

A note on mentoring

1. Mentoring

1A. What Is Mentoring

"Mentoring" is a support program for executives to manage their learning in order that they upgrade their skills, improve their performance and maximize their potential for own and company's benefit.

A mentor is a guide who can help the executive- the mentee, to find the right direction.

Mentoring is increasingly being recognized as an important tool in executive development.

Executives need mentoring because their performance, diligence, experience, talent, competence, passion has either brought them to where they have reached now or fallen short of where they could have reached. In both the situations, they realize that they have a need to talk to someone in an uninhibited manner for understanding the way-forward and unlocking the potential that they possess.

Can they talk to their employer, board, or subordinates? They usually have their reservations on doing so. Executives operate in a vacuum most of the times and it is here that the role of a mentor becomes important. They need someone with objectivity and with no hidden agenda to guide them and take them to where they belong.

1B. Why Mentoring

It is well recognized that every person operates in a cyclic manner implying that executive needs to confront and overcome performance fatigue as well as an inflexion point after hitting a high. Many persons fail to recognize the onset of performance-menopause phase and thereby fail to arrest the performance downslide, drifting farther away from where they could have headed.

The Mentor plays the role of a buffer, collaborator, crisis advisor, facilitator, influencer, sounding board, strategist, exhaust-vent and tactician. He helps the mentee anticipate the onset of performance downslide and collaborates to help the mentee overcome the downslide.

"A mentor tells what you fear to hear, shows what you fear to see, so you could be what you have always known you could be and helps you to overcome signs of performance fatigue."

Without mentoring, sometimes the good performers start to feel that the only way they can survive is by performing even higher, while not-so-good-rated-performers begin to look for escape points. Both begin to fear failures and build enormous pressure on themselves and consequently on their teams and work-environment. As a logical consequence, both the types fail to build good working relationships with team-members who may succeed them, if they fail. They may even begin killing good possibilities even while wanting to grow them.

A note on mentoring

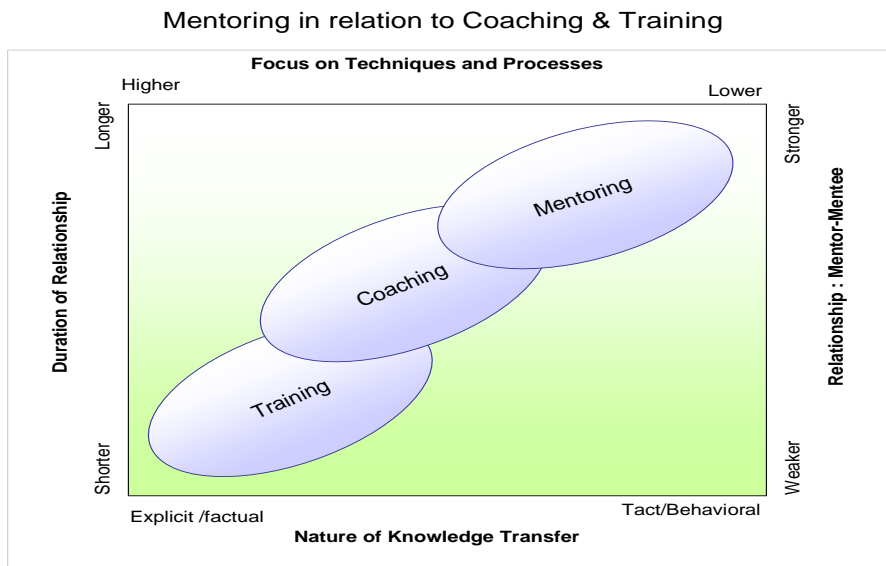
Everyone needs a mentor, whatever position he may have reached. It is the responsibility of the employers and the boards to bring up their employees well to grow businesses with sustainability and profits.

It is not that executives do not know the principles of sound management and good governance. It is just that the 'need for higher performance' at times, makes them behave differently. They may micro manage, want people to clone them, not recruit the best employees, become very emotional or reckless. An objective assessment of their "thought-process/view-point/working style" is always a good value-add. Mentoring reduces stress tremendously.

1C. Mentoring vs Coaching vs Training

Mass training workshops aimed at grooming managerial effectiveness /leadership behaviour may only have limited success because every executive faces a unique set of issues and needs one-on-one discussion and confidentiality to be able to open up. They need someone who is well networked, is competent, has seen it happening at other places and knows what the role- pressures are.

The chart below depicts how training, coaching and mentoring add value to an executive's learning needs.



1D. Executive Mentoring – Summarized

- Executives are increasingly surrounded by forces they cannot control.
- Executives recognize the value of honest, objective feedback and use mentors to sustain and further their success.

A note on mentoring

- Everyone has room to improve.
- Executives operate in vacuum, cannot discuss performance issues openly with colleagues and in-house forum.
- Rapidly growing complexities in managing people and businesses are hastening skill-obsolence creating performance fatigue, inertia and performance-menopause. Mentoring provides fresh perspectives and is rejuvenating.
- The demands of sustaining and improving performance are severe, so is the ensuing stress – it is a major challenge to be at best under constant pressure without a coping mechanism in place.
- A mentor can provide an objective sounding board and reality check, enabling executives to be at their optimum to get the best out of themselves, team and environment.

Gains of Mentoring process are many. As a minimum, the process provides:

- Effective and confidential opportunity to discuss key issues
- A sounding board for “De-clogging of mind” and “Out of box” discussions
- Increased confidence and enhanced motivation to look ahead and anticipate future challenges and opportunities
- Personal and executive development thru Improved knowledge and skills
- Aligning personal goals with the role requirements
- Exposure to new ideas, insights and fresh ways of thinking
- Reduced stress and life/work balance

