

## POSSIBLE CHALLENGES AND OVERCOMING THEM

### *What are possible challenges?*

- New employees may get too much information from different parties (HR, line manager and mentor) OR may not get any information at all (HR thinks that the mentor will give the information, the mentor thinks that the line manager will give the information etc.). You will need to make sure communication is clear and that all staff know their responsibilities to the new employee.
- New employees may not get full, professional, on-the-job training (because for the experienced mentor, everything seems so evident...). To prevent this, ensure that there is a clear plan for mentoring and other training which covers all required knowledge.
- It is important to ensure that the right mentor is matched with new employees and that they are giving the right feedback regularly. Ensure mentors are properly trained in their role to handle this.
- Pick your mentors carefully and ensure they are enthusiastic and are taking their roles seriously. A voluntary application procedure to become a mentor and good training can ensure you get the best people in your organization to be mentors!
- Be realistic about the time required to run your programme and take into account time management issues for those involved.
- Uncommitted mentors or mentees will not give you a successful programme. Employees should not be pressured to take part or given unrealistic responsibilities and expectations.
- Ensure that the mentor does not take credit for the mentee's work (inappropriate selection).
- Mentors should not see mentees as an extra member of staff. Again, ensure that program goals and role expectations are clear.

- Unsuccessful matching may cause problems between individual mentors and mentees. Give thought to the matching process, avoiding any potential conflict of interest or clash of personalities. Avoid any misunderstanding around confidentiality issues by providing a clear policy on this so that both parties feel free to talk.



*Avoid these and other problems by planning your project carefully:*

- Use a project approach to start up the mentoring system, and make sure that the necessary conditions are met before starting to implement the programme.
- Remember that communication is key!



*Concrete tips on how to deal with resistance to your mentoring programme:*

Possible reasons for resistance:

- Organization-based:
  - Fear of a loss of status as an expert
  - Fear of threatened job security
  - Belief that it is not part of one's job to train others
  - Absence of incentives for doing extra work
  - Mistrust of management's objectives
- Person-based reasons:
  - Discomfort in talking in front of others
  - Uncertainty about what one knows
  - Never having done anything like this before

- Lacking basic skills
- Nearing retirement age or will soon leave the organization for other reasons
- Fear of ridicule from peers

### Concrete tips for dealing with resistance

- The challenge is to identify the reason in the particular situation at hand and act accordingly.
  - In general, if the reasons are organization based, employees should at least be made aware that, if the training is successful, the performance of the group can improve. Thus, they have a stake in its success. For some employees, that is all that it takes to change their minds.
  - Also guarantees for the future from the management will motivate them to want to pass on their valuable experiences to newcomers. The additional role of mentor should also be recognized as part of the job for which one gets the necessary time, resources and support.
  - In contrast, when the reasons are person based, the employee should be approached in a sensitive manner to determine whether he or she wants to address the feelings or deficiencies. Training could help here.



### *Concrete tips on how to deal with the following resistance to become a mentor: "Mentoring takes too much time"?*

- Every mentoring relationship is unique. Each demands different amounts of time and energy from the mentor and mentee. If both partners mutually agree on the purpose and focus of learning, and on what it will take to make that happen, they will both be better



prepared. They can build the necessary time into their plan and schedule.

- Time can also be used more efficiently by integrating many of the mentoring activities into the regular work activities.
- Mentoring takes time. Yet it may be inconvenient at times, the benefits definitively outweigh the negatives.