

POWER IN WORDS



ANIMISHA

MANAGEMENT OF talent has become the number one priority for not just HR managers, but also for CEOs. Seamless mobility of talent across the globe has, in a sense, made talent availability better for corporations world-wide. In another sense the very same mobility has made talent shortage acutely felt. While securing talent is getting more and more difficult, focus has turned to the even more challenging task of retaining the best talent.

Competent and committed people constitute the human capital for companies today. The ability to attract, retain and engage talent has become a very significant intangible component for companies since it adds significantly to their market value.

Talent segmentation is a concept HR has borrowed from the field of marketing where capturing market share through the market segmentation approach is a well-established practice. Segmentation ensures focused attention on a particular segment.

In the same way, when we talk of talent segmentation, we focus on people who come under different segments. McKinsey's prescription to win the war for talent includes a serious advice to "differentiate and affirm". While differentiating people usually happens on the basis of their performance, the segmentation approach is very necessary for retention-related initiatives as well.

Mentoring is a powerful tool to retain people when applied to the top talent segment in an organisation. Since mentoring is a relationship-based developmental process, matching of mentors and the mentees becomes crucial to the success of the procedure and its outcome.

Many companies have taken a rather casual approach to instituting the mentoring process and later have complained that the experiment has not delivered. The mentoring process is not another feel-good tactic employed by the HR personnel. It may not serve the purpose until and unless it is well thought out and implemented.

Top employees may have nothing more in common among themselves than being promising and being good performers. If that be so, then the choice of the right mentors for them should deserve serious consideration in terms of the learning styles of the mentee and the mentoring approach of the mentor.

And the choice of mentors in terms of their ability, willingness and coaching styles is a key to making this

MENTORS...

Abiding principles

There must be a chart of "dos and don'ts" for mentors. They must learn the styles of different individuals (reading, writing, listening, reflecting, doing, watching others), reinforce the learning progress at regular intervals and ensure that the independence of the mentee is not reduced to dependence.

Freedom of choice

Mentees are given the option to choose a mentor of their choice from the list of trained mentors.

Snapping ties

Mentees & mentors must have the freedom to snap mentoring ties if they don't find it adding value to the learning process.

Pre-decided contracts

Expectations are defined and clarified for the mentoring contract.

relationship work.

This author has come across organisations where mentors were not selected carefully or trained in effective mentoring and consequently the process did not deliver the intended results. Worse still, in one large IT organisation, some of the top talent even started to leave as their experience with the assigned mentors was nothing short of disaster!

This brings us to understand that there are certain fundamentals to be understood before laying out the mentoring process. Mentors must be identified

on the basis of a set of criteria. They must be mature and positive, have the right experience, be successful at work, good listeners, understand the latent talents of individuals and are conscious enough not to impose their thought process on the mentees.

Mentors have a significant responsibility to contribute to the mentee's learning process without seeking significant change in the learning styles and personality attributes of the mentee.

Good mentoring enhances and builds on the strengths of the mentee rather than trashing any of

...& TORMENTORS

Finding fault

Tormentors suffer from "Captious Complex"—a behaviour characterised by excessive complaining or fault-finding.

Fomenting trouble

Inflicting/ projecting personal failures, disappointments or prejudices on the mentee.

Personal agenda

Having a personal agenda & using the mentee to impose this on.

In the wilderness

Moving the focus away from the scope of mentoring.

Blinkered outlook

A mindset of 'my way or the high way!'.

them and seeking a sea change as a prerequisite for mentoring to succeed. Mentors see incremental growth and learning and reinforce the confidence that mentees have in themselves and their self-worth.

On the contrary, when mentors are not carefully selected or arbitrarily assigned, the relationship does not produce results.

The key point to note is that if mentors are not chosen carefully, it can become an exercise in futility and lead to unintended consequences for the mentee and the organisation.

While the HR personnel may design and deliver a mentoring programme with guidelines and training, etc., the onus of making the plan work depends entirely on the leadership team of the company. When the leadership pays attention, mentoring moves deliver maximum value.

TALENT TRACK

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