Model of Organizational Readiness to Implement Mentoring

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Keywords: Formal Mentoring in Organizations, Model to Implement Mentoring, Mentoring Programs, Mentoring Implementation Process.

Abstract: The article presents the manners in which mentoring can be used by organizations. Prior to the implementation of mentoring programs, the organization's preparation level for implementing such programs should be evaluated. Evaluating the organization's readiness forms part of the pre-implementation analysis, which allows the determination of the organization's initial level of commitment to employee development and talent retention. The proposed model of preparing the organization for implementing mentoring programs enables management to determine the scope of human resource management changes that will be introduced. The tool used to carry out the research takes into consideration four areas of organization management: the organization's values and strategies; the development of the organization and its employees; setting objectives, conducting performance appraisals and motivating employees; cooperation and relationships within the organization. The article outlines the procedure of using the tool to carry out research, including both data gathering and analysis. The presented tool may prove useful during the pre-implementation analysis phase in all kinds of organizations that wish to introduce mentoring into their operations.

1 INTRODUCTION

The process of creating, distributing and processing knowledge within organizations is of crucial importance in the modern knowledge-based economy (Harris, 2001). Ensuring that the organization remains competitive in conditions of uncertainty and volatility requires devoting more attention to human resources than ever before. Competencies — i.e. the knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivations of employees — are currently the most valuable resource that organizations have at their disposal and are indispensable for efficient operations and growth.

Human resource management is one of the key processes of modern organization management. Management aimed at acquiring, developing and retaining talent translates into more creative and innovative teams, improved employee motivation, engagement and efficiency. It also reinforces the organization's culture and is an inherent component of sustainable growth (Baran, 2015).

The human-resource-oriented approach to management is rooted in the conviction that a diverse workforce is a resource that may bring about concrete benefits leading to increased efficiency (Thomas, Ely, 1996; Higgins, 2000; Baran, 2015). Formal

mentoring programs have gained increased popularity among organizations as a very important resource for employees development (Kram, Ragins, 2007). Mentoring programs are a tool that enable organizations to rationally allocate their human resources.

2 THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

The main goal of employers today is to retain a sufficient level of knowledge and competence within the organization. A particularly important issue is the ability to manage employees from different age groups in a way that would encourage them to become teachers to each other, therefore providing knowledge-based and organizational support in the workplace and a natural flow of knowledge and experience.

Mentoring is a process in which one individual (the mentor) is responsible for overseeing the career and development of another individual outside of the usual superior–subordinate relationship. The process

involves learning, experimenting and skill development, while the acquired competence is a measure of its success (Collin, 1979; Clutterbuck, 2002).A mentor is an experienced individual who grants non-linear assistance to another individual with the aim of transforming their knowledge, work or thinking (Megginson, Clutterbuck, 1995). Therefore, mentoring is successfully used by many organizations to pass on informal, hidden knowledge by teaching effective thought patterns, decision making and approaching complicated issues in a practical manner (Clutterbuck, 2002).

A mentor plays an important role in this process – that is to say a person with the right skills and competencies that ensure the achievement of the objectives of mentoring programs (Baran, 2016).

Mentoring is a consciously implemented process meant to support the employees of an organization, which creates added value for the employees themselves (e.g. development of qualifications and skills), as well as the company (e.g. improved atmosphere encourages employees to become more engaged in their work; increasing motivation levels).Goals of mentoring in the organization may be the following (Parsloe, 2000; Klasen, Clutterbuck, 2002; Baran, 2014):

- transfer of knowledge and experience among employees, including so-called tacit knowledge,
- practical training of new employees and adaptation to a new job,
- keeping the most valuable employees with the firm,
- building relations with new persons in the enterprise,
- carrying out a complex project,
- personal development of participants of the mentoring process,
- preparing individuals for performing new roles or working in new job positions in the organization,
- carrying out a change management process in the organization,
- talent management.

The possibility to implement the mentoring program exists in every organization, however; what is crucial here are rules of conduct which use employees' potential to the benefit of both parties – the employers and the employees (Clutterbuck, 2004; Ragins, 2011).The main objectives of mentoring programs include assisting newly-employed individuals in becoming independent and efficient employees and adapting to the corporate environment. Mentoring, due to the vast difference in

knowledge between the mentor and the employee, resembles a master-student relationship. The main aim of mentoring programs is to support the development of employees through both career and psychosocial functions. The programs usually include in-work training of employees preparing them to perform tasks in an important position, coaching, and teaching them to handle challenges with the goal of improving the mentees' skills and position in the company. Individual psychosocial functions, on the other hand, relate to the way the mentees feel about the best patterns of behaviour, their value in the workplace, personal dilemmas and feeling accepted by the group. Mentoring programs may be used in a variety of scenarios, including: when a co-worker is promoted or their scope of responsibilities is expanded; when an employee achieves success; when a co-worker desires more than achievements and promotions; and when an employee encounters obstacles that prevent them from fulfilling their dreams or following a desired path of development. In other words, the aim of mentoring programs implemented by organizations is to support selected employees in making significant changes in the organization (Megginson et all, 2008).

Regardless of the kind of mentoring used (formal or informal programs) and regardless of the size and specialization of the organization, the basic mentoring principles remain unchanged (Kram, 1988; Parsloe, 1992; Klasen, Clutterbuck, 2002; Holiday, 2006):

- The needs of the employees who are undergoing mentoring are thoroughly evaluated in cooperation with all interested parties in the organization,
- The employees who are undergoing mentoring receive support when planning and executing development plans,
- The mentor communicates well with the mentees,
- Advice and assistance are offered to mentees throughout the duration of the program in accordance with their needs,
- The results and progress achieved by the mentees are monitored by the mentor on a regular basis,
- Feedback, both constructive and encouraging the mentees' to take responsibility for their own development is ensured throughout the duration of the program,
- The mentor–mentee relationship concludes at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is proven in the literature that effective mentoring is an effective intervention in organization for leadership succession and employees' development (Higgins, Kram, 2001). However, the literature of formal mentoring has at least one identified gap. According to the author the most attention has been paid to mentee outcomes (Allen, 2007; Lentz, Allen, 2009; Regins, Kram, 2007; Allen, Eby, O'Brien, Lenz, 2008), mentors' and mutual benefits (Fletcher, Ragins, 2007; Ramaswami, Dreher, 2007). Less research has focused on the legitimacy for formal mentoring programs in organizations (Baugh, Fagenson-Eland, 2007). There is in the literature the lack of tools that help organizations with implementation of formal mentoring programs. That is the reason why in 2013-2014 the author carried out research concerning the familiarity with mentoring and the type and scope of mentoring programmes used on a sample of 250 polish organizations (80% of the sample consisted of small, medium and large companies from different regions and sectors, and 20% consisted of non-government, government, public and private organizations). A traditional PAPI survey was used. The research was meant to identify the mentoring processes in companies, non-governmental organizations and public institutions, i.e. determining whether mentoring is used, which organizations use it, in which areas of their operations it is used and what are the key factors to run mentoring programs in organizations.

The results allowed the author to draw initial conclusions about the principles of mentoring within organizations (because 10% of all studied organizations had fully implemented mentoring processes or formalized mentoring programmes). The author then prepared a list of conditions that an organization should meet to make mentoring possible based on an analysis of the gathered data and literature research. The list was then verified during 2 focus group interviews (FGIs) with 10 experts in each group. The following experts were invited: mentors, coordinators of mentoring programs, HR directors and CEOs. This allowed the author to prepare a prototype tool for verifying whether an organization is ready to implement mentoring. The questionnaire was divided into four areas of operations that had been identified as crucial for introducing mentoring processes (these are outlined in the following chapter). Each area had 10 detailed questions assigned to it and should be evaluated using the answers that describe the current situation within the organization on a Likert scale. The answers will make it possible to calculate a score for each area, i.e. evaluate the conditions for carrying out mentoring processes, which will then translate into a general score of the organization's readiness to implement mentoring programs. The scores in the presented model are calculated using the arithmetic mean of the scores of the lower level. Of course there are strengths as well as limitations of using a five point Likert scale for evaluating the condition of the organization. However, the Likert scale is one of the most widely used in the measurement of this socio-economic phenomena (Edmondson, 2005). This multi-position scale is also focused on the measurement of hidden phenomena in the organization (Likert, 1932).

4 PROPOSAL OF PROTOTYPE RESEARCH TOOL USED FOR VERIFYING THE READINESS OF AN ORGANIZATION TO IMPLEMENT MENTORING

The implementation of mentoring programmes in an organization should begin with verifying the organizational readiness to introduce mentoring. The aim of the research is to outline the organization's preparation for the introduction of mentoring in a detailed manner. The tool for determining the readiness of organizations to implement mentoring programmes outlines the boundary conditions that must be met for an organization to be considered ready to operate based on a mentoring system. The scope of the conditions that need to be met before an organization is ready to implement mentoring was determined based on the opinions of experts and insights into institutions that successfully use mentoring programs.

The results of the analysis should form the basis upon which organizations decide whether or not to implement mentoring, or if they should undertake further preparations allowing them to introduce mentoring in the future.

The proposed tool features a questionnaire making it possible to grade four areas of organizations that are crucial to human resource and talent management, that affect the growth of developmental relationships, such as: values and strategies; development of the organization and its employees; setting objectives, conducting performance appraisals and motivating employees; and cooperation and relationships within the organization (Table 1).

Table 1: Areas of an organization's operations that are key for carrying out mentoring processes.

Values and strategies	The organization's values and strategy; professional identity and sense of organizational competence; the organizational structure; the principles of employee appraisal and selection from the perspective of the organization's general objectives; the principles of selecting prospective employees (Ragins, Cotton, 1991; Kram, 1988; Eby, 1997)
Development of the organization and its employees	The principles of developing employee competence levels; planning development and promotion paths; the available types of employee training; carrier progress; professional development programs - carrier development (Zey, 1984; Kram, 1983; Fagenson, 1989).
Setting objectives, conducting performance appraisals and motivating employees	Management by objectives; managing the results of the employees' work; functioning of the bonuses and awards system for the best employees; managing talent within the organization (Whitely, Dougherty, Dreher, 1991; Fagenson, 1989; Roche, 1979).
Cooperation and relationships within the organization	The mechanisms describing inter-employee relationships; the organization's culture of fostering cooperation; transfer of knowledge and experience in the organization; effective system of communications; growth of developmental relationships, developmental networks (Aryee, Chay, Chew, 1996; Ragins, Cotton, 1991; Thomas, 1993; Higgins, Kram, 2001).

Each of the four areas was divided into detailed indicators, which are measured using the answers given to the questions (see Table 2 below). The researcher may assign one of five available answers, based on a Likert scale (1 to 5), to each question. The following answer labels are used in the research process:1 – Strongly disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Neither agree nor disagree; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly agree. If a situation outlined in the questions does not apply to the organization that is being analyzed, the respondents should mark answer 1, i.e. strongly disagree. If the situation fully applies to the organization, they should mark answer 5, i.e. strongly agree.

Table 2: Questionnaire used to verify the readiness of an organization to implement mentoring.

No	Questionnaire of organizational readiness to implement mentoring — Areas of an organization's operations	Answer Labels: 1 - 5
	VALUES AND STRATEGIES	
1	The organization has a set of clearly defined values	
2	The organization has a defined strategy of human resources management / personnel policy	
3	The organization implements its strategy of human resources management / personnel policy	
4	The organization is open to change, actively seeks ways of improving its operations and implements them	
5	Employees are encouraged to suggest and implement improvements within the scope of their position	
6	Each employee has their individual professional development plan/ career path	
7	There is a unit/individual responsible for executing the following tasks within the organization: selection and recruitment of candidates, analysis of training needs and supervising employee development, employee motivation, periodic appraisal, etc. (the so-called "soft HRM")	
8	The organization has motivational schemes	
9	The organization actively manages knowledge (e.g. by undertaking actions meant to facilitate development, to share knowledge and to retain knowledge within the organization)	
10	The organization identifies and prepares individuals who will fill key positions in the future (succession planning)	
	ORGANIZATIONAL AND EMPLOYEES' DEVELOPMENT	
1	The organization recognizes the importance of training and professional development of its employees. The organization believes that training and development are necessary, as the employees' qualifications are the key to achieving its strategic objectives	
2	The organization had adopted an approach to explore training needs and to satisfy them	
3	The organization has a system of evaluating the efficiency of measures related to the professional development of employees	
4	The organization manages the competences of its employees, e.g. it has implemented a competency-based model	

Table 2: Questionnaire used to verify the readiness of an organization to implement mentoring (cont.).

	Questionnaire of organizational readiness to implement mentoring	Answer
No	Areas of an organization's operations	Labels: 1 - 5
	ORGANIZATIONAL AND EMPLOYEES' DEVELOPMENT	
5	The necessary key skills are well known and sought after by the organization	
6	All employees are encouraged to develop their skills as much as possible	
7	Employee performance management makes it easier to identify employees' strengths and areas for potential development	
8	Professional development activities encompass a variety of training techniques, including learning methods, internal and external development methods, on-the-job training	
9	The organisation provides training based on the experience of employees with excellent performance	
10	The organization tries to learn from its mistakes – even when an employee makes a mistake, he or she is not criticized for it. The focus is on learning from one's mistakes and avoiding them in the future.	
	SETTING OBJECTIVES, MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES	
1	The organization applies a system of setting goals and assessing their achievement (e.g. a system of periodic performance appraisal)	
2	Employee performance management is part of the organization's operation.	
3	Employees are involved in achieving their own professional goals	
4	Recognizing achievements translates into acquiring, developing and retaining talent	
5	Employees are able to associate their tasks with the organization's objectives	
6	Employees see their duties as crucial for the organization's success	
7	The results achieved by employees are assessed in the context of the agreed standards and objectives	
8	Employees receive from their superiors constructive and timely feedback on their own performance and effectiveness	
9	The organization has a system that enables to reward and appreciate its best employees	
10	The reward system in the organization motivates employees to adopt desired behaviours	

	Questionnaire of organizational readiness to implement mentoring	Answer
No	Areas of an organization's operations	Labels: 1 - 5
	COOPERATION AND RELATIONSHIPS	
1	Teamwork is important within the organization	
2	An atmosphere of mutual support is present within the organization - employees are ready to help each other	
3	Executives supports the sharing of knowledge between employees in the organization	
4	As a rule, employees are treated fairly	
5	Relations between management and employees of the organization are positive	
6	Members of senior management are available to employees	
7	The organization puts emphasis on each problem solving	
8	The employee is encouraged to take more and more responsible actions within the organization	
9	Communication in the organization is open and sincere	
10	Communication in the organization is effective. Employees and teams actively exchange information	

Below you will find the interpretation of all the possible results of research into an organization's readiness to implement mentoring on a general level:

1 - The organization is definitely unprepared to implement mentoring

2 - The organization has a low level of preparation for implementing mentoring

3 - The organization is moderately prepared to implement mentoring

4 - The organization is highly prepared to implement mentoring

5 - The organization is ready to implement mentoring

Therefore, for an organization to be considered ready for implementing mentoring, it should have, on the one hand, a general score of 4 or 5 and scores of 4 or 5 in each of the analyzed areas. Low scores (1 or 2) are a definite indication of the organization's unpreparedness for implementing mentoring. On the other hand, organizations with a general score of 3 are only partially prepared (i.e. moderately prepared) for

implementing mentoring. Such organizations will require a longer implementation phase and a wider array of preparatory measures before mentoring programs are set up.

5 IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The next phase of the implementation process, in the case of organizations that prove ready (through research) to implement the mentoring process (and then formalize it as mentoring programs), will involve holding conversations with senior management and providing recommendation of further action. The mentoring process and mentoring programs are usually initiated by the management, HR departments, and the tasks associated with mentoring are usually assigned to the most experienced employees who are willing to take on the additional duties. The mentoring relationship focuses mainly on achieving the personal and professional development goals of the mentee, convergent with the objectives of the organization, which should be evaluated by the organization.

Below are the recommendations for further steps on the path to implementing mentoring:

1. Determining the benefits that implementing mentoring will bring, including: estimating the expected benefits for the organization, the mentors and the mentees; determining the timeframe in which the benefits should become apparent; predicting the obstacles that may hamper the implementation and usage of mentoring.
2. Determining the tasks of senior and middle management and the HR department in the mentoring process (engagement and support; coordination and supervision; monitoring of the process and the procedures used; evaluation; informational and promotional activities).
3. Planning the mentoring process implementation schedule (i.e. selecting mentors; selecting mentees; pairing mentors and mentees; the mentoring process plan – duration, number of sessions, training, advice, evaluation).
4. Evaluating the mentoring process in the organization. Determining how the organization will measure the effectiveness of mentoring. Planning specific indicators.
5. Estimating the costs that implementing mentoring will bring (including the expenses and time needed to train mentors; the time used for mentoring meetings; the time of the individual responsible for overseeing the process, including managing the program; analyzing results; taking corrective steps if necessary; engaging members of management).

6 CONCLUSIONS

The presented model for evaluating the readiness of an organization to implement mentoring is a a useful tool in all kinds of organizations. This tool allows the organization to verify the basic areas of human resource management, including talent management. It is also the first step on the path to implementation of formal mentoring programs into the organization's structure. The mentoring literature has indicated that formal mentoring programs continue to be of need and interest to organizations (Matarazzo, Finkelstein, 2015). Nowadays, more and more organizations implement mentoring processes, especially formal mentoring programs as an attempt to obtain organizational development. Some research is focused on the benefits of well-run mentoring programs. But there has been very little empirical research recently to guide the development of mentoring programs in organization (Allen, Finkelstein, Poteet, 2011). There is a need for more research on best practices for formal mentoring programs in different types of organization, how to implement such a program, what makes it work, what are the success factors, etc. This topic will be explored based on the current author's research into the usage of mentoring programs by organizations. The result of this research will be published by the author next year.

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