

Mentorship: An Organization's Lifeline

By Maureen Tazzioli

Why is mentorship so important? What impact does it play on an organization's ability to remain productive? Why should we, as professional administrators, care?

According to the American Heritage Dictionary the word mentor means, '*A wise and trusted counsellor or teacher.*' Oprah Winfrey believes, "*A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself.*" With these two definitions in mind, think about all those who have mentored you along the way. Why do you think they chose to help you out? What potential did they see in you? What value do you offer others?

As pressure mounts for organizations to align themselves with mission and vision statements, management teams are continuing their search to find solutions to improve daily operations.

Appearing simplistic in nature, mentorship does not always get the attention it deserves. Professional administrators are quick to notice the benefits associated with mentorship programs as working together has become the strategic process that allows organizations to reap outstanding results.

Contrary to what some may believe success is not reached by one's own doing, but rather by those who recognize the importance of mentorship programs and the joy experienced when giving back.

If you are thinking about becoming a mentor, consider the following:

1. **Know what you wish to accomplish** – Before becoming a mentor create a list of your personal strengths and the associated value with each one. Develop a clear outline mapping the direction you wish to take including such things as: time frames, goals, responsibilities, expectations of performance, etc. By providing a healthy guideline to those you are interested in mentoring, the likelihood of success increases substantially.
2. **Implement high standards** – When working as a mentor/mentee, it is important to implement high standards surrounding mutual respect and trust, especially when communicating ideas and suggestions. It is no secret that when information is first introduced the mentee may become inquisitive. This reaction should be treated with utmost care and should not be taken personally, as curiosity is a natural response. By defining individual roles and responsibilities potential dangers associated with a predetermined mindset can be eliminated helping to secure a healthy working relationship.
3. **Keep it fun** – Create light-hearted, fun approaches to learning, especially when information shared is of a detailed nature. Becoming increasingly stressed over that which they may not know, a mentee may grow frustrated with themselves. Understanding their perspective allows for the realization that fun and laughter can do wonders to help ease tensions associated with a learning curve.

Mentorship is the lifeline and foundational strength of any organization. Without healthy mentorship programs an organization stands to lose years of valuable information. This reality could see organizations suffer as productivity levels drop and staff training dollars increase substantially. Understandably this is of great concern to many organizations faced with an aging population.

As professional administrators you recognize the importance of creating a smooth transitioning workforce so many of the services we take for granted now can continue to influence our lifestyle choices tomorrow. Therefore, as professional administrators, continue to do your best by becoming a willing participant in a mentorship program. Our future depends on you!

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