

How Mentoring Can Save Even the Most Downtrodden Managers

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Mentoring Saved Best Buy's Future President

Brian Dunn started with Best Buy in 1985 selling VCRs, but his first day was so bad that he wanted to quit. He confessed to his store manager that it had been a "lousy experience." At that the manager invited Brian to come in on Saturday morning and he would personally teach Brian how he operated on the sales floor when he was in Brian's position. The **manager mentored Brian**. In doing so, he cleared the way for Brian to not only be good at his job, but to love it. **Twenty-one years later, Brian is now the President and COO of Best Buy.**

Andy Grove Used Mentoring to Mold Intel's Future Leaders

Founder and former CEO of Intel, Andy Grove encouraged reverse mentoring through "Technical Assistants," who teach senior executives about things they need to know – marketing, brands, the Internet, competition, etc. In addition, **Andy imparted his leadership wisdom to mentor and mold Intel's future CEO and VP of Software**, Paul Otellini and Renee James, respectively.

Railroad Uses Mentoring to Fill the Pipeline

When a major metropolitan railroad was faced with massive retirements of senior executives in 2015 and a stalled succession initiative, mired in complexity, they turned to mentoring. To address the threat of losing institutional knowledge, **they instituted a Leadership Mentoring Program for promising middle managers**. The success of the program was evidenced by the exalted **words of one manager who served as a Protégé, "I now look forward to coming to work."**

There is no greater tool for the evolution of managers into leaders than mentoring.

But what is mentoring?

Mentoring occurs whenever **one person who has been-there-done-that shares institutional, tribal knowledge with someone who wants to go-there-and-do-that**. The sharing of knowledge, wisdom, and lessons learned **will accelerate the success of the other person**. It's brilliant. It's transformational, instead of transactional. It can be a strategic advantage to individuals, teams, and organizations. But it is often overlooked and a missed opportunity.

Mentoring is ripe with opportunity. When we need our people in middle management to become middle leaders, we need to mentor them forward, backwards, and upside down.

Here's why...

The Impact of Mentoring on Managers

- 76% of companies use mentoring to deliver critical leadership skills.

(Workforce Management, 2010)

- Women in management increased from 15% to 39% (1998 -2007), and women in senior management positions increased from 9% to 21%.

[Results from Lloyds TSB Mentoring Program launched in response to study that women tend not to apply for promotions]

- Mentoring of middle managers increased the internal promotion of talent from 35% to 73%.

[Results from Memorial Care Medical Centers Mentoring Program]

- Retention is 17-18% higher among managers with mentors than for those without mentors

[Result from KPMG Mentoring Program]

- The number of female senior managers increased from 36 to 101 by mentoring managers.

[2004 Nissan Motors Mentoring Program]

- 28% of managers who served as mentors got a raise while only 5% of managers did who were not mentors.

[James Holincheck, "Case Study: Workforce Analytics at Sun." Gartner, Inc., Oct 2006 tracking career progress of about 1,000 employees over a 5-year period]

- Retention of employees increased from 55 to 85% when a mentored manager took over a group.

["ROI Monograph Marketing," March 2009]

Here are 7 ways to use mentoring to generate similar impact with your middle leaders:

1. Give them a Mentor. This should be a requirement of all new managers. Give them a Mentor on day one.

2. Give them a Protégé. This should also be a requirement of all managers. It is an unwritten expectation that all leaders mentor others, so instill this mindset immediately. In addition, it's a great way to fuel another mentoring program at the company that has a dearth of mentors.

3. Create a Manager's Mentoring Program. People crave structure, especially leaders. Give your managers a structured mentoring program that will teach them how to make a difference in their roles.

4. Teach them Mentoring Conversations. There are 5 mentoring conversations. Teach them how to engage in each one.

5. Enroll them in Group Mentoring. Require every manager to participate in a lunch with 20-30 people to mentor them in a group setting. The attendees will bring their relevant questions, while your managers will expand their exposure as a leader and their visibility into issues at the company.

6. Connect the Dots. Show managers how mentoring contributes to their leader-effectiveness, career-readiness, work-effectiveness, and change-readiness.

7. Track the Impact. Use metrics to track participation, retention, and promotion. Use surveys to ensure effectiveness and satisfaction. Use assessments to determine improvement in skills and competencies. Use success stories and testimonials to get at the heart of the impact. Use all of it to build a case for mentoring managers to greatness.