

## MENTORING - AN ORGANIZATIONAL NEED NOWADAYS

**Diana CHIȘ-MANOLACHE**

”Carol I” National Defence University, Bucharest, Romania  
(dianamanolache88@yahoo.com)

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***Abstract:** Today's organizations are different from those of two decades ago, and organizational needs have become increasingly complex. For this reason, organizational leaders play many different roles within organizations, such as the role of advisor and mentor. Really valuable leaders have usually been supported by mentors and have been mentors to other individuals. This has brought many benefits to both followers and leaders, but also to the organization as whole. The benefits of subordinates are many, from professional counseling to the existence of a role model. On the other hand, reverse mentoring brings to mind the benefits of mentoring relationships with subordinates.*

***Keywords:** mentor, leader, followers, organizations.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are in a process of continuous transformation, and the typology of jobs can differ in ten years or in fifteen years. Organizational adaptability, coupled with the thirst for knowledge and development are directly proportional to the ability to grow and develop the skills of organizational leaders. The mentoring activity is an excellent way to exercise this type of growth, given that it is a win-win activity.

From a classical perspective, mentoring focuses on people with different responsibilities. The more experienced mentor offers guidance to the person he is mentoring, in a continuous way, including in connection with career decisions and challenges. This type of mentoring is useful for progressive development, but if mentoring is transactional in nature, this should mean that only the mentor has new things to learn, which is not valuable enough. On the other hand, if the transformational nature of mentoring is addressed, both the mentor and the follower will prepare for the future, at a fast pace.

Who can become a mentor?

Anyone in an organization can become a mentor, a person willing to support the next generations of leaders, who wants to guide, advise, manage the careers of individuals in the organization.

If we were to list some of the traits of an effective mentor, we would put sociability first. A mentor is primarily a sociable person who establishes relationships easily and who will lead the dialogue more easily. Sociability is directly related to training. Sociable people are open to knowledge, to continuous professional development. They will have to work hard to avoid dominating a discussion.

At the same time, mentors are sincere people who can easily earn trust. Mentors show their feelings easily and it is easy for them to reveal themselves in an instructive relationship. In fact, in their case, the challenge is to look so honest and open in the face of the follower so as not to overwhelm or intimidate the other person.

In many cases, confusion can arise between coaches and mentors. In essence, we are talking about different relationships and different goals.

In order to differentiate between coaching and mentoring, we need to take into account the length of the relationship between the two parties. In coaching we talk about a short-term professional relationship, a relationship in which the coach uses all sorts of techniques that determine the follower to develop on a personal and / or professional level. The tools used by the coach are creative thinking and challenging to think differently. When we talk about mentoring, we have in mind a long-term relationship, in which the two people interact for the benefit of both. The mentor helps the learner to adapt to the job, supports him in developing the necessary skills at work, and the mentor helps the learner to develop his leadership skills.

## **2. THE IMPORTANCE OF A MENTOR IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE**

Identifying a mentor is as important a decision as it is complex.

*"Mentors are crucial whenever people are faced with new phases of their career or life that require the development of new knowledge, skills or attitudes," says mentoring expert Drew Appleby, PhD, professor emeritus at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. "Mentors help people determine who they want to become, how they must change in order to become these people, and how they can take advantage of their college or work experiences to bring about these changes."*[1]

Mentoring can be of many types, from school counseling which can be considered a form of school mentoring, to informal relationships that individuals build during their professional life. Although apparently only people at the beginning of their career choose mentors, the practice shows that even in mid-career a mentor can be helpful. Career mentoring takes the form of an informal relationship that begins without too many initial plans. *"You may meet someone, have a conversation and suddenly realize you'd like to be like this person," he says. "If this person shows a genuine interest in you, that's an ideal way for mentoring to begin."*[1]

For example, psychologist Jean Carter, PhD, of Washington, D.C., says that throughout one's career, mentors have offered support in making a variety of choices, such as the decision to go to graduate school or to change an office into a common space, in a dedicated room.

*"Informal mentoring can be a one-off event, episodic or continuous," says Carter. "It can be as simple as once talking to someone who has given you a perspective that has influenced your career. If you're open to mentoring, it's more likely to happen."*

*Informal mentoring can be a single meeting, episodic or ongoing," Carter says. "It can be as simple as one time when you talked to someone who gave you an insight that influenced your career. If you are open to those mentoring moments, they are more likely to happen."*[1]

The monitor interviewed five mid-career psychologists to find out how their mentors found themselves, how mentors helped them succeed, and how they helped others.

### 3. TRANSFORMATIONAL MENTORING

Transformational mentoring is a term that perfectly describes the two-way relationship of mutual interaction of the mentor, with the mentored one, which requires an equal amount of work from both, but which offers benefits to both. As a mentored person, the secret to fully involving your mentor is to identify the right person: the person with whom you can build a relationship based on trust, a relaxed, inspired relationship, dominated by curiosity, as opposed to the traditional exchange between leader and follower that we normally know. This type of mentoring can be approached with more experienced people or colleagues on an equal footing, as long as there is a mutual desire for personal and professional growth.

In this sense, we can take as an example Albert Einstein who had very close relations with Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr. Although of different ages and experience in various fields, they shared a common fascination with theoretical physics. Guided by genuine curiosity and having honest conversations, each of them have made significant strides in the field of technology and rapid innovation over the years. For a long time, the three great personalities organized meetings and corresponded. Their visions were not always the same, they did not try to convince each other of anything. Instead, they proposed new ideas, asked questions, offered proposals, and supported each other's seemingly terrifying notions. This approach is the secret to attracting and maintaining transformational relationships between mentors. Here's how to get started.

#### **Look beyond the common**

It is certainly a challenge to overcome the traditional approach of mentoring, that of teacher-student, when the mentor is a leader in the organization. The secret in identifying a potential mentor is to be compatible with your area of interest and the organization itself.

A first step in identifying the right mentor is the introspection into one's passions, interests, and curiosities. For example, if you are interested in new developments in the field of technology, it would be appropriate to identify the personality in this field that inspires you, whose activity you admire. In general, the people who captivate you are those whose knowledge, attitudes and behaviors can serve as a model and guide for career advancement.

People eager for innovation and change can easily transform into mentors. In the process of exchanging ideas, it is possible for everyone to discover perspectives that have never been taken into account before, aspects that inspire both people and make them go beyond their own limits. In order to identify these people, it is advisable to take advantage of the professional network, but also the external network of relationships.

The process includes several people. As with Einstein, sometimes the process works better with a lot more people. Even if you are not part of the group, there may be a valuable mentor at different times in the growth process.

It is very important to resonate with the potential mentor you meet. You need to make sure that a genuine connection can be created for the relationship to evolve.

Moreover, the ultimate goal is to create a connection with your mentor that gives you meaning and allows you to exercise and receive that much-needed influence. The transformational mentor should be the person who does not give you direct explanations, but the one who attracts you in conversations from which you will be able to learn and develop.

The relationship between the transformational mentor and the follower should be similar to a long-term investment, from which everyone involved must learn something.

The mentoring relationship is not one-sided, it is not a one-way street. This says that the influence is exerted in both directions. The mentor is the one who guides, supports the follower, but the follower can also exert a profound influence on the mentor. The follower can also guide and become a mentor to others. This process can help you reflect on your own strengths as well as your weaknesses, and also help you to use the skills you have acquired through your own mentoring. Supporting and guiding another person, certainly, the follower who this time becomes a mentor exercises his communication skills.

#### **4. SOME RELEVANT ASPECTS OF REVERSE MENTORING**

Traditionally, mentoring connects senior leaders with younger workers, with the goal of mentors to provide support and advice to help their follower in their profession. Certainly, as long as the typology of jobs changes and mentoring acquires new values. With these changes, new ways are emerging in which individuals learn from each other, support each other in their career development process.

Reverse mentoring is one of the models that organizations can adopt, apply and adapt to depending on the situation.

One definition of reverse mentoring is that it focuses on junior employees who in turn become mentors for senior leaders. *"For many organizations, the goal of reverse mentoring is to give leaders a new perspective on growing trends in technology or the future of work."*[2]

This form of mentoring, which has become quite popular in our times, reverse mentoring, is one with many benefits for both individuals and the organization.

Trust is the most important value on the basis of which the relationship between the mentor and the guided person is built, but also the virtue that is the foundation of the mentoring process. Trust and experience are two interconnected elements that are born and run side by side. Trust-based partnership.

A few advantages of reverse mentoring:

##### **4.1 Knowledge transfer**

Regardless of the importance we place on learning, it is clear that any organization has a culture of learning. Physiologically, we are always ready to learn. Continuously and constantly, employees absorb information, knowledge and make decisions about how to act, and learning-centered experiences happen all the time in organizations.

Learning is a continuous process, which focuses on the two extremely important characters: the mentor and the followers. Gradually, in the mentoring process, knowledge is transferred between the two entities, so that each of the two parties has something to learn. The mentor provides advice, is the guide of the follower, while the follower is the one who transfers knowledge and creative ideas, innovative to his mentor.

##### **4.2 Sharing digital skills.**

A central element of reverse mentoring relationship is the development of technological skills.

*"For example, the current CEO of BNY Mellon's Pershing (then COO) used his mentor to help him with social networking, which he never integrated into his professional life. Now he is one of the most passionate users of According to Cimino, "Jim [Crowley] of social networks, and this has completely changed the way he interacts and communicates with employees ... Jim is incredibly active on [our internal social networking platform]. [He] is, also actively representing the company [on LinkedIn], which has never been done before this program."*[3]

#### **4.3 Culture exchange - a step forward in implementing change**

Although experience is vital to the smooth running of an organization, the future is very important, and in some cases change is imminent. The implementation of reverse mentoring programs at the organizational level is part of the much-needed changes in an organization. For example, “in addition to educating senior executives about the importance of social media influences for the overall shopping experience, Millennial mentors developed Dreamspace, a knowledge-sharing portal for brainstorming. Estée Lauder distributed bi-monthly alerts to employees, including the executive management team, on key topics discussed on Dreamspace. Kennelly from BNY Mellon’s Pershing told us that she and her student discussed why young people are not attracted to the financial services profession. *"It simply came to our notice then. I came back with three reasons, including a general distrust of the industry, the negative portrayal of the industry in the media, and the misconception that the profession was just about sales. He then used these motives to shape the recruitment strategy."*[3]

#### **4.4 Reducing generational gaps**

When outlining the mentoring process, the relationships that are established are between a more experienced person (the mentor) and a younger employee (the follower). Given the consistency of these relationships, the gap between the two generations can be bridged.

#### **4.5 Developing leadership skills in younger employees**

Leadership skills are vital in the leadership process. Being close to real mentors, observing their behavior in certain leadership situations, followers can properly model their leadership skills so that they are able to cope with a wide variety of situations in which they will be put. On the other hand, mentors can hone their leadership skills by listening to the needs of their followers and trying to adapt to their requirements.

#### **4.6 Sharing different perspectives**

When two people in the mentoring process interact, they realize that exchange of ideas so beneficial for each of them. The mentor transmits his own knowledge, his own experiences and reveals his own abilities in the presence of the person he guides, and the follower presents to him his own perspective on things. This exchange of knowledge is vital for the two people involved in the mentoring process.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In general, competitive organizations offer employees, in addition to material rewards, the opportunity to progress and grow, both personally and professionally. Mentoring programs are the ones that contribute to this evolution of employees in organizations.

Organizations that do not offer employees the chance to develop a successful mentoring program fail to excel in extremely important areas of management, such as: organizational culture, staff retention, motivation.

The relationship established between the two people involved in the process, the mentor and the follower, is one based on mutual trust, inspiration, respect and appreciation. It is, in fact, a learning relationship in which both people have benefits. The follower benefits from a career model, is guided in outlining a career plan, has support in identifying opportunities and obstacles that they do not take into account. The mentor, in turn, has certain benefits in this relationship.

He has the chance to learn about elements related to new technologies, social media, get in touch with new trends in the virtual world. All of the above complete the picture of the close relationship between the two people, the mentor and the follower.

Transformational mentors have a decisive influence on the personal and professional lives of those they support and guide. All the actions they take are not only declarative, but they are real tools by which followers evolve and progress in the workplace. Certainly, these elements can be possible only by guiding mentors on the relationships created with followers, by the existence of mutual trust, by the desire for organizational change.

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