

Reverse Mentoring - New HR Talent Management Strategy (A study to bridge the gap between Generation X and Millennial)

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Abstract- Mentoring is about pairing up people of different experience levels and sharing knowledge. The age old description of a mentor defines someone wise, willing to share his/her knowledge and experience to help a mentee succeed without any monetary benefits. It's a matter of Respect, Admiration and Prestige for the Mentor. Feeling unsure, or requiring support are perfect situations to fall back on a mentor. The age old paradigm of mentoring elevated to new higher, more effective and collaborative effort is Reverse Mentoring. Conventional mentoring relationship is reversed with an experienced senior mentee and a much younger techno savvy Mentor. With the advent of digital era experienced professionals can learn a lot from their younger counterparts. Netters seem to have a lot of contagious positive energy and entrepreneurial attitude to add to any workplace. They have passion and drive to achieve success. A proper Reverse Mentoring program can enhance relationships between different generations, re-energize senior employees and keep younger workers engaged. The ability to match up employees of different generation and then encourage each team to meet regularly to exchange ideas and challenge each other is a task of HR department. Mentoring relationships shouldn't be restricted to gender or background. Millennials expect instant feedback, flexible work hours, career progression, path to leadership and work life balance. If engaged properly they are prone to be high achievers. Reverse mentoring helps the organization to achieve the same and pool the best of both generations.

Index Terms- Mentoring, Reverse Mentoring, Gen X and Gen Y, Sharing Knowledge and different generation.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is about pairing up people of different experience levels and sharing knowledge. The age old description of a mentor defines someone wise, willing to share his/her knowledge and experience to help a mentee succeed without any monetary benefits. It's a matter of Respect, Admiration and Prestige for the Mentor. Feeling unsure, or requiring support are perfect situations to fall back on a mentor. The age old paradigm of mentoring elevated to new higher, more effective and collaborative effort is Reverse Mentoring. Conventional mentoring relationship is reversed with an experienced senior mentee and a much younger techno savvy Mentor. With the advent of digital era experienced professionals can learn a lot from their younger counterparts. Netters seem to have a lot of contagious positive energy and entrepreneurial attitude to add to any workplace. They have passion and drive to achieve success. A proper Reverse Mentoring program can enhance relationships between different generations, re-energize senior employees and keep younger workers engaged.

REVERSE MENTORING

High-tech industries that rely heavily on technology were the pioneers to adapt reverse mentoring. It is imperative in these industries to understand the ever evolving technology. Nexters, Netters or Millennials fill this space effectively with their skills, computer knowledge of state of art technology and by being gadget gods. Open two way communication and trust between mentor and mentee are essential elements for a successful mentoring program. Learning and

assisting in the development of others benefits mutually. Though many organizations have formally embraced reverse mentoring, it continues to happen informally sometimes occurring below the consciousness of individuals involved. Human beings being social animals have taken like fish to water to vicarious learning, learning from others, adopting modeled behaviors and attitudes. In the process the organizational culture and values of the organization percolates through personal interactions with co-workers into individual employees.

A summary of the benefits of Reverse Mentoring to Organization, mentor and mentee include,

BENEFITS TO THE ORGANIZATION	BENEFITS TO THE MENTEE	BENEFITS TO THE MENTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase in morale and motivation •Greater Productivity •Discovery of Talent •Development of leadership for future survival and prosperity •Communication of Values, Goals and plans •Demonstration of personal and professional standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Development of potential and knowledge •Flexibility •Self-directed learning •Compliments ongoing formal study and/or training and development activities •Enhances Career Mobility •Mutual Feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Awareness of barriers at lower levels of organization •Enhanced skills in coaching, counseling, listening and modeling •Professional recognition and sense of purpose •Develop and nurture a unique style of leadership •Gain admiration and respect

REVIEWS ON THE TOPIC

The concept of mentoring originated in Homer's Odyssey. When Odysseus set off to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted his son's education to a friend named Mentor. Thus, the term "mentor" is now used to describe friends and teachers with positive influences. Chen, Y. (2013)). Effective mentoring within an organization served first as a pathway of workforce development, skill transfer, and continuous professional education. Second, it addressed employees' need for psychological fulfillment and established a route for their future professional growth (Wu et al. 2009). In traditional mentoring, new or junior employees learn from their seniors. However, as more members of Generations X and Y entered the workforce and technology advanced to an astonishing extent, reverse mentoring, in which junior employees share new concepts, trends and technological skills with their seniors, gradually gained momentum in multinational companies such as IBM and Burson-Marsteller (Meister and Willyerd 2010). The three functions of traditional mentoring are career development,

psychological support, and role modeling. These functions have been comprehensively discussed in numerous studies with variables such as knowledge sharing, organizational commitment, socialization, cultural differences, training transfer, migration, formality of the relationship, and organizational Performance. (Chen et al. 2006) (Chen and Hsieh 2008), (Fu et al 2008), (Hu 2005), (2006), (Hung et al 2008, Teng 2005 b) (Wu et al 2007). High retention, more job satisfaction, less mistakes and more rapid acculturation are all well-known benefits of traditional mentoring.(IDA O. ABBOTT, THE LAWYER'S GUIDE TO MENTORING (2002).

The main goal of reverse mentoring is to kick start innovative thinking and to fill the gap in knowledge for mentor and mentee. Access to the business acumen of veterans, on the job training, an insight into latest technology trends and skills are some of the benefits of reverse mentoring. Though accumulated wisdom helps, for a successful business the hopeful view of youth is required. For a successful business one needs a multidimensional view. Reverse mentoring provides the opportunity to open the world of younger employees, the way they live, work and consume information. Eliminate the cube and consider how the workspace sends a message about a company's culture. (Jeane C. Meister & Karie Willyerd (2010). Cohort generations are argued to share a common and distinct character shaped by their experiences through their times (Scheme & Noble 2000) (Strauss & Howe 1991). The most recent entrants to the workforce, the Gen Yers grew up with frequent IT inventions during prosperous times (Robbins & Judge, 2010).

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The ability to match up employees of different generation and then encourage each team to meet regularly to exchange ideas and challenge each other is a task of HR department. Mentoring relationships shouldn't be restricted to gender or background. Millennials expect instant feedback, flexible work hours, career progression, path to leadership and work life balance. If engaged properly they are prone to be high achievers. Reverse mentoring helps the organization to achieve the same and pool the best of both generations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the effects of reverse mentoring.
2. To identify the relevance and application of reverse mentoring.
3. To measure the impact of reverse mentoring techniques on the employee happiness

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An empirical method of research will be conducted to analyze the primary data. Primary data for the study will be collected from the senior and middle level leaders from IT, ITES, manufacturing, Banking and Financial services in the city of Chennai. The study proposes to collect primary data from 100 respondents. Convenience sampling was done.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The present day workplace comprises of employees from various generations. Each one with their own strengths and challenges. The growth and development of any organization depends on effective utilization of the workforce. We need the amalgamation of experience, knowledge, creativity, technology and speed in expedition. Therefore, in order to bridge the gap between the generations and to capitalize on the strength of employees from all the generations, reverse mentoring can be used as a tool. When this is adopted, a structured approach and methodology need to be employed. This study can help organizations and researchers to identify and understand various means of reverse mentoring.

The perception of various generations of employees can be measured. The youngest respondent was 21 years old and the oldest a 54 year old respondent. Out of the 100 respondents, 24 were females and 76 male. Technology (51%) seems to be the main connecting tool for reverse mentoring followed by getting familiar with Millennials to manage and lead them better (29%), and (20%) to get new ideas. (28%) were resorting to internet to gain knowledge about social media and (18%) to their children. The Millennials who are born with gadget savviness help the generation X employees. They constantly interact (49%) with their younger peers to gain mastery over it. While some (39%) opined that they have a formal Mentoring program in their organization, the other organizations had mentoring interactions that are need based and informal. The smart millennials

seem to take advantage of the seniors they mentor and expect favors (31%). (17%) of them expect work related favors. (14%) expect to be treated special. (39%) take advantage of their juniors by way of making them do their presentations, reports (22%), do online interactions for them (8%), search internet for details (7%) texting them any time for work related queries (2%). Though the Generation X are keen to take millennial's ideas they decide only after taking into consideration (89%) other factors. Getting used to the fearless and open attitude of the millennials is a challenge for the Generation X.

Hypothesis 1: There is no association between the status of the relationship and undue advantage.

Chi-square test was performed on the same. The Chi square statistic is 2.2908. The P value is .130144 at $P < .05$ significance level. This clearly shows that there is a significant association between the status of the relationship and the undue advantage taken.

Hypothesis 2: There is no association between Good employee engagement, and the happiness level.

Chi-square test was performed on the same, The Chi square statistic is 0.0203. The P value is .0886581 at $P < .05$ significance level. This clearly shows that there is a significant association between good employee engagement and employee happiness level. Interacting closely (62%) with the Millennial's have given the seniors a perspective of how they think and work. It has helped them to understand their needs and desires (52%) too. Mentoring affects the leadership development quality of Managers. With the knowledge gained they seemed to manage (44%) their younger employees better. Engaging employees has been one of the biggest challenges of current managers. Employee engagement is thus the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values an engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The Organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee. Thus employee engagement is a barometer that determines the association of a person with the organization. (Nitin Vazirani, Employee Engagement, WPS05). Reverse

mentoring interactions seem to help them engage (68%) the Millennial's better.

The Younger Millennial's are benefitted out of reverse mentoring in various ways. The otherwise closed doors of their superiors seem to be open in various aspects. (60%) of the respondents opined that they learned about Power through reverse mentoring. (45%) were privy to office politics through the same. (54%) got an insight into their Organizational Culture and made them appreciate the organization they were working for. (34%) commented that their way of communication changed for good after communicating with their seniors in the most beneficial manner. An insight into managerial skills and tactics was gained by (63%) of Millennial's.

Being listened to (74%) is the greatest benefit of the mentoring program for the younger employees. (51%) of respondents felt that reverse mentoring helps them to understand their partner better.

Emotional quotient of employees in reverse mentoring programs, either formal or informal is high. (92%) of respondents felt respected. (78%) felt admired and (81%) respondents prestige leveraged. Reverse mentoring seems to help bridge the gap between millinniels and generation X (68%). The social psychology literature supports that when people are put in a good mood by an event they tend to be more altruistic and more likely help others (Karl & Peluchette, 2006). In Part, it may be because such altruistic and helping behaviors tend to prolong their good mood (Clark & Isen, 1982). 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that they felt happy at work due to the mentoring program. Mentoring networks involving multiple mentors provide stronger career satisfaction. It is highly beneficial than the traditional mentoring. If introduced in organizations along with reverse mentoring and traditional mentoring programs mentoring networks will aid in so many ways. (47%) of the respondents had multiple mentors and were part of mentoring networks. Millennials reach or select multiple mentors based on knowledge (57%), comfort to approach (43%). Gen X select multiple mentors based on knowledge (51%), Comfort to approach (49%).

CONCLUSION

Reverse mentoring programs when nurtured in the organisation is sure to increase employee

engagement, Satisfaction, happiness and lower attrition. The Knowledge exchange between the employees of Gen X and Millennial(gen Y) is the main positive factor of reverse mentoring. Career progression, Identification and development of future leaders, innovative ideas and tech savvy Gen Y can be retained with Reverse Mentoring. The senior employees feel respected, admired and their prestige soars with mentoring younger members. It is imperative for the HR departments to facilitate this relationship in their organization for mutual benefit.

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