PROJECT APPROACH TO IMPLEMENT A FORMAL MENTORING SYSTEM

Why have a formal mentoring system?

- Although mentoring may occur spontaneously and informally with excellent results, it makes sense for progressive organizations to actively promote a formal mentoring process. A formal system is a structured program with clear goals, and evaluation at the end to help to recognize the goals achieved and the benefits for the organization.

    - Advantages of a formal mentoring program:

        - Participants are identified who can benefit from mentoring (rather than relying on similar people finding one another).

        - Each employee gets the same quality of support.

        - With clear goals and controlling activities, one can measure the benefits of the formal program.

        - One coordinator can take responsibility for the mentoring program.

Why use a project approach?

- One first creates the necessary conditions (time etc.) to be able to implement the program successfully. For example, the employees concerned must be given time for their tasks in the mentoring project!

- The project approach starts with creating support for mentoring throughout the whole organization. By creating a clear vision: why start with mentoring in our organization? What is the added value for our organization?

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Tasks of the project team?

- The project team contains representatives of all different interest groups including management, HR and various departments, and so knows the company very well.

    - It is important that mentoring is a part of the human resources management. The quality of mentoring depends on the appropriate choice of mentors, the managing of relations, and the evaluation of its success. HR professionals must understand when mentoring is the most appropriate and effective learning intervention, must be able to compose a pole of mentors and train them (if necessary), decide how mentors and mentees should be paired best, make the necessary aids available and provide continuous support, support mentors who need help, incorporate a periodic reporting system, and take responsibility for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the mentoring.

- This project team will:

    - Define the goals, scope, and target group of the mentoring project.

    - Define roles and responsibilities.

    - Define profiles and decide the selection and pairing of mentors.

    - Make an action plan with periodic reviews.

    - Create a communication plan.

    - Develop a training plan.

    - Gather success stories and plan the celebration of success.

Communication plan: what needs to be communicated and to whom?

- Communication ensures that the project lives, gets support and is taken seriously. Both formal and daily informal communication channels must be used.

- Create different messages for different target groups, giving the required information to individuals as appropriate.

- Be clear, open and honest about the program. Spend sufficient time and energy to interact with colleagues and receive feedback. This allows you also to understand the practical challenges and concerns of colleagues, and gives others 'buy in' to the project.

- Communicate regularly and reliably.

- Use several communication channels and platforms, for example e-mail, newspaper, meetings with managers, posters, an information brochure concerning what, why and how.

- Use the language of the company/department.

- If possible, provide role models and example case studies of successful mentoring programs to demonstrate the benefits of mentoring

Where do I start?

- Assess the readiness of your organization to begin mentoring.

- Structured mentoring relationships will only be successful if the organization understands the mentoring process and is committed to the concept of long-term professional growth. The organization needs to allow the participants to take responsibility for their own growth and development.

  - Assess current attitudes to training and professional development:

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- What currently exists to support staff growth and development? (What is the effective investment in time and other resources for training and development?).

- How does mentoring fit into other staff development initiatives?

- What are the current programs for induction of new staff, training for aspirant managers, support for new leaders and motivating experienced leaders?

- Check the understanding of the concept of mentoring.

- Agree on a purpose ("Why do we want mentoring in our organization?")

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