



SmartHR

Monthly People Management Feature

Gail Yeowell - Managing Director, Smart HR Solutions Limited

Mentoring – are you inspiring others to develop?

Are you thinking of setting up a mentoring programme for your company? Or being a mentor? If so, there are many benefits of doing so.

For your organisation, the benefits can include...

- Helping employees focus on their self-development and reaching their potential;
- Helping to improve the personal effectiveness and performance of your people;
- Helping to improve staff morale;
- Helping to motivate and retain staff; and
- Helping to encourage creative thinking and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Mentoring is a technique for allowing knowledge, skills and experience to be transferred to another person in a supportive and challenging environment. It is a long-term approach.

As a mentor, your role will be to focus on the development of your 'mentee'. To take an interest in their working life, encourage their career development and steer them in the direction of acquiring new knowledge and skills. This may be by sharing your own experiences or by creating opportunities for them to experience and learn from new situations.

You will build a good rapport with the mentee, create trust, identify what the person wants out of the mentor / mentee relationship, and help build the person's confidence. You will provide advice and guidance, act as a sounding board, and encourage the person to find the right answer. You will also constructively challenge

and empower the person to take responsibility for their ongoing development.

At times you may be a shoulder to cry on and a sympathetic ear when needed. Overall though, contributing to someone else's growth and development can be extremely rewarding and satisfying, and can aid your own personal development.

Suitable mentors may be drawn from staff who...

- Are capable of developing good working / professional relationships;
- Have wide experience in the organisation;
- Can command respect and cooperation from others;
- Operate with integrity;
- Have shown they have successfully completed this role before or who have the skills that can be built upon to be successful mentors; and
- Can show a balance between being supportive and encouraging – *but not interfering or providing all the answers*

For the 'mentee' on the receiving end of an effective mentoring programme, it can help them to: increase confidence in their abilities, encourage a solutions-orientated approach to problem-solving, be more resourceful, improve their productivity and performance, reflect on learning and experiences, develop

their future potential, improve morale, and focus on enhancing their career development.

I remember clearly having a fantastic mentor early in my HR career. He was an excellent leader and inspirational mentor. He encouraged me to be creative, think of ways to continuously develop as an individual, and provided me with many opportunities to analyse, recommend and implement continuous business improvements and solutions. To me, everyone should have at least one experience of this in their working lives.

If you are thinking about developing a mentoring scheme, be clear on the reasons for wanting to introduce it. Establish who will control the scheme, and how it will link to other areas such as performance management / appraisal. Identify suitable mentors and people that would benefit from being mentees. Provide training for both parties, and regularly review (and adjust if necessary) the scheme on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is achieving its objectives.

So...with all the benefits highlighted, why wouldn't you want to introduce a mentoring programme, or be a mentor if you have the necessary skills and knowledge? Set this as a company or personal objective to establish before the end of 2011. Inspire someone - it really can make a difference...

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T: 619619 E: gail@SmartHR.co.im W: www.SmartHR.co.im



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