

Developing a Mentoring Scheme Checklist 082



Introduction

Mentoring can be used as a developmental approach, and helps to show organisational commitment to the individual's development in a non-dictatorial way. It can also be very effective, and:

- provides in the mentor an organisation-backed, uninvolved party who can guide, advise and listen to the mentee, in full confidentiality
- complements other forms of learning and development.

Unstructured or informal mentoring is sometimes seen, however, as patronage, and as giving the mentee an unfair advantage.

This checklist describes the steps and considerations involved in developing an organisational mentoring scheme, and should be read in conjunction with the checklist entitled Mentoring in Practice.

Definition

Mentoring is a relationship in which one person (the mentor), who is usually someone more experienced and often more senior in an organisation, helps another (the mentee) to discover more about themselves, their potential and their capability.

Mentoring should not be seen as an additional or supplementary management task, but as part of a style and approach to management which puts the mentee's development at the heart of the business process.

The relationship between mentor and mentee can be informal, with the mentee leaning on the mentor for guidance, support, help and feedback. It can also be a more formal arrangement in organisations between two people who respect and trust each other, and who have organisational backing to develop the relationship and seek positive outcomes from it. This checklist focuses on formal, organisational schemes.

Action checklist

1. Check the organisational culture

For a mentoring scheme to be successful, a suitable organisational culture needs to be in place. Check for:

- a clear and accepted vision of where the organisation is going
- encouragement of learning and development activities amongst staff
- levels of cooperation and help between different sections of the organisation
- a pervasive air of trust throughout the organisation.

The key to success is trust. If this is wanting, a programme of change may be needed before an organisation-wide mentoring scheme can be attempted with any hope of success.

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2. Establish the goals of the scheme

Consider why you need to establish a mentoring scheme. Common reasons include:

- improving and maintaining the skills and morale of staff
- providing an additional source of guidance and support beyond that offered by line managers
- enabling staff to realise ambitious career development plans
- improving internal communications.

3. Get senior management commitment

A mentoring scheme which does not enjoy the visible support of senior management will almost certainly fail. Without this support, employees will feel that the scheme is under-resourced, and that there is no authority behind it to progress any recommended development activities. With senior management commitment, however, confidence will spill down to mentors and mentees, who will be more likely to give their time, commitment and energy to the scheme.

4. Find a champion

Appoint a mentoring champion who is a senior member of the organisation (possibly the person selected to manage the scheme). Ensure that he or she is seen to be actively supportive on a day-to-day basis. This will be demonstrated through their:

- help in developing the scheme
- willingness to contribute to it by themselves mentoring others
- involvement with others participating in the scheme
- commitment to training for those participating in the scheme.

5. Establish terms of reference

Clear up 'advice and advise' in a legal sense

Ownership of the mentoring process is with the individual mentee. By adopting a joint agreement on a course of action, the mentor should not put themselves in a position of offering legal advice or guidance which could make them liable. Establish the difference between mentoring and eliciting and agreeing action with pros and cons, and offering advice.

Distinguish mentoring from coaching

It is generally accepted that mentoring is distinct from coaching. Coaching is usually done as at least a part of a paid job, with objectives, involves a teaching aspect and should be impartial. Mentoring, on the other hand, is usually done by a self-selected volunteer who is personally involved, aims to facilitate rather than direct a mentee's development, and works with no particular agenda of his or her own.

Confidentiality

All discussions between the mentor and mentee should be strictly confidential. The only exception to this is if the mentee agrees that their content can be relayed to a third party (for example the line manager).

Target audience

Establish who the scheme is aimed at.

6. Start small

Begin with a pilot scheme. Nothing is foolproof or perfect; so testing is needed. A pilot will confine blunders to a core sample of identifiable and responsible volunteer mentors who have a strong interest in developing others, on a personal basis. The result will be a more reliable, consistent and robust mentoring process.

7. Identify and train the mentors

Mentoring should be a voluntary activity, so issue a general invitation to staff to attract those who wish to become mentors. It is important, however, to establish a selection process to ensure a level of quality amongst those who mentor others.

Training is also important to mentors - they must be fully conversant with the mentoring scheme and what is or is not 'acceptable'. Mentors will need to have a clear understanding of:

- the mentoring process
- the difference between mentoring and directing
- the boundaries of mentoring (for example psychological counselling goes beyond these boundaries)
- the skills necessary for effective mentoring.

8. Identify problems in advance

Work out what you are going to do if and when there is:

- conflict between the aims of the scheme and those of 'hidden' agendas
- breakdown between mentor and mentee
- disruption to development patterns through new tasks or responsibilities
- obstruction by the line manager.

9. Work out the logistics

Make sure you have arrangements in place for:

- announcements, promotion and awareness
- questions, problems and reassurances
- the process of pairing suitable mentors and mentees
- proposing a framework for their first meeting.

10. Establish evaluation procedures

Plan to review the scheme on an annual basis against:

- the goals selected at the introduction of the scheme
- success or failure of mentoring relationships, identifying the reasons behind either.

Make sure you include mentee feedback, as it is essential input for amending or improving the scheme.

Managers should avoid:

- making assumptions on the basis of early successes or failures - each mentee will have different obstacles to overcome.
- forgetting that all participants are volunteers - directiveness is not on the menu.

National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership

This checklist has relevance to the following standards:

D: Working with people, units 1-2

Additional resources

Books

Coaching and mentoring: practical conversations to improve learning, 2nd ed, Eric Parsloe and Melville Leedham
London: Kogan Page, 2009

Coaching and mentoring: what they are and how to make the most of them, Jane Renton
London: Economist in association with Profile Books, 2009

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Mentoring in action: a practical guide 2nd ed

David Megginson and others

London: Kogan Page, 2006

Everyone needs a mentor: fostering talent in your organisation 4th ed

David Clutterbuck

London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2004

Mentoring: a Henley review of best practice, Jane Cranwell-Ward, Patricia Bossons and Sue Gover

Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004

This is a selection of books available for loan to members from CMI's library More information at:

www.managers.org.uk/library

Related checklists

Counselling your colleagues (053)

Devising a coaching programme (224)

Giving criticism as a coach (223)

Giving feedback as a coach (222)

Mentoring in practice (083)

Internet resources

The Coaching and Mentoring Network <http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk>

Exemplas Limited <http://www.exemplas.com/Skills-and-Training/Mentoring--Coaching/?source=homepage>

A not-for-profit organisation that offers help with (amongst other things) setting up mentoring schemes.

Mentoring UK <http://www.mentoring-uk.org.uk>

Organisations

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council

PO Box 1100, Bushey, WD23 9BE

Tel: 020 8386 5304 Web: www.emccouncil.org

This is one of many checklists available to all CMI members. For more information please contact

t: 01536 204222

e: enquiries@managers.org.uk

w: www.managers.org.uk

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