

Mentoring and coaching on an organizational level

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Abstract: This paper is aimed at suggesting a few of the advantages of mentoring and coaching that could be equally beneficial to employees, managers and organizations. Organizational performances can be increased if people understand the sense of their development in connection to the development of competencies that are so necessary to organizational performance. The nuances of coaching and mentoring activities emphasize two professions that, if well dosed, can provide satisfactions to both the individual (employee) and the organization. Along with other methods and techniques (NLP, social intelligence, emotional intelligence), coaching and mentoring allow for synchronized actions to be taken in order to achieve organizational development.

Key words: coaching, mentoring, organization, leadership

Mentoring

Mentoring, as one of the oldest managerial approaches, is recognized as a valuable tool for both organizational development and the improvement of business outcomes.

Mentoring mainly refers to one employee being supervised and counseled by another employee who is more experienced, for the purpose of developing the first mentioned one's personal potential. Mentoring is

mainly focused on the long term career objectives, and not on immediate performances. Most times, it is carried out outside hierarchical rapports, by persons who work within the organization or not.

The main role of mentoring is to reduce the mobility of the organization's employees, initiating those who are to be promoted to leadership roles and rapid development of the best of them. This training process needs to be initiated within a well designed system,

it needs to have a supportive structure and should use a set of tools designed in such a manner such as to ensure system efficiency.

A mentor is a counselor who cares, a wise adviser, a journey partner, a trusted friend. A mentor is a mirror for the disciple, showing one what one can become. Frequently, this mirror can help the disciple to see from a positive perspective, allowing him/her to admit his/her own future strengths and opportunities. A mentor is the one who can help the disciple to feel comfortable in his/her own skin and to appreciate the disciple's qualities, while providing him/her with new opportunities and thinking models. Finally, a mentor is the one who can establish a strong connection with the young disciple and to use it as a catalyst of a positive change and growth. Mentoring is a long term relationship between two or more persons, a rapport in which the mentor provides permanent support, counseling and help to the young disciple.

Mentoring helps filling in the gap in the relationships with the rest of people. It can face protégés with new information, which might help them make decisions on their current and future job or in life.

Mentoring is about trusting the unlimited potential of each disciple one helps. It maintains expectations high for those who benefit from such program.

Mentoring is about time and patience.

Mentoring is about rendering the disciple accountable, and not about replicating the mentor's ideals and personalities.

Mentoring can be tough. Relationships can emphasize the mentor's own insecurities, and relationships call for commitment and great work, as they are the cornerstone of mentoring. A biased mentor risks to lose

his/her disciple's trust or to give inappropriate advice.

A mentor can provide resources and can give help only and if his/her disciples want it.

A mentor is not a resources provider; this means a mentor should not feel obligated to interfere in the employee's financial situation.

A mentor is not a savior. Goals should only be set out after an interpersonal relationship is created, as the mentor cannot know from the very beginning which will they be. Mentoring can simply provide the comfort of knowing that the disciple has a life (or job) support source and only this feeling can be an extremely powerful impact.

Three major expectations should be considered that a mentor should have from this relationship:

- ▶ A mentor should take responsibility for the relationship

Most mentors will probably face difficulties in setting up meetings. The more so in the case of those who live in a chaotic environment, consistency could be a whole new concept. Testing the mentor's commitment and flexibility can often be met in a disciple who has instable relationships with others. Due to a subconscious fear of disappointment, such a disciple would instinctively tend to sabotage the relationship with the mentor, as a means of survival.

- ▶ Mentors should know their disciples before helping them on their problems, either emotional or behavioral. If mentors do not take their time to analyze the disciple's problems and the reality which he/she faces, then the mentor's answers will not be adequate.

- ▶ Mentors need a extensive support network in order to succeed. Mentors need to understand the importance of using the

program designated staff, group activities and existing training opportunities. Each mentoring relationship is unique, because each mentor and each disciple are different.

Mentorship as an organizational activity describes a special relationship between a person who is more experienced, willing and able to provide support and a newly come, a person newly appointed on a new job or a person who needs support in a particular career phase.

Mentorship is based on a dynamical relationship that evolves over times and which reflects the phases of group development in a learning context. The specialized literature provides a four phases classic mentorship model:

a) **Initiation** is the phase where those involved try to best get to know each other, to learn more about one another, to know their expectations and thus to gain mutual trust and respect. Their relationship should be based on honesty, as the mentor should enhance the disciple's feeling that he/she is sustained, that he/she can count on the mentor's support ("I am here for you").

b) Once the process is initiated, there follows the **cultivation phase**, defined by the valorization and capitalization of the young one's strengths, by "building" his/her professional development. In this phase, the mentor's tactfulness becomes essential, as he/she needs to avoid passing judgments on the disciple, dominating him/her, imposing his/her own action or thinking approaches, as well as in conflicts. The mentor needs to be the one that emphasizes difficulties, problems and to help the "apprentice" to identify potential perspectives, consequences and solutions. The feeling enhanced in this phase is trust in the young employee's abilities of becoming

accustomed with the secrets of his/her new career ("I believe in you").

c) Trust building and support awareness favor the **transformation of the young employee**, who starts to take responsibility for his/her actions, to take initiative and to extend his/her autonomy, while the mentor's role is to provide appropriate and concrete feedback, and the enhanced feeling is that the disciple will not fail ("I will not let you fail").

d) The last phase, the **separation** is the peak of the mentorship relationship, when the disciple takes risks, tries new approaches. It is the moment of thinking, reassurance, explicit learning. The young employee (disciple) knows his/her strengths and know what he/she wants, succeeds to handle his/her job, and the credit from the mentor refers to power acknowledgment ("It is in your power").

Specialized literature, as well as Western organizations' and institutions' practice consider that the mentor-disciple relationship is a crucial one not only to the development and result of the entire process, but also for the disciple's potentially taking over the mentor role in the future.

While a modern manager needs to be more than a leader to his/her employees, it is exactly for such reason why he/should play a number of simultaneous roles: mentor, trainer and coach. Such a training could ensure business success to the manager, as he/she would work with a well trained and motivated team. Thus, managers who are well trained in the field of organizational psychology can develop their employee's native abilities, which provides them with the possibility of efficiently using the team they run.

In order to get the intended outcome, employees need to be counseled, trained and helped to best develop their job related

abilities from the very beginning. Such coaching is achieved most times by managers who are trained in this field or by persons with strong mentoring or coaching knowledge.

Thus, coaching and mentoring represent the best ways for organizational culture to be developed and for correctly guiding personnel's potential for the purpose of increasing organizational performance.

Coaching

Before initiating the coaching process, the real needs of the company (department) need to be as seed. Depending on the goals, the coach does nothing else than initially indicating the direction for achieving a balance and that is because most times coaching is called for when a blockage exists.

The secret for efficient coaching is the open relationship between those who are involved. Most times coaching is initiated and coordinated by the manager or by someone auxiliary to the organization. Professional collaboration characterized by an open and relaxed relationship between the manager, supervisor and employee generates a positive effect over employees in terms of their motivation and commitment to the organization, which generates the context for an overall successful business.

Coaching refers to developing a working relationship the end goal of which is to stimulate the employee to set up and achieve his/her professional objectives. By coaching the manager actually gets his/her employees involved in a simple personal discovery process, for the purpose of rendering their activity more efficient.

However, it is not easy for a manager to develop abilities and to increase his/her

employees' performances. For this reason, any manager who gets involved in such a process needs time and resources in order to develop his/her own set of necessary abilities, including: listening capacity and patience, assessment related critic spirit etc. Also, another extremely important feature is the ability of working with people, which also implies problem solving capacities, including in terms of mental blockages. A manager with such a set of abilities can verify his/her "performances generating force" by his/her employees' being pleased to get to work, feeling they are efficient and useful and finally, demonstrating increased efficiency in their activity.

Mentoring and Coaching—a Comparison

A successful manager will always consider the efficiency of his/her employees and to such end he/she will coach and mentor his/her employees whenever necessary.

Both mentoring and coaching are development, training and assessment process provided to employees by their hierarchical superior or by someone from outside the organization who is well trained in this field. Numerous similarities exist between the two processes, and that is because they both aim at the mentor's and coach's training and assessing the employees. Nonetheless, the differences between the two procedures are major.

While mentoring is focused on an individual, his/her career and the support he/she needs in order to develop from a professional standpoint, coaching refers to performance. Mentoring works with and for the individual, while coaching is impartial and performance focused.

The basic role of the mentor is to facilitate and is achieved without a preset mentoring program. It is based on a bilateral relationship in which the mentor teaches the employee how to discover his/her professional path. Coaching however is carried out for a well determined period and under a fixed schedule. The coach sets the objectives from the very beginning and in each meeting or discussion he/she verifies the achievement level of such. Mentoring on the other hand is more flexible, based on logic, confidence, assessment etc.

The type of relationship developed between the employee and the mentor or coach is different from one method to the other. In mentorship, one is free to continue or not, can decide when to stop or when to get the relationship more intense. One chooses one's mentor, while the coach comes with the job as a facilitator of the optimal integration of the employee in the occupied position.

In regards to influence, the mentor is equally influential to the employee as he/she is valued by the said, and is greatly dependant on the professional relationship between the two. On the other hand, the influence of the coach is given by the authority level corresponding to his/her position in the organization.

The relationship between the mentor and the employee is not a material one, based on the employee's or organization's increasing their profit; a mentor is chosen by the employee in order to help him/her to develop a certain aspect of his/her professional life. Coaching, however, is from the very start clearly focused on developing the abilities that might lead to performances increase.

Mentoring and coaching are useful tools for a manager who aims at organizational

performance. The two methods are practically a rather moral than financial "investment" which any modern manager should consider and apply.

Mentoring is the type of client working in which the mentor is specialized or experienced, which gives him/her the possibility to act as a model or as an expert. The mentor knows which are the necessary performances and competencies, so he/she will be the one who could decide on the moment when clients have reached the necessary level.

Mentors who act this way are usually top professionals, with remarkable success in their line of business. They are senior managers who have proven their abilities of efficiently operating in an organization. In the mentors' category can also be included the experts who have gave up managerial activity.

Although the approach is here and now, and clients are invited to analyze what they learn by themselves and with the mentor, the usually unspoken idea exists that the mentor knows best.

Coaching is another term used when working in here and now, yet with a whole different strategy. Of course, the coach and the client also interact in a logical manner – including emotional intelligence logic, based on dialogue, co-creation of new meanings, a new client reality, co-creation that involves the coach's role as a facilitator, active factor, actual creator of a referral framework for client. Any ability or specialized knowledge of the coach are intentionally forgotten, let aside as potential distorted prejudice, such that the client map to be the actual action basis.

In order to facilitate the exploration by the client of his/her own world model, by using active, implicated silence and rarely key

questions, so that to encourage the client to explore by his/her own imaginary and to evaluate options. The coach avoids giving opinions or advice, so that the responsibility for taking decisions would be entirely the client's. A coach provides to his/her client something else than his/her expertise as a consultant. He/she provides the possibility of a new referral framework in which the client rethinks his/her problem and finds his/her own solutions. Thus, any coaching session involves client focused pressure: he/she is the one who has a problem, knows the details of the problems, is aware of all its implications, and not the coach. A good coach only thinks about the problem, and not about potential solutions, as it is the client's job to think about solutions.

In order to put pressure on the client, the paradox is that coach needs to do as little as possible – preferable nothing. He/she only needs to actively, provocatively wait, in a certain way. A good coach knows NOT to do; the client is the one who needs to do his/her job. The coach teaches the client nothing, but creates a comfortable learning space. If he/she wants, the client can use such space in order to learn how to see his/her map and the reality in which he/she moves. This is his/her responsibility. The learning space is mainly achieved by facilitating internal dialogue; the coach accompanies the client throughout this dialogue, stimulates him/her in the nuances of such dialogues, in its nuances.

Coaching and Mentoring in Team Work

The professional association of the students of the University of Bucharest – Team Work (www.teamwork.org.ro) was established in 2002. Projects are carried out in

its departments (Communication, Human Resources, Training, International Relations, Teamwork School) by which students gain practical experience in various areas of activity.

Team Work was designed to ensure that young people have the freedom of choice. The lack of options is a de-motivating factor and almost always leads to physical, psychical and intellectual exhaustion. The will of helping students to discover ways for developing their talents, to create competencies and to experiment in contexts created not only by others, but also by themselves, is valued and materialized by voluntary work.

Team Work is aimed at enhancing enthusiasm and passion for a work that is beneficial to both the society and every member of the organization. Ideas consolidation is pursued, followed by their valorization in either the university or the business environment.

Long term Team Work philosophy is for the organization to function to the benefit of students as well as to the benefit of the society because in the end by creating opportunities the true quality of people is unrevealed.

Young people's freedom of choice represents an important condition for the design of the systems that need to develop harmoniously. From the very beginning Team Work has aimed to transmit courage to young people in being themselves.

By Team Work context creation is pursued, by which obstacles can be overcome, by associating the useful with the pleasant, as grounds for an efficient cooperation, good team work, and as a bridge between personal benefit and common interest of the people in the society. Team Work encourages the valorization of ideas, which can only be achieved by work, which in its turn facilitates the

overcoming of physical-material and psychological barriers.

By coaching, the Team Work students develop their efficiency by academic and practical activities, unleash their individual resources and develop communication skills. In Team Work the role of coach is played by college graduates (former Team Work members) with wide professional experience, teachers and professional coaches who bring along their field expertise. Performances are increased by self-knowledge and permanent development. Thus, the coach becomes a person who helps an initiate unrevealing his/her potential by facilitating personality development, increased performance standard and the capacity of changing behavior and thinking models.

By mentoring the new comer in Team Work is granted special attention for a while, so that he/she would get accustomed with the association's conditions. Mentorship is the process the purpose of which is to transmit information and to form a set of abilities under supervision from experienced individuals, by efforts focused by the organization towards its debutants.

In Team Work we have used over time a set of methods and techniques by which personalities have been developed who are capable of making decisions in stressed situations and are able to be responsible: NLP, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, coaching, mentoring, counseling, supervision, etc.

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