in learning and development. For the last fifteen years, Ann Rolfe has specialised in helping organisations and individuals enjoy the benefits of mentoring. Widely respected as a consultant and presenter, her training programs and resources are used internationally to develop and support mentoring.

Ann Rolfe is the founder of Mentoring Works where we help you create mentoring conversations, relationships and programs that work. We offer a comprehensive range of resources that provide clear, practical guidance based on extensive experience and expertise.