



TRISIGMA

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE & REWARDS

## Someone at Work Encourages My Development

***“...there’s no faster way to a protégé’s brain than watching a good role model in action – it’s direct stimulation rather than just conceptual reasoning...”***

Typically 40% of employees feel that neither their manager nor anyone else is looking out for their development. The imperative is to reverse this situation and ensure the employee does not feel abandoned inside the business.

Formal **mentoring programmes are not the solution** and the manager is not the only candidate to fill this *encourager* role. Perversely in most organisations having an *encourager* diminishes with age and service though there is a strong manager-see-manager-do phenomenon. There are benefits for not only the protégé but also for the mentor, plus strong commercial drivers.

### *Roles to consider*

- Mentoring
- Managing
- Role modelling
- Coaching
- Supervising
- Counselling
- Sponsoring
- Leading

**Mentor** – according to Homer, Mentor was the old friend of Odysseus who he entrusted to advise, counsel & nurture his youngest son Telemachus while he attended the Trojan Wars

**Personal guides** have been ubiquitous throughout (commercial) history. In the 1990’s “mirror neurons” discovered as the neurological mechanism to explain the power of example – University of Parma (Dr Giacomo Rizzolatti)

### *Wise ‘Grey Hair’ as Mentor*

Typically a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and a less experienced employee which is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

Mentors are trusted confidants and knowledge transferrers, typically not the manager wherein candidates for being mentored may hold back sharing their concerns and thoughts with the person who ‘sits in judgement’.

### *Mentoring differs to supervision.*

Mentors should be aware that mentoring demands an investment and commitment beyond day to day supervision.

Supervision emphasises immediate tasks and short term needs, while mentoring is concerned with the professional and long term needs of an employee.

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### *Key Attributes of a Mentor*

- A willing volunteer, not a conscript
- Mentors and candidates need to be chosen and matched appropriately.
- Displays behaviours that the organisation needs for success
- Is seen by others as a thought leader, not just technically
- Would typically be at least from the organisational level above the mentee, but not necessarily
- Understands confidentiality
- Generous with sharing their knowledge & experiences
- Good two way communicators

### *Manager as Coach*

- Exposing the employee's talents
- Challenging assignments
- Friendship
- Socratic questioning - a form of inquiry designed to help learning and to reveal new lines of reasoning; a system to elucidate ideas and understandings; a way in which to tease out and challenge your underlying assumptions on the subject; a dialectic through which to train you to think critically about complicated issues.
  - What are your plans?
  - What are you doing?
  - Why would you do that?
  - What have you learned?
- Protecting
- Seeing the potential
- Focussing the employee on what the employee is good at
- Keeping notes to use in coaching
- Investing in the relationship
- Learning all about the person
- Addressing technical problems & obstacles
- Investing personally (at least metaphorically) in the education of the other
- Supplying mentors and role models
- Helping find role that matches talents
- Taking time to question & understand what the employee is doing
- Being engaged with employee(s)
- Advocating with senior management

### *Objectives*

As with any programme that is going to consume time and resources, there needs to be clear objectives for the programme established before commencement.

For P&I, one objective would obviously be the identification and transfer of key knowledge to less experienced engineers.

### *Sponsoring for Success*

Visible support and endorsement by senior management (see management commitment). This ensures the mentoring program is perceived as credible and valued, and therefore attracts a high



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level of participation from employees. The support of managers and widespread organisational support is facilitated by:

- Managers playing an active role in promoting the program and taking part in activities such as information sessions and the evaluation process, seeking out mentors
- Explaining the program to all employees
- Allowing time for mentor & mentees to meet regularly and share experiences on important projects where possible
- Providing at least moderate levels of funding for specific activities

#### References:

12 The Elements of Great Managing; Rodd Wagner & James Harter, Gallup Press 2006

First Break All the Rules; Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman, Pocket Books 2005

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