

MENTORING AS AN HRD TOOL FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract : This paper attempts to study mentoring as an HRD tool for skill development. Mentoring has been identified as an effective means of leadership development in organizations the world over. Mentoring is a professional relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) assists another less experienced person (mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge. This helps in the professional and personal growth of the mentee. The study gives a broad overview of the concept of mentoring, the role and benefits of a mentor and women mentors in Indian context. The paper helps in understanding how mentoring helps in developing leadership skills, management skills and creating charismatic leadership in organizations. This paper will be informative to Indian corporate to recognize the importance of mentoring and how to make mentoring effective. Mentoring will not only help corporate in encouraging and retaining valuable talent but also in developing leadership skills in the organization.

Key words: HRD, mentoring, skills, leadership, mentor, mentee, development.

INTRODUCTION:

Mentoring is the HRD involvement that promotes developing skills. HRD oriented organizations are increasingly focusing on coaching and mentoring as a means of skill development. Developing leadership skill by mentoring is an important HRD tool for management. The mentor acts as a role model and supports the mentee by sharing knowledge, resources and advice to help them improve their skills. It is usually a formal or informal relationship between the mentor and the mentee. According to Peter Drucker, "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Extending these definitions, a mentor is one who teaches and coaches others to do the right thing. Mentoring helps in the development of leadership skills and management skills. It helps to manage and motivate people and helps others learn, grow and be more effective in their workplace. Senior employees are today's leaders whereas the junior employees are tomorrow's leaders; hence the juniors need guidance and training. Mentoring is one of the way in which companies conduct training and development programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring is a process in which one person [mentor] is responsible for overseeing the career and development of another person [protégé] outside the normal manager/subordinate relationship (Clutterbuck, 1991). Gregson (1994) says that mentoring is an endeavor to transmit proficiency and expertise from practiced members in an organization to the less experienced. It is mostly used as a "fast-track" support scheme wherein the senior members of the organization oversee the activity and performance of the more junior colleagues who have been identified as 'crown princes' - kings of tomorrow. Stafylarakis & Eldridge say that no doubt coaching and mentoring have always been associated with the HRD but in order to promote the learning within the organization they are now being used much more extensively across all the levels of the organization.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Central part of objectives of this study is to understand the concept of mentoring and its importance in developing leadership skills among managers. However, detailed objectives have been outlined as under:

- i) To recognize mentoring as an essential leadership skill
- ii) To understand the difference between coaching and mentoring
- iii) To examine the role of a mentor and benefits of mentoring
- iv) To understand as to how to make mentoring effective
- v) To acknowledge the need of women mentors.

COACHING AND MENTORING

Coaching and mentoring are not recent phenomena, it is there right from the ancient times of rishis, munis and saints who played the role of philosophers and guides. Whatever the case, these 'wise and trusted counselors' have remained a feature of human interactions throughout history. The common noun 'mentor' was first recorded in 1750. Interestingly, the etymology of the noun 'coach' is actually Hungarian. It is derived from the word for a vehicle or a carriage – the idea being that instructors carried their pupils!

Coaching and mentoring cannot be interchanged in practice; rather they have their own characteristic efficacy in separate areas of the HRD so they both of them are needed to be adopted as tools of the employee development in their own areas (Veale & Wachtel, 1996). Coaching may involve either an individual coach or a team, mentoring is always one to-one process between two individuals (Stafylarakis & Aldridge, 2005).

Coaching focuses on the ability of employee whereas mentoring focuses on their attitudes. Focus of coaching is normally technical in nature, development of certain skills while mentoring takes care of personal and professional development. Coaching focuses on meeting very specific objectives within a set period of time but mentoring is an indefinite relationship based activity with several specific but wide ranging goals. Coaching is a planned programme with a specific time period however mentoring process extends over a period of time gaining from the skill, knowledge and experience of the mentor and applying to new situations and processes. Mentoring and coaching can be 'stand alone' activities, but they can also be used to complement each other.

ROLE OF A MENTOR

Mentor plays a very significant role in the overall skill development of the organization. They can be listed below:

- Provide valuable knowledge and information
- Creates a mentoring cultural which encourages employees growth and development
- Helps in the development of skills
- Improves productivity
- Encourages retention
- Reduces turnover costs
- Challenges the employee to move beyond their comfort zone
- Creating a safe learning environment for taking risks
- Encourages cooperation among various departments
- Being an internal expert for professional development

SKILLS AND QUALITIES OF A MENTOR

A mentor needs to have right skills and qualities to make the process of mentoring work. Seniors who agree to become mentors should have the right skills and qualities.

- Interested to work as a mentor
- Time commitment
- Appropriate knowledge and skill
- Moral and ethical
- Be patient and supportive

- Good listener
- Trustworthy

BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Mentoring benefits the mentor, the mentee and the organization. It is a win-win situation for all the concerned parties. The benefits can be thus classified into:

A)To the mentor

- i)Skill development- coaching, counseling, listening and model
- ii)Maximizes potential growth
- iii)Enthuses, re-energises the mentor
- iv)Gains satisfaction in sharing expertise with others
- v)Develops and practices a personal style of leadership
- vi)Learns more about other areas within the organization
- vii)Helps to understand the problems at the lower levels of the organization
- viii)Awareness of generation gap
- ix)Personal and professional development
- x)Becomes a part of the organizational development

B)To the mentee

- i)Gains from mentor's expertise and experience
- ii)Professional and personal development
- iii)Helps in smoother transition into the workforce
- iv)Receives critical feedback from the mentor
- v)Helps further career development opportunities
- vi)Gains insight into a different and new viewpoint
- vii)Helps to better understand own strength and weakness
- viii)Discuss their ideas and viewpoint
- ix) Insight into unspoken rules and culture
- x)Networking is strengthened

C)To the organization

- i)Helps in improving organizational performance
- ii)Helps to improve communication within the organization
- iii)Better coordination among employees and departments
- iv)Growth of the organizations through skill development
- v)Higher levels of staff retention
- vi)Cost effective way of skill development

GUIDELINES TO MAKE MENTORING EFFECTIVE

Organizations have to formulate a formal mentoring programme. The process is to be initiated and sustained by the top leadership. A small group or committee should be formed to deal with the intricacies of the mentoring programme. To be effective the organization/committee need to have a clear action plan integrating the following things:

- Purpose of the committee should be specific and clear
- Role and responsibility of every member
- The employees to be mentored
- The task to be undertaken
- Outcome of the process
- Programme evaluation

The mentoring process itself needs a delicate and professional approach. It should include:

- Nurturing a continued mentoring relationship
- Mentor need to be a guide and a role model
- Mentor should motivate and inspire the mentee
- Mentor should enjoy teaching
- Help in developing new skill and opportunities of the mentee

- Having an awareness of the environment
- Help in developing the leadership skill of the mentor.

ROLE OF WOMEN MENTORS IN INDIA

In India, companies are depending on women mentors to both retain and to nurture the women talent. A number of talented employees leave their job due to family commitments and pressures. So, companies have started developing support system for women to hold on to key talent in the form of mentors. Cadbury India recently introduced the 'My Mentor' programme to encourage high-potential women to aspire to senior leadership roles. The self-paced, 12-week programme provides an opportunity to network with both peers as well as senior business leaders, including women leaders within the business across the Asia Pacific region. Accenture has Women's Mentoring Programme that pair women executives with senior executive mentors, which include virtual workshops and provide networking tips.

Coco-Cola India has been targeting to get more women in the workplace, develop them to advance in their career and retain them. It has an initiative called LINC- lead, inspire and connect. Its objective includes inviting senior women role models to share their experiences on issues like managing career growth, barriers to growth and to retain them in the company.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring is a way in which progressive companies tackle staff training and development. It is becoming increasingly popular as the most important on-the-job development programme of HRD. Companies need to understand the importance of mentoring as an essential leadership skill to both retain and develop talent. Mentor plays a very important role and the mentoring process need to be effectively implemented in the organization. The role of women mentors is equally important to retain and develop leadership skills.

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