Mentoring at work: a talent development tool for Gen Y and Gen Z
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Introduction
The changing demographics, evolving labor market, rapid technological advancements, and dynamic work environment are presenting significant challenges in developing talent at the workplace. In the past, there used to be a single age group dominating the workplace, however, today’s workforce is much more diverse in terms of age and generational differences. In the current organizational context, Gen Y and Gen Z are redefining learning and reshaping talent and the talent management practices. According to Hecht (2022), Gen Y, also known as Millennials is born from 1981 to 1996 and is in the spotlight dominating the working landscape. On the other hand, Gen Z, born from 1997 to 2012, is slowly entering the corporate world. Gen Z, popularly known as Zoomers, post-Millennials, first global generation or “iGen” is bringing forth unique set of fresh perspectives, behaviors and expectations at the workplace. Given this backdrop, managers need to understand their characteristics and invest in ways to develop talent of both the generations in unconventional ways. Traditional ways of talent development, do not resonate with these highly ambitious digital natives. Modern HR managers need to be constructive in their approaches, and need to design innovative ways to bridge the intergenerational gaps.

Mentoring is one of the most significant talent development practice that can transform the disruptive work expectations of the Gen Z and Gen Y. Mentoring is an intentional, collaborative, developmental relationship in which a more experienced and more knowledgeable person nurtures the professional and personal life of a less experienced, less knowledgeable person. Mentoring can be formal or informal and is different from coaching and counselling. Literature supports mentoring as a high attention domain from management scholars and practitioners (Xu et al., 2021). Past scholars have uncovered the positive impact of mentoring in uplifting employee performance (Chen et al., 2020). It is important for employee well-being, career development, implementation of DIEB (Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belongingness) strategy and the overall organizational success. Social Exchange Theory by Homans can be applied to understand the relationship between mentor and mentee and it is believed that mentee will engage in the mentoring relationship if he/she notices advantages outweighing the costs. This paper talks about Modern Mentoring methods for nurturing the young generations.

Benefits of Mentoring: Following are the powerful benefits of Mentoring for mentors as well as mentees:

Benefits for Mentors:
- Cultivation of leadership and communication skills.
- Leads to personal development.
- Helps in skills enhancement for career growth.
Benefits for Mentees:

- Better Networking and skills enhancement.
- Leads to Career advancement.
- Improves Mental health- reduces isolation, lowers down anxiety and improves confidence.

Connecting multi-generational workforce through modern Mentoring methods

Gen Y and Gen Z want a road map to success, and they expect their employers to provide it. In order to closely manage the new wave of workforce, mentoring plays a critical role in shaping the young mindsets. The traditional mentoring of one-on-one and in-person interactions needs to be evolved to fit in to the demands of the younger workforce, who are habitual of internet, social media and fast information. They want quick and helpful feedbacks and wish to chart their own ways. Modern Mentoring methods are inclusive and extend beyond the traditional one-on-one relationships (Mangan, 2012).

Below are the Modern Mentoring methods:

1. **Reverse Mentoring:** When the traditional mentoring gets reversed and a junior employee mentors a senior employee, it is called reverse mentoring. The idea is to enhance mutual relationships and shared learning. The older generations can learn technological advancements, new concepts and current trends from younger generations (Satterly et al., 2018). The younger generations in exchange get an opportunity to get expert knowledge and wisdom from the seniors. It may be less or more formal. Reverse Mentoring is an excellent way to encourage inclusiveness and sense of belongingness at work. Companies such as Proctor & Gamble, Sodexo, Accenture, General Electric, Unilever, etc. are using this technique to encourage professional friendships.

2. **Group Mentoring:** When one or two mentors have multiple mentees with unique expertise and skills, who work together towards development, it is called Group Mentoring. It provides multifaceted environment to the mentees to learn and grow. Through such Mentoring mentees have the opportunity to polish their skills and become part of a culture that promotes learning and growth. Such learning circles serve as a platform for many to open up, get feedback and discuss important issues, necessary for organizational growth. For example- BT (UK based telecoms company) makes use of a social collaboration platform named Dare2share, which promotes employees to share knowledge and insights with colleagues through audios, videos, discussion threads etc.

3. **Distance Mentoring or Anonymous Mentoring:** With the advancement of technology mentorship no longer needs to be done face to face. Through Distance Mentoring employees get connected to an anonymous senior mentor outside the firm, virtually. Impromptu advice could be given using online software or even emails.

4. **Flash Mentoring or Speed Mentoring:** When quick information is needed, flash Mentoring comes as a savior for employees. Instead of having long term relationship, the mentee will have tactical short duration one time meeting, which will involve one-on-one conversation with a set of a experts. This allows quick one-off Mentoring session, in order to learn a key piece of information or skill. It is becoming very popular among Gen Y and Gen Z.

5. **Peer to peer Mentoring:** In this Mentoring model, the employees are from same department or performing similar kind of roles. The peers pair up and coach one another. It can be one to one or a group Mentoring relationship.
Creating Mentorship Program for talent development: 5 steps

A structured Mentorship Program can develop talent of Gen Y and Gen Z, through timely transfer of skills and experience. Following five steps could be used by organizations to develop the Mentorship programs:

1. **Design**: This step would include structure of the program, which comprise of the following:
   - Selection of Mentorship style: reverse, group, flash etc.
   - Connection type: one on one or many on one.
   - Duration of connection: can be single session, weeks or months.
   - Measurement – progress tracking and reports generation.

2. **Attract**: Effective promotion of the program, right recruitment and training of the mentor is essential to maintain natural enthusiasm of mentees (Gen Y and Gen Z). For this benefits of the program must be well communicated to the stakeholders. Training and reinforcement should be provided throughout the program.

3. **Connect**: Proper matching of mentor and mentee is one of the most critical aspects of Mentoring sessions. Mentees may differ in terms of skills, competencies, backgrounds, learning patterns etc. Finding the most suitable mentor for each mentee is a challenge. Organizations must invest good time to find the perfect match.

4. **Guide**: All mentorships should begin with SMART goals and action plans. This brings focus from the beginning and gives a kick start to the Mentorship program. Mentees should be provided with relevant resources such as topical content, exercises etc., which would maintain continuous flow of information sharing and add accountability to accomplish something.

5. **Measure**: The last step must measure the success of the program. A flourishing Mentorship program must measure leaning through mentoring connection and transfer of knowledge. To be effective, organizations should capture metrics and feedback throughout the lifecycle of the program.

Implications and conclusion

Mentoring is an effective way to share knowledge, improve efficacy and create positive intergenerational relationships. Traditional approach to mentoring is becoming less common due to advancement of technology and practice of work from home. The modern mentoring methods are here to stay. Gen Y and Gen Z seek out for employers who give them opportunity to learn and grow. As employers are competing for talent, if they do not meet the demands and desires of the younger generations at work, the chances of conflicts and dissatisfaction will be too high. By utilizing the above-mentioned mentorship methods, HR practitioners can assist the employees to develop their skills and abilities. Mentorship can be leveraged as a tool to develop and retain Gen Y and Gen Z. The five steps of Creating Mentorship Program can be used by HR practitioners to develop organizational support for mentoring program, thereby creating an environment of intergenerational knowledge sharing and a supportive community.

**Keywords:**
Mentoring, Gen Y, Gen Z

References


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