

Mentor Leadership: Define It, Develop It, and Be Dedicated to It (998 words)

Many of us are students of leadership and professional development. Mentor leadership refers to the activity when a leader or a senior member of an organization shares their wealth of experience with a junior or inexperienced member. When you start a mentor leadership program be sure to define what mentor leadership is, consider getting your own mentor, consider being someone's mentor, and follow the guidelines given below.

Define It: Mentor leadership is the creation of a personal and professional development relationship between a leader, or mentor, and a person in the organization that demonstrates leadership potential. Sometimes the recipient of the mentoring activities is referred to as a protégé, apprentice, or mentee. Mentoring is the act of sharing relevant insight and wisdom that accelerates the mentee's personal and professional development.

Mentoring not only helps the mentee, it also benefits the organization overall. Studies show that there is a positive correlation between a positive mentoring experience and a measurable improvement in productivity, retention, commitment, satisfaction, knowledge sharing, leadership growth, and succession planning.

Given the positive impact, mentor leadership should be a strategic organizational priority. Signs of a successful mentoring relationship include willingness of both mentor and mentee to ask questions, challenge ideas and suggestions, freely and openly discuss personal and professional goals, give honest feedback, and express appreciation for each other's efforts. There are many people that can be magnificent mentors. Mentor leadership should be part of your standard operating procedures.

Mentor leadership takes time and commitment from both parties and is worth the investment. The mentor enjoys the satisfaction of watching someone grow and the mentee gains a feeling of being valued.

Develop It: Invest time and effort in yourself and with others. Consider getting your own mentor. A mentor can help you develop important professional connections, expand your network personally and expose you to new opportunities professionally. If you would like to gain insight to the processes, people, and culture of your organization, spending time with a mentor will be a good use of your time. A mentor can give you insight concerning preferences, attitudes, norms, and values of your colleagues and customers, and the expectations of the organization overall.

If you would like to gain a fresh perspective about yourself and your ideas, a mentor leadership relationship is critical. Your mentor is committed to your personal and professional development and will provide an outsider's view of you, your ideas, and your behaviors. They can give you honest feedback supported by their expertise and experience. Mentor leaders have so much to offer. Identify what you hope to gain. What type of mentor can help? Where do you want to be in the next few years? What knowledge do you need to acquire? What skills do you need to develop? So, who are you going to ask?

While reading this article about mentor leadership you might be recalling informal mentor relationships that have helped you along the way both personally and professionally. Maybe it's time for you to be a mentor. Sometimes, the best mentees turn out to be the best mentors.

There are many characteristics required for you to be an effective mentor. Are you committed to assisting in others' growth and development? Are you willing to share your expertise that has taken years to develop and introduce your mentee to relationships you have nurtured for a lifetime? Have you acquired content knowledge and insight about the organization's norms and expectations, and fully understand the organization's culture, and can explain it in a way that benefits all? Over time, have you focused on developing your emotional intelligence and communication skills to the point that you can be sensitive to the emotions and feelings of others? Because as a mentor, your responsibility is to provide guidance, through feedback, that is accurate, yet kind. So, do you have the time to invest in a mentoring relationship? Your mentee will be counting on you to be accessible, whether face-to-face, by phone, or at least online.

Continue to develop mentor leadership skills. Get involved in a formal mentor leadership relationship and polish the right skills. Mentor leadership is a commitment. Both the mentee and the mentor leader need to be determined to invest the time and energy. Mentor leadership activities should not be taken lightly by the mentee or the mentor.

Be Dedicated to It: Sometimes it seems hard to get a mentor leadership program off the ground. It is ideal if your organization creates a clear strategy for mentor leadership opportunities. A thoughtful framework helps determine the guiding principles, clarifies reasons for the program, helps define the objectives, and creates a plan for implementation.

Your organization must be clear about the purpose of the mentor leadership program. Short-term and long-term goals need to be discussed. Given the scope of the program, it is important to determine who and how many mentors and mentees will need to be recruited. It is wise to consider the characteristics for selecting both mentors and mentees. If we are trying to develop new leaders, then we need to pair seasoned leaders with mentees. If we are seeking retention, we need to pair charismatic, or naturally social leaders, with mentees.

It is important to provide skill building training for both mentors and mentees. All of the soft skills become critical, including empowerment, listening, supportiveness, collaboration, and assertiveness. The training should also consider how to assess strengths and weaknesses, how to identify developmental objectives, and how to discuss and clarify the roles and responsibilities of participants. Take the time to train staff.

Make sure your organization doesn't just jump into a mentor leadership program without giving these guidelines some serious consideration. The key to mentor leadership is to take it seriously. Our members, coworkers, and younger employees need us to provide a

thoughtful framework that guarantees success for all.

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