

CREATING A MODERN MENTORING CULTURE

by Randy Emelo



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THE NEED FOR MODERN MENTORING

Mentoring has proven again and again to be a powerful and effective workforce development tool; and the need for mentoring, knowledge sharing, and skill building continues to grow. However, traditional mentoring is no longer adequate in today's hyper-connected and fast-paced world. The traditional approach to mentoring has been defined as a relationship between an older mentor and a younger mentee who meet in person to facilitate development and to groom the mentee for career progression. This approach has become antiquated and is not enough to help develop a complex and multigenerational workforce.

As such, today's companies need to change the way they think about mentoring and view it as a holistic practice that extends beyond traditional limited populations and formal programs. Companies need to modernize their approach to mentoring in order to create a culture that's centered on a habitual attitude toward it, where it becomes less of a special one-time opportunity and more of a commonplace everyday occurrence. Furthermore, companies today must embrace a new form of mentoring and knowledge sharing that allows workers to find and connect with their colleagues so they can learn while on the job, share best practices throughout all areas of the business, and collaborate with people no matter where they are located.

The reality today is that people want to learn from their peers, regardless of what department they may be in or where they may physically work. Technological advancements make it much easier to break down barriers and bring people together. This trend is being driven in part by the Millennial generation.

The Millennial Learner

A growing contingent in the workforce, this generation has a preference for connecting and learning digitally. They want to have access to people throughout their organization and have the freedom to choose who they seek knowledge

from or share insights with. Millennials approach learning and mentoring in a different way than preceding generations have, viewing it more as a way to learn and collaborate than a way to advance their career.

Companies must understand what makes the Millennial generation distinct when it comes to learning and leverage these learning attributes to help develop and engage their entire workforce. Everyone stands to gain from approaching mentoring in a Millennial fashion, even the company itself. According to a 2011 report called "The Power of Peers" from the Corporate Leadership Council, only 36 percent of employees are effective at peer mentoring, and only 7 percent of organizations focus engagement initiatives on improving these interactions. However, when employees are effective at critical peer mentoring interactions, average engagement capital can improve by 66 percent. If companies can harness the power of peer connections within mentoring, they can significantly improve their engagement.

Millennials will soon represent the majority of the workforce, and this generation is especially distinct in its approach to work and learning. Millennials are resourceful and networked learners, and other generations stand to gain from taking a Millennial approach to learning and development activities, such as mentoring. As a result of growing up in a connected world, this generation is naturally comfortable with technology; they not only know how to use it, they also know how to harness it to solve immediate needs, both in personal and professional capacities. They are natural synthesizers of information and can parse out the critical insights they need with ease and speed.

Along these same lines, this generation has also been largely affected by the abundance and widespread use of social media and social networking technologies, like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. They have been effectively posting, uploading, sharing, following, friending, networking, connecting, publishing, and tagging their entire lives. Termed *digital natives* and the *wired generation*, this group is innately socially driven and their behavior is enabled through technology.

GENERATIONAL VIEW OF MENTORING



Traditionalists (born between 1922 and 1945) are hardworking, loyal to their organization, and respectful of those in authority. They want learning that is predictable, practical, and delivered by experts. They also need to share their experience and expertise with others to feel valuable.

Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1964) believe in participative management and work hard for personal gain. They want to be involved in learning that has an immediate payoff to their job. They need more help in developing the complex relational skills involved in leadership.

Gen Xers (born between 1965 and 1980) tend to be skeptical of those in authority and seek a better work-life balance. They are also often fiercely independent and have more of an entrepreneurial spirit. They want learning that is collaborative, peer driven, and seek to balance their professional and personal relationships. They need help settling on a career path that is both challenging to them and fits the needs of the organization.

Millennials (born between 1981 and 2000) are hopeful, multi-tasking web-surfers. They want learning that is on-demand but highly social and network oriented. They need help learning the foundational skills and social awareness needed to be effective in the organizational culture. Due to the life-long exposure and ready access to information and resources, they don't have patience for learning processes that take too long.

While Millennials were the first adopters and initial drivers of social networking technologies, engaging with social media is now a mainstream activity. According to a 2011 Pew Research Center study on social networking, Baby Boomers now comprise the largest growing user population of social media, like Facebook. This means that your entire multigenerational workforce is looking for ways to connect, share, and learn from one another. This is not just a Millennial phenomenon, but there is something to be gained from examining their learning habits.

This *Infoline* will:

- Help you gain a better understanding about Millennial learning habits and generational approaches to mentoring and learning.
- Define the practice of modern mentoring.
- Outline the key pillars of modern mentoring.
- Discuss the individual and organizational benefits of putting this type of social learning and mentoring program in place for your multigenerational workforce.
- Discuss the types of relational connections that comprise modern mentoring.
- Offer practical advice and guidelines for creating and implementing a modern mentoring culture.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN MENTORING TECHNIQUES

Each generation approaches the corporate practice of mentoring differently. The practice of modern mentoring has taken root in large part because of the Millennial generation and their sheer numbers. They can't be ignored!

Due to their open, social, collaborative, and egalitarian mindset, Millennials do not have a traditional view of mentoring as one older mentor having face-to-face meetings with a younger mentee for the sole purpose of helping groom the mentee for career advancement. Millennials have a much broader view of mentoring. Their definition of mentoring is simply collaborative learning that is relationship-centered.

Modern mentoring is connecting people across an organization to share critical knowledge and skills. Everyone has something to learn and something to teach, regardless of age or title, and people can be both mentees and mentors at the same time.

Virtual relationships and multi-participant engagements form the basis for modern mentoring, which incorporates a more inclusive mindset about who should participate, a broader scope for making

meaningful learning connections, and an open flow of knowledge among participants. No longer just about one-on-one relationships between senior leaders and potential successors, today's mentoring is focused on removing the barriers between people and engaging them in rich learning and teaching opportunities in a broad, networked manner so that knowledge can flow to the point of need. (See the figure, Traditional Mentoring vs. Modern Mentoring.)

Key Pillars of Modern Mentoring

When creating a modern mentoring program, focus it around the following key concepts and characteristics.

Open and Egalitarian

For uninhibited and meaningful learning to take place, you must allow modern mentoring to occur in an open environment where people have equal access to one another. Modern mentoring is a great equalizer, because it is built on the idea that everyone has something to learn and something to teach. To let knowledge flow freely and unimpeded to the points where it's needed, this type of unrestricted, open, and egalitarian environment is essential.

Diverse

Diversity is what will help your modern mentoring program thrive. Here, the use of "diverse" isn't limited to represent just people of different genders, races, and ages. Cross-functional, cross-geographical, and cross-generational participation in modern mentoring relationships is key to this practice. Modern mentoring relationships should also vary by number of participants depending on who is available and willing to participate. As a result, modern mentoring relationships will vary in makeup and size: from one-on-one traditional relationships to large-scale group mentoring relationships.

Diversity in your modern mentoring program is essential, because different perspectives within mentoring communities and relationships help novel ideas and approaches arise in answer to organizational problems or issues people are facing. Individuals in a different functional area, geographical area, or even from a different department or age group, will likely view situations and issues through a distinctive lens and be able to offer a unique perspective that can lead to innovative solutions.

Safe and Judgment-Free

You should also ensure that mentoring takes place in an environment that is considered "safe" with regard to employee sharing and learning. In other words, people don't want to show perceived weaknesses by asking for a mentor, if they think they are going to be judged by their managers or by their organization.

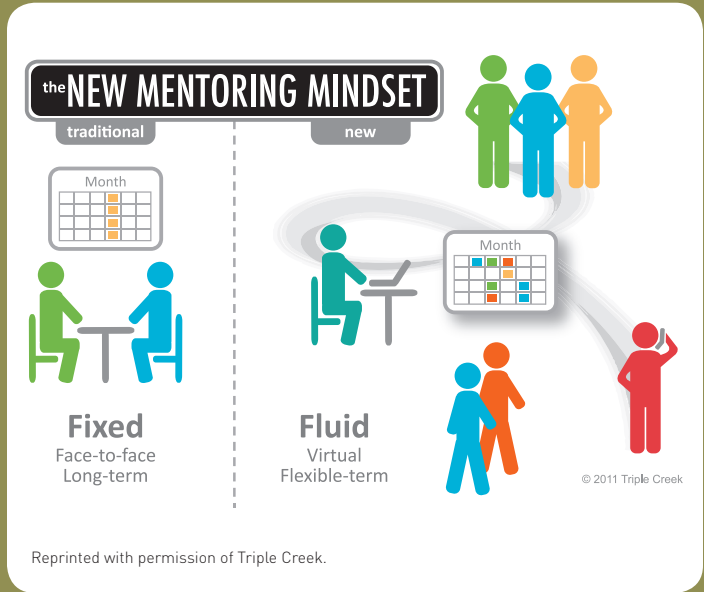
Keeping mentoring programs separate from performance-related systems and processes is helpful when creating such an environment. It is also critical to establish set norms for how people will treat information shared in the mentoring engagement. For example, one group may want complete freedom to share anything they learn from the group, while another group may decide to ask for confidentiality around the things that are shared. The choice should be up to the people interacting in the mentoring engagement and honored by all who participate.

Independent and Autonomous

Additionally, the less organizational control exerted over your mentoring program, the better. Modern mentoring will organically address the knowledge needs of the organization by connecting appropriate mentors to mentees around whatever the individual learning need is at that time. As such, there is no need to try to control the amount of time people spend engaged in mentoring, the topics they connect around, or the people with whom they connect. Too much rigid control will only create unwanted barriers to knowledge flowing from those who possess it to those who seek it. You should not try to qualify or define who can participate in what roles—whether mentor or mentee, because this will be determined by each employee's relative authority in a given mentoring instance.

For example, a younger Millennial or Gen X employee may be able to mentor older colleagues on technology or emerging social media trends since he or she may have a higher relative knowledge than the older counterparts on that particular subject. The organization's role should be limited to creating a supporting mechanism that enables people to connect and collaborate naturally and of their own volition. Once you have created an enabling structure for modern mentoring, let your employees take the reins of their own learning.

TRADITIONAL MENTORING VS. MODERN MENTORING



Asynchronous

With the increasingly global nature of organizations and the increased complexity in the organization's knowledge economy, the person who may be able to answer your question or help facilitate your development may work half-way across the world from you. For this reason, the communication and collaboration present in mentoring relationships has become increasingly asynchronous. Of course, there will also be a time and place for synchronous or instantaneous collaboration, such as at the beginning of a mentoring relationship and as needed as the relationship matures. With that caveat, technology-enabled communication (email, online communities of interest, business social networks, mentoring and social learning software) is only on the rise and is a key enabling structure that supports modern mentoring.

Self-Directed and Personal

Adults want to drive their own learning. Through participation in modern mentoring, you are enabling your employees to address their own personal

real-time learning needs by connecting with and gathering insights from colleagues anywhere in your organization. In this way, modern mentoring is a process that empowers individuals to be in control of their learning. Self-directed learning also allows individuals to learn what is applicable to them right now, gain skills that can help them with their unique work context, and make them more productive.

Modern mentoring can also lessen the burden on L&D and training departments that oftentimes can't keep up with the swift pace of change and complexity associated with individual and just-in-time learning needs. Employees are more likely to be engaged and learn actively if they choose what they learn and who they collaborate with on learning.

Technology-Centric

Technology plays a large role in enabling modern mentoring because it allows organizations to view mentoring as "for the masses" and a scalable practice that harnesses the collective knowledge, skills, abilities, and passions of an organization's entire workforce. Due to Millennial learning habits and increasingly diverse and global workforces, technology should be the main supporting mechanism for your modern mentoring program.

Whether you have email and an intranet, a small social business network, or a large-scale software program built to facilitate mentoring relationships, it is important to leverage these technologies for modern mentoring. Technology also gives participants a means to connect with others and a space to collaborate and communicate.

Flexible

Modern mentoring is also flexible. People should be allowed and encouraged to shift in and out of your mentoring program and of the mentee-mentor roles themselves, as learning needs and knowledge strengths evolve, which will help you create a diverse, fluid, and dynamic mentoring network. This adaptability and flexibility allows insights to be shared and applied on the job in a just-in-time manner, with people seeing real work results from their mentoring activities.

TYPES OF MODERN MENTORING

Modern mentoring is dynamic and comprised of relational connections of all types. The common thread that unites these connections and relationships is that they are born or derived from a learning need shared by as few as a couple of people to as many as over 100. The following are some examples of how modern mentoring can take shape.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring connects colleagues at the same hierarchical level in the organization but who may be in different functions or divisions. Learning relationships of this sort are particularly beneficial because peers can be a great source of social support and encouragement. They understand and experience the same organizational pressures and can provide their peers with breakthrough insight and advice from someone who gets it.

To support peer mentoring, urge managers, supervisors, and leaders in your organization to foster an environment for subordinates where reaching out past their work teams and functions to connect with peers is an encouraged practice. Managers and supervisors often are the “choke-point” for this type of connection, so they will need to help encourage and support these lateral connections.

Reverse Mentoring

Reverse mentoring places those who would typically be considered mentors into the mentee role, and those typically considered mentees into the mentor role. This type of mentoring also can be helpful with bringing your older employees up to speed on new skills, processes, and technologies, which younger generations—like Millennials and Gen Xers—have already mastered. It can also help expose organizational leaders to new perspectives of younger generations and bring bright young minds to the attention of seasoned leaders.

To support reverse mentoring, you need to help your more experienced workers embrace the concept of reverse mentoring and understand the value of connecting with younger workers who can

help them learn about technology, emerging trends, and cultural attitudes toward products and services.

Paired (or Traditional) Mentoring

Paired mentoring embodies the traditional idea of mentoring but is still included under the umbrella of modern mentoring. Typically characterized by high amounts of trust and confidentiality, one mentee and one mentor meet for targeted mentoring engagements to share highly personal, private, or sensitive information with one another.

Often, this type of mentoring can be leveraged to help employees with sensitive work-related issues, like dealing with a difficult manager or transitioning into a new role at the company. You can support paired mentoring by directing people who come to HR with these types of sensitive issues to seek out a mentoring partner for guidance and advice for working through their issue.

Group Mentoring

Group mentoring leverages internal experts and facilitators to support collaborative learning experiences for multiple learners at one time. The power of group mentoring comes from group leaders sharing expert knowledge with participants and from participants sharing information and experience on a peer level.

The focus of group mentoring can vary significantly, ranging from supporting topical learning (for example, project management basics), to implementing new processes (such as a new consultative sales model or how to have difficult management conversations), to ongoing relational peer support groups (for example, a new parents group focused on achieving work-life balance). Due to its dynamic nature, group mentoring is efficient and flexible. It also helps to bring together dissimilar colleagues who can learn from each other’s different perspectives, and this diverse collaboration often leads to innovative new ideas, processes, or work-products.

In fact, a 2010 study by Lechner, Frankenberger, and Floyd, published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, showed that when employees collaborate, the more diverse the group of people is in terms

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR MODERN MENTORING



Technology is the main enabling mechanism for modern mentoring, so it is important to leverage whatever technologies are available to you to support the practice. Consider the following suggestion for various types of technologies.

Intranet

- Set up user profiles or share employee directories, so that employees can use it to look for mentoring connections.
- Create a section for employees to use as an internal “wanted section” for potential mentoring connections.
- Create a section where employees can post mentoring relationships or engagements that are available for others to join.
- Set up collaboration spaces or communities for group mentoring.
- Allow participants to post information and resources to help drive learning conversations.

Business Social Networks

- Fully utilize user profile features. Ask employees to share their contact information, background, skills, experience, and what they are interested in learning or teaching others on their user profile page.
- Create groups (private and public) that people can use for mentoring collaboration. Allow them to post information, and resources, as needed to drive the learning conversation.
- Use broadcasting capabilities as a means for people to seek out mentoring partners and publicizing popular mentoring engagements to encourage further participation.

Mentoring or Social Learning Software

- Leverage user profile information. Encourage employees to include their complete background and learning or advising interests, so mentoring isn’t limited to their current job title or role.
- Make it easy to start mentoring. Facilitate mentoring connections based on profile information.
- Foster participation through system notifications, individualized RSS feeds, and so forth.
- Support learning conversations and collaborations through the creation of groups and engagements where participants can post information, ask questions, schedule events, create polls, and upload resources.
- Gain insight into program participation through reports and metrics provided. Use information about popular mentoring topics and skills to promote further participation.

Email

- Help employees communicate across geographies, functions, time zones, and offices.
- Allow employees to reach out to potential mentees or mentors.
- Send company-wide updates and promote participation in modern mentoring programs.

of values and viewpoints, the higher the group’s performance. To support group mentoring, look for popular or timeless work-related topics (work-life balance, career development, and so forth) for groups to discuss. Help them get the conversation going by setting up groups around these topics, so all that people have to do is jump in and start

participating. (See the job aid for ideas on learning conversations you can set up.)

Situational Mentoring

Situational mentoring gives individuals a way to address immediate learning needs with one or

more advisers. Several people can offer ideas simultaneously so learners get quick-hitting answers on a high-impact problem or opportunity quickly. Learners then synthesize this knowledge into a solution that fits their needs and bring that solution back to the job in a timely manner.

To support situational mentoring, help identify emerging practices and novel concepts, and guide employees to explore them with others who have a similar interest or experience. Because a situational mentoring engagement can be over and done very quickly, you may feel the need to constantly bring in new mentors. One great way to do this is to ask the person who had the learning need to give back as a mentor once their situational learning need is satisfied. This person could be a wonderful adviser to the next person who may have a similar learning need. This helps keep the cycle of learning and sharing moving, and creates a smooth process for indoctrinating new mentees and mentors so no one ever feels overburdened.

While all of these types of modern mentoring serve a very important purpose, you do not need to set up individual structures to help facilitate these types of relational connections. If you set up an enabling mechanism for modern mentoring that is open and contains its key pillars (as described earlier), all of these types of mentoring will occur naturally and as needed. Participants in modern mentoring will innately and organically participate in all of these different types of mentoring to fulfill their unique and evolving knowledge needs. With this in mind, don't get hung up on creating programs that enable reverse mentoring, peer mentoring, and so forth. The only thing you need to do from an administrative standpoint is make sure that participants are given the freedom and autonomy by the organization to connect in an independent fashion.

From a practical standpoint, this is where re-educating organizational leaders on the benefits and value of modern mentoring and securing permission for individuals to connect in an open, autonomous way becomes most important. If the open nature of modern mentoring is compromised by too much organizational involvement, the quality of mentoring connections and the caliber

of learning that takes place as a result of these connections will be degraded.

CREATING A MODERN MENTORING CULTURE

Now that we've discussed the key pillars and types of connections that a modern mentoring program contains, here are some steps to take to create a modern mentoring culture within your organization.

Re-Educate Leaders

Managers and organizational leaders will likely need to be re-taught what mentoring is and why it should be embraced as a valuable development practice. Most people still think of mentoring in a traditional way, as a tool for career advancement or that only includes a one-to-one relationship between a hand-matched older mentor and younger mentee. You need to help organizational stakeholders understand the expanded and broad vision of modern mentoring and its associated benefits (see the sidebar on Mentoring Benefits).

Leaders and managers must be re-educated to understand that modern mentoring is a productive activity that won't detract from employees' effectiveness, but rather will help to strengthen it. Once you have managers and other organizational stakeholders' support and understanding, you can get the proper approvals that will allow employees the freedom, autonomy, and access to technology they will need to take charge of their own learning and participate in your mentoring program. This re-education effort will help you to eliminate barriers to success for your mentoring program, like:

- limited and exclusive participant populations
- career advancement and sponsorship as sole purpose for mentoring
- co-location as a requirement with face-to-face meetings as primary mode of communication
- assessments and qualifications necessary to be considered capable of advising
- mentoring that is only in support of formal programs like high-potential development or succession planning.

MODERN MENTORING BENEFITS



Modern mentoring has a far-reaching organizational impact, which makes it a great vehicle for engaging and developing all the generations that make up your organization. Here are some of the enterprise benefits that you can expect for your organization.

Increased Retention and Engagement

In *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave*, author Leigh Branhan states: “Mentoring programs have been found to be effective in increasing employee retention in 77 percent of the companies that implemented them.” Additionally, mentoring can help decrease attrition, because it helps remedy common organizational issues that are known to cause turnover. Mentoring can help employees feel more connected to others throughout the organization and can allow people to reach out to another person or group of people for support with any type of work-related topic, issue, or situation, and it can let them navigate career progression options within your organization.

Modern mentoring can also have a large impact on enterprise engagement levels. According to Corporate Leadership Council’s 2011 *The Power of Peers* study, when employees effectively participate in peer mentoring, organizations have seen 66 percent increases in engagement. High engagement levels are known to increase the number of top performers, employee loyalty and commitment levels, and overall productivity rates. Most notably increased engagement can affect profit. A 2011 study by Taleo Research on Profitable Talent Management noted that by increasing employee engagement by 5 percent, a 10,000-person organization can boost the bottom line by an estimated \$40 million. The benefits of increased engagement are one of the many reasons companies are beginning to rapidly adopt modern mentoring practices.

Increased Collaboration and Innovation

Collaboration between units, geographies, offices, genders, and generations is essential because it can help spread best practices and critical knowledge across your entire company. Diverse and collaborative learning relationships and networks can help generate creative solutions, novel ideas, and unique approaches to organizational problems or issues.

- People reaching across different generations will gain insights into how various age groups tend to think and behave.
- People reaching across cultures can leverage differences to better understand colleagues and clients, and to increase creativity and effectiveness when working with people from other cultures.
- People reaching across functions can harness the power of best practices from colleagues in other business units and locations so that they can repeat what works well, rather than trying to invent a new process.
- In an era marked by increased competition and rapid change, the need to spur innovation and enable collaboration throughout the enterprise has never been greater. Modern mentoring can become a key competitive advantage for your organization because it can enable this collaborative and innovative behavior.

Increased Knowledge Transfer and Productivity

The idea of transferring organizational knowledge has become increasingly important as more inexperienced Millennials enter a workforce that Boomers and Traditionalists will soon depart. Corporations should be seeking out ways to help knowledge and experience held by older generations spread to younger workers who could stand to learn from veterans who have years of know-how, best practices, and overall experience in their field. Modern mentoring is a perfect mechanism for connecting the knowledge assets of your organization to help facilitate the development of others.

Modern mentoring is also a great way to help create a more productive and effective workforce. In a 2012 study by McKinsey Global Institute, companies saw 20 to 25 percent increases in productivity in the average knowledge worker as a result of their participation in technology-enabled social collaboration, like modern mentoring. The study also noted that employees

spend 47 percent of their work week writing and responding to emails and searching for information internally to complete tasks. Using modern mentoring to effectively source and locate internal information will help free up employees' time for more productive activities. When the impact of increased employee productivity is amplified to the enterprise, it can have a large and positive effect on your company's bottom line.

Creating a Culture of Learning and Agility

Creating and fostering a culture of learning is important today, because it encourages the practice of self-directed learning and development. In a culture of learning, employees will want to proactively share ideas, knowledge, and experience with one another for the sake of mutual benefit and advancement. As the economy becomes increasingly global and complex, it will be important for employees to collaborate and share best practices so that companies can plug into the collective intelligence of their enterprise. A culture of learning can help employees become more effective at facilitating ongoing learning that is informal and autonomous for themselves and for others. Having an employee base that can quickly respond to changing requirements, skills, and trends will help your organization become more agile as a whole. This is paramount, because corporate agility will be a characteristic that defines organizational success as the world continues to globalize and change at a rapid pace. It's important to consider that modern mentoring is scalable and so are its benefits. The more employees that participate in your program, the wider the positive impact your program will have on your company.

These lingering perceptions and influencing elements commonly found in traditional mentoring programs will need to be minimized for modern mentoring to flourish in your organization. Re-educate and get managerial and executive buy-in so that you can expand mentoring's impact and push its benefits out to your whole organization.

Get the Word Out

It is important to create great internal marketing that speaks to your organizational culture. It should communicate not only the value of participating, but also how and where to participate. You can leverage the following activities to help educate your workforce on modern mentoring, as well as increase visibility of your mentoring program:

- Conduct webinars or e-briefings on mentoring that not only promote current programs, but also educate people on getting the most of their modern mentoring relationships. Help people understand how most of us are involved in informal learning and mentoring every day, and encourage them to formalize their learning so others can benefit from shared knowledge resources.
- Use various media (podcasts, webinars, or newsletters) with target audiences to show how the vision for mentoring can extend beyond traditional mentoring. By using different messaging with targeted audiences, you can address their unique concerns and use terminology that will resonate with them.
- Present brief "commercials" at other training events to highlight the benefits of having colleagues with whom participants can discuss what they are learning. This can be as involved as a video showing people talk about how mentoring impacted them, or as simple as a single presenter discussing a few stories that help bring the practice of mentoring to life.
- Sponsor roadshows or lunch-and-learns where mentoring participants share their experiences. Offering a venue for mentoring participants to meet and mingle can help energize your program and provides another opportunity for people to network and make learning connections.
- Leverage employee resource groups to help spread the word about your mentoring program. Let these naturally networked groups that already exist within your organization help drive and

MODERN MENTORING IN PRACTICE: A SODEXO SUCCESS STORY



Sodexo brings modern mentoring to life with their Spirit of Mentoring initiative that offers both formal and informal mentoring options. Powered by social learning software, employees throughout the company engage with one another as learners and advisors; transfer knowledge related to their experience, competencies, and needs; and collaborate with colleagues around training, career development, on-the-job productivity, learning groups, and more. Sodexo makes great use of modern mentoring networks, reaching out to colleagues across locations, generations, and functions. Here are a few examples of modern mentoring in practice:

IMPACT: This high-potential mentoring program connects individuals cross-culturally and across business lines in support of diversity and inclusion. In addition to the one-on-one experience, participants choose to engage in a virtual community to share resources that hone their leadership competencies. Program metrics show that 30 percent of women involved in IMPACT received a promotion.

Peer2Peer Mentoring: This informal mentoring program is made available through nine Sodexo employee and business resource groups. Examples include iGen, Sodexo's Intergenerational Group, which is in the process of launching generational roundtables; WiNG, the Women's Network Group, which offers mentoring circles; and several other groups that offer one-on-one mentoring options.

Expertise in Action—Collaborative Learning Groups: These groups are forming in response to the development needs of the learners within the Spirit of Mentoring system. Topics of mutual interest include communication, strategic leadership, and leading change.

Modern Mentoring ROI: In addition to supporting key initiatives, Sodexo reported in Diversity Inc.'s article, "Diversity Management: The Chief Diversity Officers No. 1 Advantage," that the company gets two dollars back for every dollar they invest.

By offering modern mentoring to its employees, Sodexo has created a central gathering place where people can come and go as needed, where they can join in when their time and needs allow, and where learners can be met at their own unique point of need.

promote mentoring behaviors. Since they are already networked, they can help make mentoring connection introductions between employees, as well as help come up with group mentoring topics to address.

- Organize town hall meetings where a brief presentation could be followed by a question and answer session on how modern mentoring has impacted people. Use the Q&A time to educate the audience on what modern mentoring is, how it can be accessed, and how it can impact participants. Sharing testimonials from participants can be a powerful way to show the process in action.
- Leverage your program's evangelists. If you know certain people have found particular value in the program, unleash the power of a positive review. Urge these modern mentoring evangelists to share a mentoring experience they had at an all company meeting, or use a form of corporate social media to promote their good experience. Even just encouraging them to share their success story with others around them will help your program gain traction and help encourage further participation.

Modernize Current Mentoring Programs

If you currently have targeted mentoring programs that support formal training programs, like high-potential development or succession planning, these programs can be a great starting place. Begin by expanding your current mentoring programs and making them modern (see the key pillars section). Adding modern mentoring will mean that the people who were participating in paired or traditional mentoring can still participate in those relationships as long as they want, but they can also have the freedom to connect with other participants independently and as dictated by learning needs. Also, this can be a great place to start inviting other people outside of these targeted audiences to participate in mentoring.

If you don't have formal mentoring programs in place, consider launching modern mentoring around an organizational initiative, like more effective onboarding or increased diversity and inclusion. To get started, you can connect modern mentoring to various formal programs, such as:

- **Onboarding:** Immediately including new hires in your modern mentoring program can help them tap into the knowledge resources from your company on day one, helping to bring them into the cultural fold more quickly and to share their own insights immediately upon hire.
- **High-potential development:** Instead of limiting high-potentials to one mentor, let your brightest talent pull from an array of mentors and knowledge resources. Also, allow high-potentials to be mentors themselves and share their knowledge with others while concurrently learning how to be a leader.
- **Training:** Augment your formal training initiatives (including, certification-based programs, new manager programs, and e-learning) with mentoring cohorts, where alumni of training programs mentor and advise a group of people currently going through training. This can help the learners become more involved in the practice and apply the concepts they are learning with greater effectiveness. Peers going through the same training can also connect and share stories around application of concepts learned in class to help cement the newly attained knowledge.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Increase your efforts by encouraging people to use modern mentoring as a way to connect with diverse colleagues and learn from their unique perspective and attitude, which can lead to innovative collaboration throughout your organization.

Adding modern mentoring programs to formal programs is a good way to help your program gain traction and continue to expand as a result. Remember that modern mentoring is inclusive, so anyone who is willing and available should have access to participate, regardless of his or her involvement in a specific formal program.

Amplify Using Technology

It is important that you have some sort of enabling technology that will act as a supporting platform for your modern mentoring program. Whether you have email, a social business network, an intranet, a wiki page, an online internal directory, or mentoring or social learning technology, it is

important that you leverage each system to enable mentoring connections and collaboration. Consider the following guidelines as you put this into practice.

- **Let employees use technologies you have available to communicate and collaborate.** This may mean you allow participants to create a community or a group space on your intranet, wiki, social business network, or through other enabling technologies where people can post comments, ideas, and resources for others to access. Email can be utilized in support of communication efforts, but if possible, it shouldn't be relied on as the only technological support element.
- **Make online employee directories or other skill profiles available to help participants see who would be a good mentoring connection.** You can also ask participants to fill out a profile (like in a social business network or on your intranet) that details out what they are interested in learning and can advise on. This will help ensure that quality connections are made.
- **Take a facilitative role in learning as an HR or learning professional.** Although organizational control should remain limited, it is permissible for you to help get the learning conversation started. For example, you can create groups or communities in your enabling technology and prepopulate the initial conversation topic around common organizational learning needs, like "Increasing Cultural Awareness," "Leading Others," and so forth.
- **Don't overstep the bounds when facilitating learning.** While helping to get a learning conversation started is a best practice, this is where your involvement in the actual learning should end. Let employees be drawn in and out of these type of learning conversations and groups as their learning needs evolve. As reiterated throughout this guide, too much organizational involvement will only hinder learning and mentoring from taking place efficiently. (See the job aid for ideas on learning conversations you can set up.)
- **Allow people to join your mentoring program at any time.** Supporting mentoring with technology will allow you to have an open program that includes anyone in your organization who wants

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL MENTORING ENGAGEMENTS



Here are some ways to ensure that mentoring engagements will be productive and successful:

- **Get commitment.** Successful engagements can take concentrated effort in order to make them thrive. They may require 30 minutes to three hours each week of an individual's time, so participate only if you can make the commitment.
- **Be responsive.** A successful engagement is one in which you demonstrate your willingness to learn from and advise others. Be sensitive to your partners and support the goals, needs, and perspectives of everyone in the engagement. Include other participants in the formulation of goals and objectives for your mentoring engagement so that everyone has personal involvement in its success.
- **Be accountable.** A strong engagement is built on trust and reliability. If you make a commitment in your mentoring engagement, add time on your calendar to accomplish your task to ensure that it is completed as promised.
- **Be supportive.** Everyone involved in the engagement plays a part in each other's development. Be aware of personal biases and others' backgrounds when conversing. Challenge yourself to be as open as possible to new people, ideas, and solutions.
- **Hold confidences.** At the beginning of a mentoring engagement, discuss participant expectations of confidentiality. Don't discuss mentoring conversations with anyone except engagement participants to prohibit unintentionally sharing someone else's confidential information. Trust that other participants will provide you the same courtesy.
- **Appreciate feedback.** Offer and hear feedback in the spirit of improving competencies and building areas of weakness and strength. Only give constructive feedback to others, and be aware that other's feedback is offered as advice or suggestions for your own self-improvement; it is not criticism.
- **Be focused.** Ensure the engagement's purpose and goals are clear. Make sure to write down the learning goals ahead of time and distribute them to all participants. Periodic check-ins for progress against these goals will also help keep the engagement on track.

to participate, and that makes it easy and cost-effective to scale the program as needed. Don't forget that a key pillar of modern mentoring is allowing it to be open and egalitarian. Also, by scaling the practice of mentoring and inviting your entire organization to participate, you will see the impact of modern mentoring benefits throughout your entire workforce (and not limited to a small subset of employees).

- **Acknowledge the efforts of those in the program.** This can take the shape of verbal or written recognition of the work people are doing, such as through a spotlight case study on someone or a group of people. The goal is to motivate people to keep engaging in the mentoring program and collaborating with their colleagues. Tangible benefits, like an extra day off or a gift card, can also be used if that fits with your organizational culture.

THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW: ARE YOU READY?

A large portion of the current workforce is set to retire at the same time that a younger generation is poised to enter the workforce in large numbers. By establishing a modern mentoring practice in your organization, you can let knowledge held by older workers be recycled back into your organization and available to younger workers before older generations retire.

The time to implement your modern mentoring program is now. Use it as a tool to help develop an increasingly diverse workforce and as a means to help increase innovation and collaboration. Encourage people to actively seek out mentoring relationships, share knowledge, and collaborate with others. If you give people the freedom and tools to take charge of their own learning through connecting with their peers, you will have created modern mentoring and you will reap the many positive outcomes that come from it.

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GROUP MENTORING TOPICS

Jumpstart group mentoring with these templates, which provide a framework for collaboration and a foundation for learning conversations. Recruit members (both mentors and mentees) to be the group’s “facilitators” and actively and continuously drive the learning conversation. Encourage participants to upload or share relevant resources, ask and answer probative questions, create learning-centric events, and post helpful information and experiences. These templates can be changed to fit your organizational culture, but it is important that each group mentoring conversation contain:

- A goal statement and description of the group that helps attract participants and is at the core of the learning experience. This learning goal statement should help guide the conversation.
- An end date, which gives participants a set time when they can reflect on what they’ve learned and evaluate whether learning goals have been met.
- Suggested discussion topics that engender learning and support group goals.

Mentoring Topic	Description/Goal Statement	Timeline	Discussion Topics
Leading Others	Effective leaders know how to engage others in group decisions without forcing consensus. They also know how to optimize the work environment to enable high team productivity and effectiveness. Additionally, they know how to identify which individuals can effectively handle which responsibilities.	6-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to align yourself and your team with the organization’s mission, strategy, and direction. • How to quickly assess team skills and delegate responsibilities appropriately. • Ways to become better skilled at understanding multiple points of agreement versus points of conflict. • How to build a work environment in which employees can thrive. • Techniques to promote open communication, active listening, and ongoing encouragement and recognition.
Being Innovative and Visionary	Professionals from all functional areas of the company should strive to become more creative at work and increase their ability to think out-of-the-box both individually and in a group.	6 to 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for approaching problems and organizational situations with curiosity and open-mindedness. • How to leverage existing information while also discovering techniques for iterative learning, idea sharing, and developing creative solutions. • Techniques for creative brainstorming. • How to effectively encourage yourself and others to take appropriate risks. • How to effectively spark creativity and innovative behavior among teammates using inspiration, images, metaphors, and stories.

Mentoring Topic	Description/Goal Statement	Timeline	Discussion Topics
Increasing Cultural Awareness	Professionals should understand how the organization's culture influences personal and team effectiveness.	3 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to define and understand the organization's culture. • Techniques for identifying unique cultural characteristics and ways to communicate and engrain these qualities into team members. • How to integrate organizational concepts and values into everyday work. • Strategies to help others build their cultural awareness and seek insights from people across the company
Learning a New Technical Skill	To remain current and competitive, professionals should continually seek to acquire necessary tools and knowledge to advance expertise in relevant areas.	Varies by skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and where to effectively research relevant technical knowledge and expertise. • Best practices for exploring resources to increase knowledge of specific processes. • Strategies for increasing knowledge of functional areas. • How to effectively reach out and contact subject matter experts for tools and guidance. • Techniques and resources for how to stay informed about common industry practices.
Expanding My Network	Professionals should strive to continually build, grow, and nourish a strong learning-centric network.	3 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for focusing on effective and purposeful relationships. • How to effectively solicit feedback from my network. • Strategies for interacting with a variety of job levels and functions across the organization. • How to use professional networks to help accomplish goals and build support for ideas. • Strategies for letting my network flex and change as needs and strengths evolve.
Making Better Decisions	Successful professionals can make quick and effective decisions that are informed by the past, that respond to the present, and that align with the future.	3 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for understanding what types of information are needed for making different types of decisions. • Techniques for evaluating diverse and competing options. • How to anticipate and weigh the potential impact of different courses of action. • How to use past decisions to inform current and future decisions. • Best practices for communicating and implementing decisions.



PRODUCTIVE MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Choose activities from this list to support the learning and development goals of mentoring participants. Engage in activities that are most relevant to the skill, topic, or situation that the mentoring relationship has formed to tackle. Additionally, keep the learning styles and preferences of yourself and others in mind.

- Record observations of others.
- Attend lectures, webinars, and podcasts, and discuss lessons learned.
- Listen to audio books or recorded presentations.
- Pretend the question raised by the mentee or mentor came from a third party: the mentee and mentor collaborate on the advice they would give that person.
- Read and journal.
- Share a story with one another that illustrates a personal experience and issue and then talk about it.
- Practice presentations, followed by review, feedback, and discussion.
- Interview others and discuss observations.
- Brainstorm.
- Break down complex activities into steps.
- Job shadow.
- Role-play and use case studies.
- Debate from opposing viewpoints.
- Generate self-study and improvement plans.
- Conduct research to identify multiple perspectives of an issue.
- Complete a self-evaluation of performance and suggest plans for improvement.
- Produce a position paper.
- Build a training manual outline.
- Conduct interviews and synthesize conclusions.
- Produce a personal job aid.
- Evaluate a paper or presentation of others.
- Complete joint projects.
- Assist in others' development.
- Train others with evaluation.
- Present a two to three year personal development plan.

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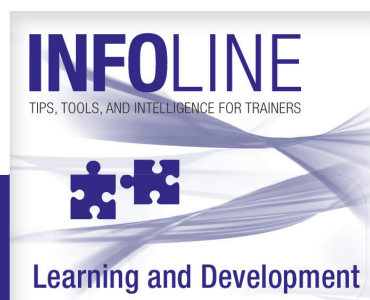
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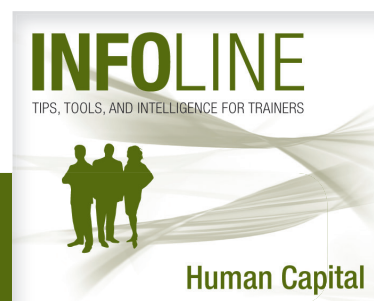
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