
THE MENTORING OF WOMEN FOR BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The benefits and advantage of the development of women in the work force through mentoring must be recognized by top management. This recognition must be encouraged and communicated to all supervisors and managers. Without the interest and effort to stimulate managers' interest to mentor, and to train them in the process and stages, the human resource potential in women will not fully be utilized. Organizations and managers that meet this challenge to be mentored will come out on top. Women can contribute their ideas, insight, expertise and suggestions for creative approaches to intelligent and imaginative accomplishments to the twenty first century.

There is an ever increasing number of women entering the work force. Women are flooding into the job market, boosting economic growth, and helping to reshape the economy dramatically (Pennar and Mervosh, 1985). Women have taken two-thirds of the jobs created in the past decade.

From 1975 to 1985 the percentage of women in the work force who held executive, managerial, and administrative jobs jumped from 25 percent to 35.6 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1986).

Nobel Laureate Paul A. Samuelson, Professor of Economics at M.I.T. said, "to the degree that women are getting an opportunity that they didn't have in the past, the economy is tapping an important and previously wasted resource" (Pennar & Mervosh, 1985). If these women are not used to their full capacities, a great deal of inefficiency would exist.

In the research reviewed (Fleet and Surage, 1984) supported the finding that women were generally found to be as effective as men in actual work situations.

To prevent career stagnation for women and to reduce and prevent turnover, the first step is to obtain the active support of top management to develop women in the organization (preferably through mentoring) (Chusmil, 1982). Without this support and encouragement, the program would falter and be allowed to fail. One most important

area (outside of the formal structural relationships) is to include women in the informal work relationships (social) that are on the job. This would allow them to be involved in decision making often occurs in informal settings.

Jane Evans (1986), President of Monet Jewelry, states that, "Unfortunately, most of the men in corporate America today have not developed the same level of comfort in dealing with women that they have dealing with men, and this discomfort continues to be the largest single barrier impeding women's upward mobility." It seems to be that male resistance to women's advancement persists as the single most difficult challenge for women of the late twentieth century.

Women need role models and/or mentors for their achievement and development. The role and purpose of the mentor should be to encourage and aid in the development and achievement of the female work force.

A common definition of a mentor is that of a senior person who undertakes to guide a younger person's career development. The function of mentor is that of a combination of coach, role model, and developer of talent. These functions suggest that employee development is an important part of the mentoring role (Schain, 1978).

Mentors should share common nonwork interests with a protege. In this relationship work-related

suggestions, and criticism can occur. Mentors can be an important source of career development because they help new managers learn the ropes and benefit from their experience. The relationship often goes beyond coaching and training to become a close, personal friendship that includes mutual respect and affection, helping the protege understand organizational norms, using power on the protege's behalf, and taking the protege along when the mentor moves to a new position (Kram and Isabella, 1985).

According to Jennings (1967), there is now a developmental ethic in business which was not present 20 years ago. This ethic holds the management responsible for developing talent. The manager's own promotion can be facilitated by adequate training of a replacement.

In order for mentors to better understand the steps that are involved and know what to expect in the relationship, the development pattern should be known. There are four stages through which the mentoring relationships typically progress: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Schockett, Yoshimura, Beyard-Tyler, and Haring, 1983). The developmental nature of the relationship creates problems in separation and redefinition (Levinson, et al., 1978). The initiation stage is a period of six months during which mentor and protege get to know each other. Cultivation is the major period, during which the mentor supports, guides and counsels. The developmental nature of the relationship creates problems in separation and redefinition (Levinson, et al., 1978).

Part of the problem relates to the time put into development of an individual and the lack of recognition or appreciation given to the mentor. Sometimes former mentors become sponsors (different than a mentor). This may be after the separation phase. Sponsors select competent people and place them in key positions where they will make decisions affecting the organization's future. Sponsors test (mentors teach); sponsors have little outside work interest (mentors have common interests outside work); sponsors are distant and have less frequent contact (mentors have a strong emotional bond). Reciprocity, advocacy, and training are common elements (Dalton and Thompson, 1986).

Haring-Hidore and Brooks (1986a) found that mentors frequently cited problems with deficien-

cies they perceived in their proteges' attitudes, skills, motivation, and willingness to follow advice; proteges often experienced problems with their mentors' attitudes, personalities, and behaviors.

In order to aid in the cited problems, a number of suggestions for a protege candidate are given (Hennig and Jardin, 1977): 1. Accept the sex role differences and learn how to overcome them. Examples, handling conflict, criticism, and risk taking. 2. Decide if you really want to succeed in a management career. 3. Develop a career plan and ways to implement it. 4. Find coach or mentor in a senior position to guide and support your career. 5. Become familiar with the informal relationships which usually exist in organizations. 6. Develop an awareness of the male/female role issues on the job and make plans or procedures to avoid difficulties.

Some authors view mentoring as so important that they suggest all managers should be thoroughly trained in the mentoring process, and that their performance as mentors should be evaluated during formal performance appraisals (e.g., Levinson, 1979).

Since women and minority women have only recently entered management ranks, they may have difficulty in developing the social networking and mentoring helpful to career development. In the business environment, there is the tendency to mentor individuals with backgrounds similar to their own. Managers should be recognized for their contribution to their minority mentoring in their performance appraisal.

One of the most interesting aspects of mentoring can be viewed from the book, *When Smart People Fail*, by Linda Gottlieb and Carole Hyatt. They note that failure is a judgement about an event and its the way that people cope with failure that shapes them. The mentor can assist the protege in learning from their failure. According to Gottlieb, mentors can play a crucial role in helping individuals cope with failure. The mentor can play the counseling role. If the mentor assists in showing how to learn from an experience then there can be no such thing as failure (learning only problem solving and decision making). If a mentor can give insight, direction or a new interpretation of a situation or event they have directed that person for positive action. Success and

development of an individual can be the ability to digest (accept) failure and go on learning (with the mentor) that aids the self development of the individual.

The position of the protege within the organizational hierarchy may also affect the availability of mentors. It would seem that as a person moves up the organization, he/she can afford the favoritism of a mentor. Some would be mentors may be more attracted to persons with proven track records. On the other hand, the number of persons available to be a mentor naturally diminishes as a person advances in their career.

Roche (1979) lists seven key characteristics that mentors have, and that proteges should look for in selecting a mentor: (1) willingness of the mentor to share his/her knowledge and understanding, (2) knowledge of the organization and its people, (3) rank of the mentor, (4) peer respect, (5) knowledge of the use of the power, (6) upward mobility, and (7) organizational power.

Managers will find that most women are receptive to or even enthusiastic about exploring mentoring as a way to develop their management skills and to boost their careers. Some characteristics of the mentoring relationship are an emotional bond, mutual identification, voluntary selection and reciprocity (Dalton, Thompson, 1986). Also identified are several functions that an effective mentor performs: providing resources, supplying information, showing an interest in the protege's work being a role model, setting high standards, building confidence, coaching and protecting during the inevitable errors that result from making decisions.

There are steps that young managers can take to develop a mentoring relationship with experienced managers (Hunt & Michael, 1983): 1. Determine who is successful and well thought of, and get to know him or her professionally and socially. 2. Seek out opportunities for exposure and visibility - committees and special projects - that will provide opportunities to work with experienced, successful people. 3. Inform experienced individuals of your interests and goals; let your activities and successes be known to these people; seek specific feedback on your performance from experienced people other than your boss.

Proteges are selected by mentors because the

protege: (1) has good performance, (2) has the right social background, (3) knows some of the officers socially, (4) looks good in a suit, (5) is socially similar, (6) has the opportunity to demonstrate the extraordinary, and (7) has high visibility (Levinson, 1978 and Kanter, 1977).

Benefits of the mentor-protege relationship provides several advantages to the protege. In Roche (1978), survey of executives, former proteges (versus nonmentored executives) were found to be better educated, less mobile to plan their career move, have higher salaries, be more highly satisfied within career program, and to derive greater satisfaction from their work.

Following are some guidelines for the manager, administrator or supervisor who wishes to mentor. The first agenda is that of planning or goal setting in which there is a focus on doing and knowing a job description. The next step should consist of a plan of action for self development to accomplish the requirements. An analysis of the abilities, traits and aptitude of the individual should be made. It should relate to the description of the career goal and its sequence. The mentor should assist on the reinforcement necessary to increase courage and confidence and overcome any fear.

The second area of concentration should focus upon human motivation (for self and others) and self understanding. This should consider the subject of self concept and the protege's view of herself. There should be a discussion of attitudes, its nature and development, and attitude change. There should be some understanding, frustration and conflict (its source and techniques to deal with it); the ability to be aware of and deal with defensiveness and irrational behavior: the ability to handle problems of employees (including handling of grievances and discipline).

The third area for the protege is that of the development of her leadership ability. This would include the development and improvement of techniques for oral and written communication, how to give orders, and how to suggest and persuade people. Leadership training should include the techniques to improve effectiveness in problem solving and decision making. This training would encourage and develop logical/intuitive thinking and good judgement.

...Effective intuitive thinking is fostered by the

development of self confidence and courage....A person who thinks intuitively may often achieve correct solution, but he/she may also be proved wrong....Such thinking, therefore requires a willingness to make honest mistakes in the effort to solve problems....One who is insecure, who lacks confidence, may be unwilling to run such risks. (Bruner, 1960).

It requires a sensitive mentor to distinguish an intuitive mistake. If a mistake occurs, the analysis of the error, and the development of other choices from which to select is also part of a good mentor's role. Also it requires a mentor who can give approval and correction simultaneously to the protege.

It is important to note and be aware that enhancing effectiveness in the mentoring agenda may not result in significant career progress. Some attention by the mentor should be focused on the informal management system. The informal organizational system has been identified as an important factor in power acquisition and promotion for both sexes. It has been demonstrated that, compared to men, women, make less use of informal mechanism (Hennig and Jardim, 1977).

Results presents by Stewart and Gudykunst (1982), reporting that women who were advancing upwardly in the hierarchy perceived a combination of the formal and informal organizational systems to be important in the promotion process.

In order to advance upwardly, women need to relate differently to the informal system. They have to become more knowledgeable about its operation, to be able to view it in a neutral fashion and to be able to use it for their own career goals. Women need to de-emphasize the formal system in their cognitive mapping.

How can women learn to relate differently to the informal system? Such learning can take place off-the-job, in special training tailored to women's needs (Larwood et al., 1978). It can also be done,

perhaps more effectively, on-the-job, through actual work experience. Because knowledge of the informal system is, by its nature, implicit, tacit, and subtle (West, 1982), it should be learned from experience rather than formally taught.

The social and informal knowledge includes an understanding of: (1) the basic goals of the work group and/or organization, (2) the preferred means by which these goals should be attained, (3) the role responsibilities associated with the job, (4) the behavior patters that are required for effective performance in the role. This type of knowledge is often highly specific to the particular organization, work group, and/or position in question, and as such, it can be obtained through direct experience with a mentor.

In conclusion, the mentor's strategy should be employee development in which the manager or supervisor should have a fairly clear idea about which type of position that the employee might potentially be promoted. Moreover, it is important that the mentor be able to identify accurately both the skills and experiences that are needed in order to perform well in the target position, and the specific type of job changes that will be most helpful in providing those skills and experiences to the protege.

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Organizations and managers that meet this challenge to be mentored will come out on top. Women can contribute their ideas, insight, expertise and suggestions for creative approaches to intelligent and imaginative accomplishments to the twenty first century.

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