

Mentoring and

Succession Planning in the Workplace

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Linda is aspiring to attain her career goal as a business manager. To progress her career, she will need to focus her efforts and improve her work performance. She knows that the career journey will bring challenges and issues to confront. Linda is committed to the industry and her chosen career and is keen to progress quickly.

Craig is planning his retirement next year. To ensure a seamless transition for his retirement and for the organisation succession, he will support Linda to pass on his valuable knowledge and insight. He is supported by the organisation to retain the organisational wisdom, engage and develop Linda's talent and career.

Research by National Seniors on the 'baby boomer' generation, states that almost 5.6 million Australians born between 1946 and 1965, are now aged in their 50s and 60s – over 800 baby boomers are turning 50 each day. As they grow older, they are leaving the paid workforce to take up their next stage of life – retirement.

As experienced workers leave their jobs and take their valuable knowledge and skills that have been built up over extensive employment, a gap will occur in the workforce. This has a profound bearing on the workforce, with fewer working people with the necessary skills, and the continuity of organisational wisdom and competence being threatened.

As organisations address workforce challenges such as: enabling succession plans, increasing employee retention, career and leadership development, organisational mentoring and development programs enable senior staff to transfer their knowledge and skills to less experienced employees.

Vital knowledge and organisational wisdom are retained and distributed to staff at all levels of the organisation.

Organisations are realising the benefits of aligning individual career goals with organisational goals to create a more productive organisation that continuously transforms itself to the needs of its staff and external events and challenges.

For individuals, mentoring offers support, knowledge and guidance during their career journey to enable them to develop their professional practice and attain their career goals. The learning curve to learn the knowledge and practice is shortened.

The mentoring relationship is not a modern fad. Historically, individuals learned through older members who passed their knowledge and insight whilst in the workplace. Patiently, the mentor provided the time and energy to serve as the teacher and overseer of the mentee.

Modern mentorship programs transfer business knowledge and skills. Employees engage with each other and a pipeline of future leaders who understand the skills and attitudes required to succeed within the company are developed.

An organisational mentoring culture is a valuable human resource tool for workforce planning and development, for spreading knowledge and best practices throughout the organisation. The benefits of a mentoring culture can be seen with a Plus, Minus, and Equal model.

PLUS – Mentoring develops individuals by those who have already ‘been there and done that.’ A mentor offers their knowledge and experience and offers advice to guide and support the individual during their professional career journey. As individuals develop, knowledge, skills and valuable organisational and industry wisdom are retained, rather than lost, as experienced staff leave.

EQUAL – As peers share their experiences and challenges, there is recognition that staff at all levels of the organisation have valuable knowledge and experience to share with others. The qualities of a learning organisation facilitate the engagement and learning of its staff. The accumulation of learning builds higher levels of business performance that enables the organisation to continuously transform itself.

MINUS – We can gain fresh perspectives from younger individuals. Reverse mentoring occurs when a more experienced employee partners with a younger, less experienced individual. It distinguishes from traditional mentoring because the new employee becomes the mentor who provides senior members of the organisation with up-to-date information on the latest business technologies, technical skills and workplace trends. This makes sense as the so-called digital natives, the dot-com kids are the most technologically literate generation of children.

Increasingly, organisations are creating formal mentoring programs to ensure that it has the right people, with the right skills, at the right time – now and in the future.

Encouraging an organisational mentoring and development program will engage and inspire individuals at all levels of an organisation to attain higher level thinking and performance for their career development and will recognise the Mentor’s expertise and leadership skills.

Linda and Craig are committed to their mentoring relationship. They have collaboratively established clear and realistic goals. They have developed an action plan to focus their efforts in a consistent direction. They are motivated and excited to their commitment to progress and develop. Craig is looking forward to the opportunity to ‘give back’ to his organisation to ensure that his organisational wisdom is retained, so that he can retire with an organisational succession plan in place.



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