Improving the Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs to Increase Employee Satisfaction and Retention

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Increase Employee Satisfaction and Retention

According to Washington D.C. based iReach, a marketing research consultancy, the value of employee satisfaction and retention is often overlooked (Employee Surveys, Employee Satisfaction Surveys, Employee Questionnaire, n.d.). This is not necessarily an intentional act, but one to which organizations often fall prey. This may be attributed to management's focus on producing consistent results (Natemeyer, 2011, p. 361). When considering the success or failure of a business, it seems that the organizational process and financials are considered before the employees. Employers often address business dilemmas, such as employee satisfaction, product quality, and interoffice relationships, by focusing on the process rather than considering the underlying issues. There are a number of possible areas which could be explored in order to determine the reason for such behavior. Since the employees are the one constant factor in the equation, they will be the focus of this study. Additionally, of the many characteristics and dynamics which can alter the behavior of this constant, personal and career development is just one. Thus, this study will focus specifically on understanding the ways in which the effectiveness and sustainability of a formal mentoring program may be improved, in particular as it enhances the personal and career growth of employees.

Businesses face many challenges. Many of these challenges may or may not be related to, or rectified by, an effective mentoring program. According to Sage, "93% of small and medium sized businesses acknowledge that mentoring can help them to succeed" (Mentoring statistics, n.d.). It is possible that these businesses may be failing to take full advantage of all their human resources. Asset development and growth may contribute to positive business outcomes as well as employee satisfaction. Subsequently, some organizations may be inadequately fulfilling their obligation to properly cultivate those resources. The employee/employer relationship has an unwritten agreement of bidirectional responsibility. It is the duty of the employee to perform the tasks assigned in the most responsible way possible. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the employer to provide the employee with an environment that not only allows, but encourages and promotes this responsibility. There are a number of activities that add value to an organization. Employee interaction, for example, tends to build a sense of community (Brock, 2013). In addition, an equal balance of achievement and camaraderie are major factors and expectations of most employees (Karnes, 2009). It stands to reason then, that a key factor in the success or failure of this relationship, and the employee's ability to succeed, may be a formal mentoring program.

Problem Statement

In the hustle and bustle of the business world, all eyes are on the work product associated with that particular organization, often overlooking the personal or professional development of the human assets. The intent of this research is to determine why some organizations may have difficulty creating or sustaining mentoring programs which could promote employee productivity, increase motivation, and result in employee satisfaction, which may positively impact business outcomes.

Research Question

What are some of the factors which have led to the absence of formal mentoring programs in some organizations, which may feasibly promote business success and employee satisfaction?

Subset research questions. What are the challenges in implementing and maintaining a mentoring program? What factors must be evaluated in order to deliver an effective mentoring program? What are the measureable success elements associated with an effective mentoring program? What are the risks associated with a mentoring program, and how should an organization evaluate and respond to those risks?

Rationale

More often than not, employees want to do a good job (9 Employee Engagement Killers by the Modern Manager, 2015). They want to help the organization succeed, and they also want to grow personally. There are a number of factors which play into employee satisfaction. Once an employee's basic needs are met, most people derive satisfaction from: adding value, being given ownership, a sense of belonging, feeling appreciated, and being cultivated. This is where a true leader is needed. Leadership is about helping people succeed; specifically those leaders which have been charged to manage. Although the definition of success can be different for each person, one of a leader's responsibilities is to help each employee realize their goal and even surpass it, while fulfilling the corporate mission. If organizations are able to create and sustain a successful, accountable mentoring program, this may place them one step closer to developing, strengthening, and retaining employees.

Nevertheless, this is not a blind exercise for the organization. In a spring 2012 whitepaper entitled "So Your Organization Needs A Mentoring Program", Management Mentors suggests that organizations should consider three areas: their budget, size, and goals. These considerations will determine what type of program is most appropriate for the organization. Management Mentors also suggest that external resources, through them, can be acquired to assist in the mentoring process for as little as $2500 to $7500. The importance of such programs goes beyond cultivating content employees. In a 2010 whitepaper entitled "The Well Leveraged Corporate Mentoring Program", Management Mentors refers to several statistics that impact businesses. High attrition rates are one. Denoting a 2008 study by Deloitte Research, the article pointed out that one in every three people hired leaves within the first year. It has been estimated that replacing those disengaged employees will cost businesses between 29 and 46 percent of their annual salary (Management, 2010).

The lack of such a program, or at least a culture of employee mentorship, may result in negative impacts associated with the employee, as well as the organization. An employee that is not functioning at his or her highest ability is an under-utilized and under-contributing resource. Not only is the employee at risk of being discouraged, which will affect their performance, but the business is not receiving the most return on its investment. This deficiency in resource utilization will eventually affect the bottom line and possibly create a revolving door of endless lost opportunities.

Finally, according to an article in Smart Business Chicago, only 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs (Management, 2012). If 30 percent of the largest organizations do not have such a program, one has to wonder how many of the remaining 30 million businesses, in the United States alone, would have one. According to a 2003 meta-study, which analyzed 151 studies conducted on mentoring, 90% of them reported that there were positive outcomes associated with their programs (Ehrich, 2004). In some studies, these positive outcomes came in the form of career satisfaction and employee commitment, which were evidenced by an increase of positive employee attitudes (Ragins, 2000).

Definitions

A formal mentoring program is a structured, systematic approach to developing leaders. Typically, this type of program is sanctioned by the organization and has identified specific activities and requirements by both the mentor and the mentee. These types of programs are often associated with medium to large companies. Informal mentoring, on the other hand, is where leadership or peers take it upon themselves to share knowledge and experience. This type of behavior is not conducted in order to meet any organizational requirements. In reality, it is a result of an organization or group of individuals who have a sense of teamwork. This is often motivated by the members' desire to see each one succeed. Like formal mentoring programs, these too can be found in large organizations. Most often they will be developed within the small team environment. In addition, this is typically the mentoring delivery method of smaller businesses. An organization is a group of people - whether in a company, business unit, or operational team - that has a shared service delivery or purpose. An effective program is one that delivers a measurable and favorable outcome. In the case of mentoring, this would be specific to both the employees and the organization. A satisfied employee is one that believes he or she is rewarded in proportion to their work effort. This may come in the form of a monetary gain, or for others may incorporate inclusion. The feeling of satisfaction will be different for each individual. A mentor, as defined by Merriam-Webster is "someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person". This definition recognizes the need for a mentor to be willing to give of their time. It also alludes to the requirement that the more experienced person take an interest in the growth of the less experienced.

Hypothesis

Organizations that maintain formal mentoring programs experience a higher level of employee satisfaction than those organizations without formal mentoring programs. In addition, organizations that do not necessarily have a formal mentoring program, but do embrace a culture of mentorship, have similarities in employee satisfaction. Finally, the cost and risks of implementing a formal mentoring program, or training staff how to informally mentor their employees, is in direct relationship to their willingness to engage.

Literature Review

There are a number of assumptions, challenges, and risks associated with mentoring activities. The least of these is the ability to measure the effectiveness for both the individuals involved and their organization.

According to some studies, organizations spend over $25 billion on training and mentoring their staff annually (Goldman, 2013). Confusion arises when one is unable to define how leadership is developed (Hackman, 2007). This may be the reason for the disparate accessibility of concrete research material that is available between popular and scholarly sources. There are some similarities, such as the method of delivery. One often hears reference to various leadership style theories, such as the leader-member exchanges theory, situational leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and authentic leadership. These are specific to the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Goldman, 2013). Although some other ideas exist, this highlights the necessity for a stable relationship. The challenges of fostering such a relationship may prove increasingly difficult. This dynamic can vary from generation to generation, and from industry to industry. This emphasizes the necessity for additional research and publication by researchers of this subject matter.

Additionally, some have suggested that individual preference, experience, and expectations play a significant role (Allen, 2006). “Mentorable” relationships must include characteristics such as: credible, confident, personal, and encouraging (DeLong, 2008; Ladyshewsky, 2010). It not only demands characteristics from the superior, but also from the organization as a whole, with a final return on investment for the future (Meister, 2010).

For example, an employee may be looking for a flexible schedule from their manager, a clear career path from the organization, and the ability to build upon their experience for the future (Meister, 2010). The challenge arises when this dynamic is evaluated against the investment, while employee turnover is on the rise (DeLong, 2008). There are also some characteristics that should be sought out when accepting a protégé (Hunt, 1983). These may include past performance, drive, and adaptability.

With this in mind, organizations also need to determine what really attracts and retains employees. Mentoring is sometimes touted as offering numerous benefits to an organization and its employees (Allen, 2006). Conversely, it is important to take into consideration the payout in correlation to the reward. Some studies have reported a lack of empirical evidence that supports the attractiveness of an organization based on its institution of a formal mentoring program (Allen, 2006).

However, conflicting reports state that there is anecdotal evidence that it is an effective recruitment tool (Allen, 2006). Further research is required to understand the various outcomes. It is recognized that most studies concerning formal mentoring programs focus primarily on the mentee, or the mentee/mentor relationship. It is important to also investigate such programs as they relate to the organization and the alignment with their organization's goals.

When leaders within organizations discuss issues associated with a particular business unit, they often speak in terms of a team, and with every team comes a coach. Thus, it should be no surprise that managers of teams are expected to have skills like that of a coach. On many levels, coaching and mentoring can be interchangeable. Schelling refers to eight coaching skills that parallel that of the expectations of a mentor (Graham, 1994). Clear communication, feedback, relevancy, development, performance and reward, guidance, and a productive relationship are all synonymous with mentoring skills (Graham, 1994; Ladyshewsky, 2010). Although all of these skills may not be relevant in a formal mentor/mentee relationship, they are significant in an informal one, where the manager is fulfilling his or her duties as a leader.

It is suggested that many of these skills are key to employee and employer success (Graham, 1994). As with mentoring, coaching assumes similar semantics in context and terminology. Those characteristics which are similar in nature would include opportunities that are: impromptu, short and timely, spontaneous, targeted, and cultivating conversations (Turner, 2015). Likewise, these must all be conducted with the receivers' expectations, perceptions, and situations in mind (Turner, 2015). This dynamic may be challenging to juggle, but necessary for any organizational development and performance management process (Ladyshewsky, 2010). This is an excellent opportunity to discuss the value and applicability of emotional intelligence as a framework for any formal mentoring process (Ladyshewsky, 2010).

The ultimate goal of any mentoring program or process is to grow the employee which will grow the organization. There are several dynamics and benefits to a mentoring program, which include not only benefits for the mentee, but also for the mentor. Being a mentor can be professionally rewarding and satisfying (Hunt, 1983; Gong, 2014). Other benefits that have been attributed to the mentee are as simple as the ability to receive information directly from the source and learning through the experience of others. This provides a certain level of confidence (Newby, 2013). In addition, the benefit that may be recognized by the organization may be an increase in quality employees. Quality employees are those that are engaged, energetic, and committed (Newby, 2013). However, there are also some disadvantages as well. An undesirable outcome can arise when such programs are instituted without the proper training. Relationships within an organization can be stressed and there can be an increase in frustration (Hunt, 1983).

Additionally, if mentors are unsuccessful in mentoring a staff member, it could be a negative reflection and impact the mentors' career growth (Hunt, 1983; Gong, 2014). This identifies the importance that personalities can play in the process, which will require further study (Gong, 2014).

Ultimately, employee satisfaction is the catalyst which creates an environment where employees work at their peak performance. When employees work at their peak performance, organizations reap the benefits. Thus, organizations would benefit by knowing how to get the most out of their employee base. According to an article published by Gartner, "Use Mentoring and Coaching to Create a High-Performance EA Team" (2014), they conducted a study back in 2006 which found numerous benefits associated with mentoring. This study took place over five years, and includes a total of 1000 employees. Of these employees, 25% of them experienced a salary increase, while only 5% of their non-participating counterparts did so. In addition, both the mentors (six times more often) and mentees (five times more often) experienced promotions. Also, both of these participants experienced a much high retention rate throughout the process.

There are a number of theories, some which focus on the financial impact, others on the benefits to the mentor or mentee, and still others on the impact to the organization as a whole. If people are the primary resource in an organization, it would seem logical that organizations would maintain and utilize those resources in the most efficient manner. Formal mentoring programs may be one of the tools available to promote positive behavior among leadership and management that would assist in developing these resources.

Methodology

My method of research for this paper will be Qualitative. A quantitative study would be difficult since much of the outcome, whether negative or positive, is emotionally based. Even the effects on productivity would be difficult to attribute directly to any form of mentoring. It would prove difficult to quantify satisfaction or worth with any consistency. Likewise, I am not currently in a position that enables me to be directly involved in implementing change in a timeframe necessary for this study.

A qualitative study will assist me in sifting through the great deal of related research that has been captured in case studies. I plan to study and analyze related research, looking for connections, correlations, and variances in application which might help determine patterns of behavior among employees. I would also like to develop a web-based survey in order to gain real-time data within specific organizations and industries. There may also be an opportunity to utilize these surveys in order to capture specific regional and job function information. My population will include a random sampling of individuals, which may include any and all races, male and female, between the ages of 18 and 65.

The analysis of this data will seek to determine the presences of formal and informal mentoring programs. It will strive to gauge the employee satisfaction level among those with and without such programs. The survey and analysis will also attempt to determine the impact mentoring programs have on employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. In addition, the goal will be to establish a baseline of challenges and risks that others have experienced, while implementing or maintaining a formal or informal mentoring program.

Results

The survey was delivered to approximately 3,300 contacts through several social media outlets, as well as 200 direct connection requests through electronic mail and LinkedIn®. As a result, there were a total of 82 participants, primarily from the healthcare and information services sectors. However, responses were also received from 17 other industries. The group consisted of: 34 staff members, 25 managers, 12 directors, 7 senior leadership members, and 4 supervisors. Thirty-five percent of the participants have been in the work force for 21 to 30 years. While the other breakdowns were as followed: 18% - 11 to 15 years, 16% - 31 to 40 years, 10% - 16 to 20 years, 6% - more than 40 years, 5% - 1 to 5 years, and 1% less than 1 year.

Primary Industry	
Banking	Manufacturing
Construction	Mental Health
Education	Military
Energy	Retail
Government	Retired
Healthcare	Social Welfare
Hospitality	Staffing/Services
Information Services	Technology
Insurance	Utilities

Engagement

There was one error denoted in the survey questions. That was in not determining how an engaged employee should be defined. Most people do not want to admit that they are dis-engaged or they do not understand what it means. An engaged employee is one who has a sense of passion about their work. Many have stated that this is driven by an undeniable connection the company and its purpose. According to Curt Coffman, co-author of the book "First, Break All The Rules", 55% of the U.S. workforce is not engaged (Buckingham, 1999). These are the people who are simply "doing their job". Often, they are not seeking to increase productivity, decrease the cost of services, and are often left feeling "stuck" in their circumstances.

According to the United States Labor Force Statistics, as of December of 2015, there were 149,929,000 gainfully employed citizens (United States Labor Force Statistics, 2015). This means that approximately 75,000,000 people simply go through the motions at work every day. The survey results reported that only 13% of the participants were not engaged, committed, or energetic, while 44% stated that they anticipated separating within the next five years. It has been stated time and time again, that people do not leave companies, they leave managers.

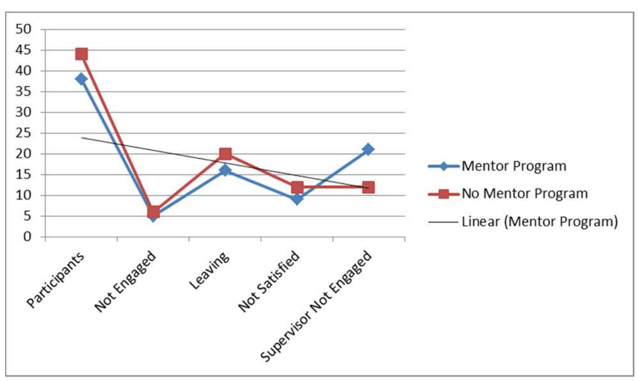
Interestingly, 34% of those who have some sort of mentoring program, still report that their direct supervisor does not mentor them according to their needs.

Desired Outcomes

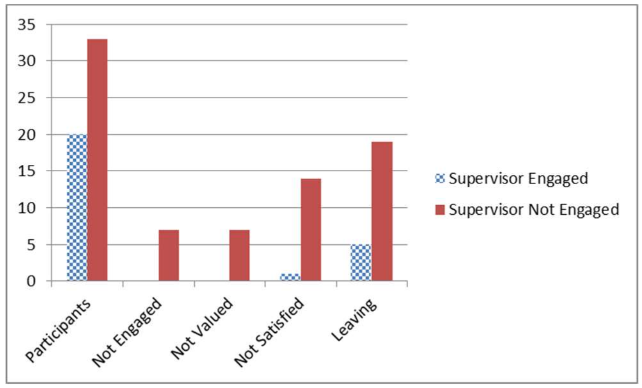
Show me the money! – whether from Jerry Maguire, the South Korean television series, or the reply of the U.S labor force when asked, “what will motivate you?” However, our study has shown that this is not the case, as 40% of the survey participants stated that their outcome was to increase their performance. In addition, when asked what the purpose of a mentoring program should be, 72% stated that it should identify and utilize the strengths of their employees. It is not just about the money. According to a recent Randstad US employee engagement study, “one in four employees would rather have a better boss than a $5000 raise”. Also, “one in three would rather be happier at work than receive a $5000 raise” (Randstad US: Employee engagement study reveals how bosses can become workplace heroes, 2015).

Of the 13% of the survey participants who did not feel valued, they were also not satisfied in their current position, did not believe that they would still be engaged with their current employer in five years, and did not believe that their supervisor met their needs. Amazingly, not one survey participant reported that financial compensation was their top priority in any of the applicable questions.

A Program or Not



It appears that engagement, retention, and satisfaction may not be linked to whether or not an organization has a mentoring program. However, the survey also discovered that 50% of those whose organizations had some sort of mentoring program, were not included in that program. Moreover, it is possible that those statistics are decreased based upon the supervisor's engagement, or lack thereof. It is clear



that those who have supervisors, who are engaged, are more satisfied and less likely to leave the organization. They also have a much higher rate of perceived value than those without engaged supervision. This may be evidence that what is more important than a formal program, or formal mentor, is a manager that actively participates in the success of each employee. Incidentally, however, only 16% of those in a leadership position believe that it is their responsibility to instigate mentoring activities.

Discussion

Have formal mentoring programs really gone by the wayside? The old adage that "perception is reality" is validated in that we perceive the activities around us, our situation and the circumstances of others by how it affects us personally. Psychology may define it as our acknowledgment and analysis of physical information, and how we respond to it. Either way, whether reality, as defined by Albert Einstein ("Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.") or simply a perception of it, it needs to be addressed before it deteriorates our organizations, and more importantly the people in them.

According to a 2015 Emerging Workforce Study, 89% of young workers seek more from their employment than simply a means to make a living (Highlights from the 2015 Emerging Workforce Study, 2015). They, as well as the majority of today's workforce, want to work for an organization whose mission they believe in, and can relate to. Furthermore, engaged employees require that the work they do will contribute to the overall success of the organization. This is important because studies show that 59% of engaged employees will be retained for at least five years (Highlights from the 2015 Emerging Workforce Study, 2015). The challenge before us as employers, managers, and even employees, is to understand how we can refocus our commitment on what produces and enhances value within our organizations. In addition, we must address those areas among our workforce which creates, motivates, and mentors employee engagement. Focusing on our employees in this fashion will enhance loyalty and commitment, which in turn will enrich customer satisfaction, productivity, brand recognition, and ultimately the bottom line on the organization's financial statements.

Our tendency is to focus on only the "best" or "most productive" employees when it comes to development and growth opportunities. It turns out however, that this is most likely the easy way out. It takes little to no involvement to motivate an effective employee to remain engaged. Often times these employees are self-motivated to the extent that they need little to no mentoring in the way of development. These employees are often the ones that simply need to be pointed in the right direction, and released. However, developing a potential superstar can take a little more work. Those employees that need consistent encouragement, refocused direction, and structure could be tomorrow's under-performers or superstars. This is another reason that managers should seek to identify the strengths in each of their employees.

Personally, I have always found that a celebrated victory, when perceived as the underdog, is much more rewarding than running away with the race everyone knew you would win. A team that develops individually, and as a whole, to claim victory is typically more engaged, emotionally stronger, and more tightly bonded. The negative effect of focusing on specific individuals is that it will develop a sense of favoritism. Transversely, focusing on each and every employee with their specific strength in mind will engage and develop the entire team.

A major step in accomplishing this challenge is to be exponentially committed to the personal and career growth of our workforce. We would think it absurd if a farmer were to simply throw some seed on unprepared ground and leave it to its own development. It takes the care of the farmer to cultivate the crops by watering them and protecting them from insects or diseases that would move in and destroy them. At a minimum, neglected crops would have significantly diminished yield. Likewise, it is counterproductive to hire employees and fail to cultivate their growth.

Cultivating Resources

There are various ways we can cultivate our workforce. Cultivating does not always mean throwing money at the problem, but more often includes interacting with our employees. As previously mentioned, there are factors in an employment engagement that often go beyond financial compensation. Cultivating an employee, and thus enhancing their satisfaction level, is often associated with many other aspects. Studies have shown that employees are equally craving an environment where they are valued (Highlights from the 2015 Emerging Workforce Study, 2015). Loyalty, commitment, and engagement are all factors that will be affected when an employee fails to understand their value in an organization. When employees are given ownership of a task, it not only builds confidence, but also cultivates a sense of value. The value they bring to the team encourages and strengthens their sense of belonging and appreciation. Even the water boy or girl on a team adds value when they realize their contribution is directly related to the success of each member, and the team as a whole. In combination, this type of environment also builds the overall trust factor. In addition, when we belong to a process, with a shared mission among our coworkers, it tends to build upon the similarities we have with one another. These similarities create an environment of belonging. The ability to create such an environment requires a diligent effort which includes thoughtful observation and honesty. Interestingly, emotional intelligence may be the key to creating a culture that is prepared for the type of change needed in today's workforce.

Emotional Intelligence

Many organizations and managers likewise, put a very high price on a person's education when determining their ability to fulfill a task. In an essence, they tend to qualify a person's ability by their intelligence quotient (IQ). Although an employee's ability to reason is an essential one, there may be factors which are unrealized by placing an unbalanced emphasis on a person's IQ.

Psychology Today defines emotional intelligence (EQ/EI) as a person's ability to identify their emotions and the emotions of others. In addition, it is the ability to utilize that knowledge in a way that facilitates relational behavior. In the book, Emotional Intelligence 2.0, Bradberry and Greaves identify four skills that are synonymous with EQ (Bradberry, 2009). Specifically, they suggest that self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management are four skills which are encompassed within two competencies, personal and social. Self-awareness and self-management is our ability to understand our own emotions and how we tend to respond to them. Coleman has categorized this as self-control (Coleman, 1998). He relates to those specific emotions as being disruptive. These personal competencies are crucial in controlling our instinctive reactions through the mentoring process. Social awareness enables a manager to empathize with the employee. If a manager is capable of honestly evaluating and controlling themself, while understanding the feelings and reactions of those around them, they will be able to engage in effective relationship management (Bradberry, 2009). Many of the significant relationship skills necessary for mentoring will be exponentially more effective with a manager who has a high EQ. Likewise, an employee with a high EQ will be able to more rapidly navigate the social network of an organization. They will also be equipped to effectively motivate themselves as well as those around them. A team with a high level of emotional intelligence is often a tighter knit group. They have the ability to shift their roles and expectations of each other in an effort to reduce stress and reduce the opportunities of failure among their coworkers.

There are some additional angles that can be affected by focusing on our emotional competencies, as Coleman describes them (Coleman, 1998). He speaks of trustworthiness, which may have connections into social awareness, but more specifically the demonstration of honesty and integrity. The certainty that a lack of trust will destroy a relationship is indisputable. Conscientiousness is another competency to which Coleman refers. How a person behaves is a reflection of their belief system. What they believe is acceptable will be magnified under pressure and the reflection of their base values will be exposed. Likewise, when a manager is dependable and follows through with their actions, it is a reflection of their integrity and reliability. In turn, this will also act as a catalyst in gaining the respect of their employees. Additionally, Coleman identifies the emotional competency of adaptability. A manager's ability to be flexible through changes and challenges will not only assist in the establishment of the relational trust factor with their staff, but will also build upon their respect, as well as extract those same qualities in their staff. As with many of these skills and competencies, they are magnified when utilized in conjunction with each other. Ultimately, they build relationships and organizations that are not only focusing on the individuals, in an effort to make them the best "them" that they can be in the workplace, but also in part with their work/life balance. As Coleman stated, "great work starts with great feelings" (Coleman, 1998). Finally, recognizing that emotional intelligence is both a personal and interpersonal tool, we must ask ourselves how that instrument can be best utilized to maximize its effectiveness.

Mentoring Philosophies

There are a few diverse philosophies when it comes to identifying who it is that does the mentoring. Although the organization may have a formal mentoring program, it may not be the most effective. Even when the organization initiates the relationship by identifying employees, there are a few problems with that solution. For example, who chooses and by what criteria are employees selected? This is not to say that it is not beneficial for an organization to have guidelines for mentors. Our survey results indicated that 48% of the participants believe that it is the organization's responsibility to institute and regulate a mentoring program.

Another popular scenario is encouraging the employee to seek out a mentor. Although this requires initiative by the employee which encourages ownership, it does little to show the employee that they are valued or appreciated. However, interestingly enough, 23% of our survey participants do believe that the employee should be the initiator.

Although we will not be discussing it within this subject matter, there is an "idea" of mentoring up. This encourages subordinates to mentor their leadership. Although there are some excellent opportunities for this, this may be more adaptable once a mentor/mentee relationship is developed. This opens the door to the focus of this paper, which is one whereby the manager seeks to mentor their own staff.

Although it may be controversial, a productive manager / employee relationship has the ability to provide opportunities of growth that no other member of the organization can. A manager has the ability to cultivate the employee by encouraging and promoting their responsibilities throughout their employment. Their ability to create an atmosphere of achievement, growth, and comradery will be the force behind extracting the employees' strengths, breaking down barriers and challenges, and creating a culture of development. Incidentally, 28% of the survey participants agreed that it was the manager's responsibility to have some part in mentoring their employees. Although this may not actually fall into the mainstream schematics for the characterization of mentoring, the bases of this paper will adopt the following assumption. Whether or not an organization has a formal mentoring program, it is the responsibility of an employee's manager to mentor that employee.

Barriers, Factors, and Challenges

There are a number of barriers, factors, and challenges which lead to inadequate or infertile mentoring in the workplace. Some of which are unintentional, some out of ignorance, and others due to an environment of control.

At the pace of business today, it can be difficult to make time for proper mentoring. It seems like the days and months pass us by at the speed of light. Forty three percent of our survey participants agree that this is a major hurdle. This is why it takes a conscious, committed effort to allocate the necessary time that is required to be invested in the primary resource, - our employees. The commitment of leadership was the second most difficult challenge identified by 38% of our survey participants. Time investment requires an additional effort to effectively manage our workload to ensure that there is space in our schedule to provide for mentoring opportunities. Time investment also requires a personal devotion and vulnerability that many are unwilling to give. As managers, there is a fine line between our personal and professional lives that needs to be navigated. When there is an environment with some susceptibility, this line can sometimes be blurred. The fact remains that in order to be empathic toward one's staff, it may be necessary to straddle a line that is thought unapproachable in our modern day management philosophy.

A change in philosophy often requires a change in culture, which can be a difficult proposition. However, there is little possibility of authentic communication without it. In addition, in order to truly relate to our employees needs and desires as it relates to a proper work-life balance, this culture needs to be overcome. Like any other relationship, managers must put aside their own feelings and fears if they desire to strengthen others. This will often require that managers balance the achievements that may promote their own strengths and success, with those of their employees. As an employee experiences a manager's willingness to seek their best interest, it will also advance the camaraderie of their relationship, and that of the overall team.

The challenge of overcoming many of these barriers, factors, and challenges is primarily based upon a selfish desire to grow personally and professionally. However, with the proper balance in a culture, these same benefits will be realized at every level of an organization.

Measurement

Success can be difficult to measure. In a sporting event, there is a clear winner. Whoever has the most points at the end of the game, wins. However, a deeper look into each of the players will give a better perspective as to how this same measure of success can be analyzed within a business team. The key is a manager's ability to see the strengths of each individual on their team.

Some measure of success will be seen through the growth and advancement of each member. Some success, although seemingly counterproductive, measurement will be seen through the professional advancement of its members. When mentoring brings about the strengthening of individuals to take on additional roles and opportunities within the organization, there is a clear sense of success. The mentoring abilities of the manager are seen by enabling the employee to grow. This will necessitate the release of control and trust in the employees abilities by the manager. This also enables the organization to retain the knowledge of the employee within the organizations and stabilize turnover.

Employee turnover will also be affected when employees realize that management appreciates and seeks to utilize their strengths. This is not only related to the current staff but is also communicated to those perspective employees which may bring value to an organization. The truth is: people talk. A simple search on the internet will unveil what current and former employees think of an organization. When employees speak negatively of an organization, this tends to deter others who may be looking for opportunities. One study indicates that one in every two people, when considering an employment with an organization, take into deliberation the company's online reputation (Highlights from the 2015 Emerging Workforce Study, 2015). This also speaks to those looking to do business with the company. Customers and vendors want to know that the organization they are doing business with is stable and reliable. One indicator of their commitment and culture can be perceived by observing how they treat their own employees. In addition, satisfied employees perform better than those who are discontent. Customers will often seek to put their business in the hands of organizations which are healthy. A healthy partnering organization is one which will have a positive impact on both parties. These positive impacts are not always exclusively financially motivated. A working partnership, whether realized or not, will have lasting effects on the employees involved. If one of the parties is discontent and unengaged, it will likely affect the relationship, and most definitely migrate negatively.

Risks

Not unlike any relationship, there are risks to a mentoring relationship. However, similarly, the risks are outweighed by the benefits. There will undoubtedly be those unmotivated employees who will take advantage of the culture. In addition, there may be some generational expectations which may be challenging to navigate. However, the overall organization will still recognize the culture and the willingness of management in those circumstances.

One of the greatest fears that any manager may have when they give over control, is failure. However, failure in moderation builds character. It also acts as the greatest teaching tool. When else do we learn more quickly, and forget not? When weightlifters are training, the most growth comes near the point of failure. Likewise, managers that present opportunities which have a prospect of failure often find that that is when an employee's strengths are honed and growth is exponentially developed.

The myth that an employee's mistakes make the manager look bad need to be recalibrated. Although this should dissipate once a manager's focus in transferred to the employee's success, the comparable growth and success of most employees will overshadow most errors. Ultimately this is a culture change. We must recognize that mistakes are not unproductive, rather not stretching our capabilities to the point of failure is. As explained by Christina Lattimer, in her book "The 6 Secrets of Great Emotional Intelligence", "We must refrain from projecting our own needs, fears values and desires onto others" (Lattimer, 2012).

As it is with life, we often tend to identify the easy wins. This highlights the risk of focusing on the "easy employees". In order to change culture, all employees should receive the same exposure and attention. Those employees who are engaged are often subjected to a much different kind of development challenge. These employees may require even more attention in order to help them remain engaged and challenged. The point here is that every employee needs to be considered in their particular situation.

The truth is there will be some employees who will simply not want to engage in the relationship. Some will resist out of a lack of trust that the culture has developed over the years. Others, "just simply want to do their job", and that is okay also. The former may attempt, inadvertently or intentionally, to create an under toe of mistrust. Nevertheless, change cannot become reality unless there are risks taken. Optimistically, as a manager begins and continues to display and cultivate a positive culture, people will realize the sincerity of the efforts and change will be made.

Whether or not an organization or department has a mentoring program is irrelevant to the supervisor's responsibility to mentor their staff. Additionally, although it may not officially fit the mold of what most identify as a formal or informal mentoring program, it is a supervisor's responsibility to cultivate the most growth, performance, and satisfaction from each of their employees.

Supposition

One of the key dynamics in considering how these influences can be manifested is by understanding the strengths of one's team. This, in turn, can mitigate many of the assumed risk factors. A 2009 Gallup poll found that those employees whose managers seek to develop their strengths are less likely to become disengaged, specifically, 1 in 100 (Driving Engagement by Focusing on Strengths, 2009). In addition, those employees who are overlooked, and even more harmful, those whose supervisors only focus on their negative characteristics, showed that employees who are discounted are twice as likely to become disengaged (How Employees' Strengths Make Your Company Stronger, n.d.).

Growing up, many have heard the advice that we should treat people how we want to be treated. Under that “golden rule”, would we prefer to be under the constant pressure of performing tasks that we are not suited for? Understanding our employee’s strengths involves first getting to know who they are and what makes them tick. Knowing what our employee’s values and ambitions are will help in directing them to their final goal. This will also help build a solid foundation of trust in order to move forward. Additionally, it will help the manager to understand what triggers will drive the employee and keep a positive emotional atmosphere (Coleman, 1998). An engineer that understands the workings of a combustible engine know exactly how that equipment will act and react in every situation. Likewise, equipped with an understanding of our employees will accomplish the same result. With this in mind, a manager is able to know what tasks an employee is prepared to undertake, with success.

The quality of a team's output is in direct relationship to their leaders' willingness to encourage, empower, and embrace their input. One of the first steps in understanding an employee’s strengths is focusing on the employee. This, in conjunction with a manager’s understanding that it is their duty to develop each and every employee, will be the key in initiating this process. Each member has a set of core competencies that will benefit the overall team. It is the manager’s responsibility to hone each of these in a coordinated effort to enable them to work in harmony. Misinterpreting an employee’s strengths can be just as devastating as ignoring them. In addition, studies have shown that rigidness and the inability to establish relationship are two main factors in the failure of careers and relationships (Coleman, 1998). This example begins with the manager, as an example, or template, for the employee.

Many underestimate the power of how our behavior determines the performance around us. Mentoring is not always a “do as I say” relationship. It also involves setting an example by allowing the people around us to see how a good employee behaves. When a manager displays emotional behavior that is either destructive or encouraging, this sets a precedent of what is acceptable. When a manager maintains their composure under stress, for example, this is a form of mentoring. As Coleman points out, our reaction to our circumstances is a choice (Coleman, 1998).

As alluded to throughout this paper, an employee's commitment to their job, and transversely their retention is not exclusively connected to their monetary compensation. Much of the time, there is high value placed upon areas such as: training and development, the flexibility of work hours and locations, fairness, the overall culture of the organization, and the climate that management creates. Many of these topics are embodied in, and indication of, the organizations value, trust, and appreciation of the employee.

Conclusion

If the employee, as many profess, is the most valuable resource, then the culture of mentoring must change. Managers must recognize and react to the understanding that they can have the greatest impact on employee satisfaction and their retention. Moreover, organizations must focus their attention away from the traditional understanding of mentorship, and identify with this same truth. Persuasively, the impact of dissatisfied and discontent employees will impact the organizations stability. Recognizably, this is not something that can be transformed overnight.

Based on a 2012 report by CBS News, it can cost companies more than 20 percent of a person's salary to replace them upon separation (How much does it cost companies to lose employees?, n.d.). Inc. magazine has also reported that this cost could exceed 150 percent; depending on the position to be replaced (How Much Employee Turnover Really Costs You, n.d.). When we take into consideration the knowledge lost, retraining, the cost of possible recruiters, and the detriment to the organization as a whole, it could exceed even those estimates.

As previously mentioned, for as little as $2500 to $7500, an organization can find help, if necessary, to begin to build a culture which could feasibly save them thousands in the long run. According to salary.com and payscale.com, the median annual salary for an organizational development consultant is $83,000. Thus, it would cost an organization approximately $7000 for a one month primer to initiate change among their leadership. Understanding that a consultant may need additional time to understand the current dynamics, this is greatly based upon leadership's honesty of the current culture. Even an employee making $50,000 a year will cost the organization a minimum of $10,000 to replace. If the 2008 study by Deloitte Research is accurate, and one in every three people hired leaves within the first year, a medium sized company who employees 500 people will lose 1.7 million dollars to employee turnover per year. The following chart illustrates the 2013 turnover rates as provided by CompData Surveys, with a static replacement cost of 20 percent (well below, or toward the bottom end of most reports or surveys), at industry average salaries.

Number of Employees	Employee Count	Industry	Average Salary	Replacement Cost	Turnover Rate per Year	Annual Loss
Small 1 to 100		All	50,000	20%	10.40%	$52,000
		Banking	45,000	20%	12.80%	$57,600
	50	Manufacturing	35,000	20%	8.40%	$29,400
		Healthcare	80,000	20%	12.50%	$100,000
Medium 101 to 999		All	50,000	20%	10.40%	$520,000
		Banking	45,000	20%	12.80%	$576,000
	500	Manufacturing	35,000	20%	8.40%	$294,000
		Healthcare	80,000	20%	12.50%	$1,000,000
Large 1000 +		All	50,000	20%	10.40%	$5,200,000
		Banking	45,000	20%	12.80%	$5,760,000
	5000	Manufacturing	35,000	20%	8.40%	$2,940,000
		Healthcare	80,000	20%	12.50%	$10,000,000

Source: Banking Industry Salary, Average Salaries | PayScale. (n.d.); Compensation Force: 2013 Turnover Rates by Industry. (n.d.); Healthcare Wages | Compare Healthcare Salaries. (n.d.); Manufacturing Industry Salary, Average Salaries. (n.d.).

Financially, it observably makes sense that organizations should do all they can to retain their human resources, and in turn their intellectual capital. Thus, mentoring with an approach that improves employee satisfaction and retention is a safe business decision, even if that is all we are concerned with. However, as stated, the purpose of employee retention and satisfaction goes far beyond the financial reward. As a side note, let us not forget that a financial impact may not always be revealed by the month end statements. This also takes into consideration the reputation of the organizations and the long term effects of any errors. In the healthcare or manufacturing industries for example, this could come by way of litigation brought about by flaws in product or process. The negative facilitators which could very well be instigated by disengaged employees. Consideration also must be recognized as to the unrealized loss of productivity by these uncommitted employees. A salaried employee making $50,000 a years will be making $24.04 an hour. If the same employee is motivated to work 10 hours per day, their output rate will drop to $19.23 an hour. Essentially, the employer will be getting more work for their money. Transversely, a discontent employee many only produce for six hours a day, increasing their output rate to $32.05 an hour. As demonstrated below, although hypothetical, the difference between under-utilized and under-contributing resource and one that is engaged has the potential in impact the organization greatly.

Number of Employees	**Yearly Salary**	**8 Hr Rate (2080 Hrs)**	10 Hr Rate (2600 Hrs) **Highly Engaged Employ**	6 Hr Rate (1560 Hrs) **Disengaged Employ**	**Yearly Gain**	**Yearly Loss**
1	$ 50,000	24.04	19.23	32.05	$ 12,500	$ (12,500)

In reality, many organizations already have the necessary knowledge base to begin establishing a mentoring culture. Much of what is touted in endless leadership and mentoring books each year can be summed up in a common sense analysis of what motivates people. The catalyst is sparking an interest in exposing and developing this cultural need to establish a philosophy of accountability within the leadership ranks.

Managers must be held responsible, through tangible methods, for the mentoring of their employees. This may require that managers are measured by not only their success in fulfilling their duties as prescribed by their position description, but also the development of their employees. This may require that employees provide feedback as to the effectiveness of their managers mentoring to leadership. This also provides the manager an effective tool in determining how they helped each person grow throughout the year. This also begins at the point of hire, assuring that each manager is hiring people; or rather accepting a protégé, that they feel confident can be mentored to success.

In a sense, mentoring is less of a program based on a set of instructional success factors, and more about caring and accepting responsibility for the people you have charge over. Understanding that your staff is not motivated by how much you know, but by how much you know they know, is a driving factor in the teams overall success. The truth is, if control and power is what you cherish as a manager, you will be no good to those under it. An analysis of whether your most essential assets are anything other than your employees will be evidence of whether you are a leader or simply a manager (Mills, n.d).

Recommendation

A recent Gallup poll (State of the American Workers Report: Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders, 2013) discovered that companies with higher employee engagement experienced much high earnings per share compared to those with actively disengaged employees. This should come as no surprise. These are the two primary objectives of every successful organization: to make money and to retain satisfied employees.

As quantified in this paper, employee engagement is unveiled through valuing your employees at every level. Through actively engaging and mentoring each employee on a personal level, the inclusive value of the employee base will be evident throughout the organization. The research brought forth in this paper identifies the responsibilities and expectations of a manager, and demands that those expectations be redefined. Managers must be willing to take a personal interest in all of their employees. This relationship is the most essential component to a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Erika Anderson has identified the elusive obvious, as she compares employee engagement to the work of a horticulturalist in her book, “Growing Great Employees.” She stated that “growing a garden and growing employees both take time, thought, skill, and knowledge” (Anderson, 2007). In his review of Anderson’s book, Jack Covert, author and founder of 800-CEO-READ, sums this up by stating that “management really is a process of planting, tending to, and watching employees grow, and “Growing Great Employees” is ‘miracle grow’ for your business.” Employee engagement, and the manager’s responsibility to nurture that, is by far the most crucial component to a successful business – period.

Managers are more often judged upon their ability to effectively deliver a service, and rarely upon their ability to successfully develop people. We must begin to identify and apply new principles of training, application, and assessment for managers. This will equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to transform their thought process. Finally, managers must be accountable for making the time to cultivate each and every employee.

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