Mentoring Matters
Developing Talent With Formal Mentoring Programs

Top Benefits for Mentors:
• Develop new awareness of other perspectives
• Develop leadership skills

Top Benefits for Mentees:
• Professional development
• Better understanding of organizational culture

Who Participated?
969 Talent Development Professionals

29% of participants’ organizations have formal mentoring programs

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A Note From MentorcliQ

When people think of formal mentoring, they tend to think of a general program for all employees. MentorcliQ has been fortunate to work with some of the largest and most admired companies in the world, such as Deloitte, Honda, and Nationwide Insurance. We have learned that the best companies have a very deliberate approach to mentoring employees. We’ve coined the phrase *intentional mentoring* to describe it. There is certainly formality to the process, but what can be even more important is an intentional strategy to create the impact that you’re trying to make on the business.

For instance, a company with the goal of going from 25 percent women in management to 40 percent by 2020 should prioritize mentoring within its women’s network, which is often part of the diversity and inclusion umbrella. A company struggling to retain its best talent should focus on a high-potential mentoring program. The process of identifying these key business objectives and then applying an intentional mentoring strategy helps companies achieve the greatest results with formal mentoring.

MentorcliQ is proud to sponsor *Mentoring Matters: Developing Talent With Formal Mentoring Programs*. We hope the findings of this report will help illuminate the importance of employee mentoring and provide some examples of companies that do it well. We strongly believe that more employee mentoring will result in better people, and better people lead to a better business.
About MentorcliQ

MentorcliQ is an award-winning mentoring software solution that helps companies engage, develop, and retain top talent through high-impact employee mentoring programs. Companies use MentorcliQ software to launch, support, and grow employee mentoring programs for their global workforce. Customers describe the company’s programs as employee mentoring made easy.

The Association for Talent Development awarded MentorcliQ with Excellence in Practice for Mentoring ROI, and Brandon Hall awarded MentorcliQ with the Best Advancement in Mentoring Technology for its matching software. MentorcliQ has been featured in publications like *TD* and *Chief Learning Officer* magazine for its use of best practices in mentoring.

MentorcliQ supports mentoring programs in more than 65 countries across six continents and is proudly improving the workplace for more than 1 million employees and counting! To learn more, visit [www.mentorcliq.com](http://www.mentorcliq.com).
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People often talk about having a mentor and how their mentor has helped them navigate tricky situations or climb the corporate ladder. According to The Atlantic’s Mel Jones (2017), mentoring programs can “bolster recruiting, boost employee engagement, help train future company leadership, increase diversity, and raise rates of worker loyalty and retention.” Clearly, mentoring programs can have a significant impact on an organization.

Even so, questions remain. How effective are mentors in their roles, and how are they trained? Who serves as mentor or mentee? How are they selected? What are the characteristics of these programs? The Association for Talent Development (ATD) sought to find answers in Mentoring Matters: Developing Talent With Formal Mentoring Programs (hereafter, the Study).

Defining Mentoring

For the purpose of the present Study, mentoring is a relationship in which a mentor with insights, knowledge, or experience that can benefit the mentee guides him or her. This is often a mutually beneficial relationship for long-term development. Typically, both the mentor and mentee are internal employees.

Formal mentoring programs have a defined structure and clear guidelines and objectives. Informal mentoring programs do not have clear guidelines or structure and may not have clear objectives.

Note that mentoring is not coaching, which is a formal relationship focused on improving a specific behavior or performance area to resolve work issues or handle aspects of the job. The coach is often an external individual or an individual’s direct supervisor.

Formal mentoring programs are associated with a plethora of benefits for mentors, mentees, and their organizations. For example, respondents indicated that the top benefits for mentees are professional development and a better understanding of organizational culture, while the primary benefits for mentors are developing new awareness of other perspectives and developing leadership skills.

Although mentoring programs can be advantageous for organizations, it’s critical to exercise thoughtfulness when implementing them. Jenn Labin, principal at TERP Associates and author, explains that “mentoring is a great solution when organizations are facing big talent issues like attrition, low engagement, or a shallow talent pipeline.” Unfortunately, many talent development professionals are under the impression that mentoring is a quick and cheap
solution to fix those talent problems. Says Labin: “In fact, effective mentoring programs really require a similar budget and timeline as other development solutions. A lot of organizations say that they’ve had a mentoring program fail, but it comes down to the fact that they thought they could basically throw one together and it would just kind of work, but that’s just not the case. Mentoring programs and fostering a mentoring culture requires a lot of effort.”

Anna Marie Crowley, vice president of global talent management and organizational effectiveness at Wyndham Destination Network, echoes this sentiment when recounting her initial experience with mentoring programs at Wyndham. She says, “When we first started mentoring, it was very informal and ad hoc; a bit disorganized. We eventually realized we needed to prepare people. There needed to be contracts and an agreement of how it would run, parameters for discussion, and how to track the beginning and ending, and the timing of sessions. Initially, this wasn’t in place, so we didn’t see the return.”

The purpose of the present Study, then, is to shed light on formal mentoring programs, including effectiveness and benefits for all involved. The Study also examines who serves in each role, training methods, platforms for mentoring sessions, and the time mentors and mentees have been at their organization. Additionally, it investigates examples of mentoring programs in Genpact and Cardinal Health, illustrating mentoring programs in global companies. The Study includes key insights from subject matter experts on how to best design and implement mentoring programs while avoiding common pitfalls.
Mentoring relationships have been around for ages, and it’s difficult to find employees with many years of experience who haven’t had some type of mentor in their career. Although many people have had mentors in their lives, formal mentoring programs are not as prevalent. In fact, less than a third of participants reported that their organization had a formal mentoring program in place (29 percent), although 37 percent said their organization had an informal one. The remaining third did not have any type of mentoring program—formal or informal.

*Mentoring Matters: Developing Talent With Formal Mentoring Programs* focuses on formal mentoring programs. Oftentimes, this relationship is beneficial for mentors and mentees. Mentoring also differs from coaching, which is a formal relationship focused on improving a specific behavior or performance area to resolve issues or handle aspects of the job.

**Participant and Organization Demographics**

ATD Research surveyed 969 participants about their organization’s mentoring programs. A majority of respondents indicated that they work for a national organization, with operations in only one country (61 percent). Nearly eight in 10 participants indicated that their organization is headquartered in North America. Forty percent of respondents were from small organizations of fewer than 999 employees, while just over a third of participants were from organizations with more than 5,000 employees.

Participants were most likely to report that they were a manager, supervisor, or team leader (37 percent), followed by individual contributor (28 percent). About three in 10 respondents were directors or executives.

**Key Findings**

These key findings are based on responses from the participants whose organizations had formal mentoring programs (n = 285).

- The top three benefits mentees received from participating in mentoring programs were professional development (36 percent), a better understanding of organizational culture (30 percent), and developing new perspectives (27 percent).
The top three benefits mentors received from participating in mentoring programs were developing new perspectives (59 percent), developing leadership skills (49 percent), and gaining insight into the organization (38 percent).

The top benefits organizations received from mentoring programs were higher employee engagement and retention (50 percent), supporting growth of high-potential employees (46 percent), stimulating creation of intra-organizational relationships and collaboration (37 percent), and knowledge management and transfer (37 percent).

Results showed that 57 percent thought their organization’s mentoring programs were effective to a high or very high extent at achieving learning goals, while 38 percent thought their organization’s mentoring programs were effective to a high or very high extent at achieving business goals. Another 35 percent believed mentoring programs were moderately effective in reaching learning goals; for business goals, the rate was 47 percent.

Existence of Programs and Characteristics

This section examines the various mentoring structures and their effectiveness, as well as the purpose of different mentoring programs. It also explores Cardinal Health’s mentoring program, which was implemented in 2015.

Formal Mentoring Programs

It may come as a surprise that organizations have multiple mentoring programs. Of those whose organizations had a formal mentoring program (n = 285), the majority reported that they had two or more mentoring programs (58 percent); about four in 10 said they have one mentoring program at their organization.

Mentoring programs can take many forms. The most common mentoring program was a traditional one-on-one style, where the participants meet in person (Figure 1). Virtual programs are also relatively popular, according to approximately four in 10 respondents. This type of mentoring program is nearly identical to the traditional one-on-one program, except that mentoring takes place in a virtual environment (such as an online meeting room or telephone call) and allows the mentor and mentee to be in different locations. Just less than a third of participants indicated that they have a hybrid program that combines two or more mentoring structures.

Interestingly, almost half of participants said that hybrid mentoring programs are the most effective (47 percent; Figure 2). Traditional one-on-one mentoring programs, although they are the most common, are considered most effective by only 36 percent of respondents. Again, although virtual programs are the second most popular structure, just 4 percent indicated that they are the most effective.
FIGURE 1: MOST COMMON MENTORING STRUCTURES
What type of mentoring structure(s) best describes your program(s)? Select all that apply.

- Traditional one-on-one (in person) 78%
- Virtual (one-on-one, but virtually) 39%
- Hybrid (a combination of any of the listed mentoring structures) 30%
- Group mentoring (a single mentor is matched with a group of mentees) 21%
- Peer mentoring (a group of individuals without a designated mentor lead) 17%

FIGURE 2: MOST EFFECTIVE MENTORING STRUCTURE
Regardless of whether you use them, which mentoring structure do you think is the most effective?

- Hybrid (a combination of any of the listed mentoring structures) 36%
- Traditional one-on-one (in person) 47%
- Group mentoring (a single mentor is matched with a group of mentees) 5%
- Virtual (one-on-one, but virtually) 4%
- Peer mentoring (a group of individuals without a designated mentor lead) 3%
- All other 5%
Mentoring programs can vary not only by how they’re structured, but also by how they’re scheduled. A majority of respondents said that the mentoring program at their organization is calendar based, with clear beginning and end dates (57 percent). Slightly less common is an ongoing schedule (39 percent), where people can join at any time. Just less than a third of participants reported that their organization’s mentoring program schedule is programmatic in that it happens as part of another learning program.

The purpose of mentoring programs varies by organization and depends on the need. Although mentoring is not an ideal training solution for all needs, Jenn Labin believes it works well for issues such as leadership development, attrition, low employee engagement, or a shallow talent pipeline for those moving into management positions. As such, it follows that one of the most common purposes of mentoring programs is leadership development (Figure 3). Professional development, which ranked second, aims to improve professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.

**FIGURE 3: TOP 5 PURPOSES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS**

What is the purpose(s) of your organization’s mentoring program(s)? Select up to three.

- Develop current and future leaders: 56%
- Professional development: 49%
- New employee onboarding: 35%
- Knowledge management and knowledge transfer: 23%
- Organizational development: 14%
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, mentoring programs are considered effective and beneficial for mentors, mentees, and organizations, likely due to effective mentors. Results of the Study showed that organizations should consider formalizing mentoring programs, if they haven’t done so already.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the Study, as well as information gleaned from case studies, available literature, and insights from subject matter experts, the following recommendations are offered.

Test with a pilot program.

Before launching a new full-scale initiative, consider testing out a pilot program with a small group. Be sure to evaluate its effectiveness, as well as participant satisfaction and outcomes, to ensure that objectives are met.

Consider following Cardinal Health’s example and test out the new mentoring program with a small cross-section of employees. Then, if any adjustments or modifications are needed, they can be made before the full program has been rolled out.

Use mentors for new hires.

As the Genpact example clearly illustrates, pairing new hires with a mentor is an effective way to onboard new employees. Indeed, in the case of Genpact, it even works with executives and senior leaders during their first year.

Mentoring programs for new hires are particularly useful when an organization uses them to acclimate new employees to the company culture.

Evaluate performance before and after the program to measure effectiveness.

Jenn Labin encourages talent development professionals to continuously monitor and evaluate mentoring programs. Ideally, she says, evaluation should occur once a month and involve different methods, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
**Provide clear guidelines and training for all involved.**

The majority of respondents reported that their organization provides training for both mentors and mentees and also provides a welcome guide at the start of the program. Both training and materials are important for a successful mentoring program. Training is particularly important when considering effectiveness of meeting learning goals. Recall that organizations that train mentors are significantly more likely than those that don’t to report high effectiveness in meeting learning goals. The same was true for those whose organizations train mentees.

According to Jenn Labin, there are a variety of materials that program participants could receive, including instruction guides, mentoring agreements, and a list of discussion topics. By providing these resources, program participants will be better equipped and the program will be more likely to succeed.

**Get buy-in from senior leaders.**

For any learning program to succeed, it’s essential to get senior leaders on board. Anna Marie Crowley suggests asking senior leaders a simple question to win them over. Who in your career has given you the best advice or guidance? Most senior leaders have had some type of mentor—formal or informal—during the course of their career, so reminding them of that is likely to persuade them to support the program, and perhaps even convince them to act as a mentor.

At Wyndham, the CEO took on the role of mentor and gave each direct report a goal of mentoring an associate. “We were lucky that our CEO believed in mentoring, and then had a mentee, that was key. Given the enormous role of a CEO, the fact that he could find time to develop and work with an associate in this manner, set a great example for all leaders.”


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► **Anna Marie Crowley**, Vice President, Global Talent Management and Organizational Effectiveness, Wyndham Destination Network

► **Jennifer Labin**, Principal, TERP Associates, and Author, *Mentoring Programs That Work*

► **Susan Moss**, Program Manager, LEAD, Mentoring, Sponsorship, Leadership Development, Cardinal Health

► **Abhyuday Gupta**, Assistant Manager, Corporate Training, Genpact
The Association for Talent Development (ATD) is the world’s largest professional membership organization supporting those who develop the knowledge and skills of employees, improve performance, and achieve results for the organizations they serve. Originally established in 1943, the association was previously known as the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD).

ATD’s members come from more than 120 countries and work in public and private organizations in every industry sector. ATD supports talent development professionals who gather locally in volunteer-led U.S. chapters and international member networks, and with international strategic partners. For more information, visit www.td.org.

ATD’s researchers track trends, inform decisions, and connect research to practice and performance. By providing comprehensive data and insightful analyses, ATD’s research products, which include research reports, briefs, infographics, and webcasts, help business leaders and talent development professionals understand and more effectively respond to today’s fast-paced industry.

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Tony Julien is creative director for ATD and served as the designer for this report.
APPENDIX: SURVEY OVERVIEW

Target Survey Population

The target survey population for this Study was talent development and learning professionals from organizations in various sizes and industries. Overall, 969 unique participants completed the survey.

Survey Instrument

The survey was composed of a total of 46 questions, including those geared toward the demographics of respondents.

Procedure

ATD Research distributed a link to an online survey to the target population in May 2017. The survey closed in mid-June 2017.
MORE FROM ATD RESEARCH

Advancing Innovation: High-Performance Strategies for Talent Development

Most companies struggle to achieve high levels of effectiveness in their innovation efforts, according to talent development leaders surveyed by the Association for Talent Development (ATD) and the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp) for Advancing Innovation: High-Performance Strategies for Talent Development. Designed to explore the roles talent development functions play in organizational innovation, the study found a largely untapped area of opportunity. Advancing Innovation also uncovered many complexities involved in driving successful organizational innovation. For more information, visit www.td.org/innovationreport.

The Science of Learning

In the report The Science of Learning: Key Strategies for Designing and Delivering Training, the Association for Talent Development (ATD) presents a framework of five learning concepts and three teaching strategies that contribute to learning. The framework is designed to help talent development professionals enhance their organization’s learning experience by highlighting the key concepts and strategies necessary for them to understand. These concepts and strategies include memory, cognitive load, motivation, connecting to prior knowledge, creating appropriate difficulty in learning, retrieval practice, spacing, and interleaving. For more information, visit www.td.org/elearningreport.

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How Does Your Pay Stack Up?

ATD Research surveyed 1,230 full-time talent development professionals in the United States. The resulting report, How Does Your Pay Stack Up? 2017 Talent Development Compensation, Benefits, and Job Seeker Report, takes a close look at 2017 salaries, compensation, benefits, and job seeker data. Participants were primarily instructional designers or trainers and had more than 11 years of experience in the industry. The compensation, benefits, and job seeker information in this report empowers talent development professionals to benchmark personal earnings and benefits and enables organizations to evaluate their offerings. For more information, visit www.td.org/Salary2017.

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