

IOMA'S REPORT ON

Managing & TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

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THE LEADING SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON LEARNING & PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT

Program Improvement Tips

How Training Managers Are Taking Their Programs Up a Notch

Good news. Training professionals know that their programs must serve a larger purpose than just employee training; that training must have broad applicability to employees' job performance; and that they as well as the people they're training should expect to be held accountable for what they learn. This focus has varied form and substance, IOMA's 2002 *Training Management and Cost Control Questionnaire* shows, but the overarching business theme is persistent.

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e-Learning

8 Common e-Learning Horrors And How You Can Avoid Them

What can be more fraught with the potential for horror stories than your first e-learning launch? As difficult and stressful as those "omigosh" moments are, it's from them that we learn the most. If we can learn from others, so much the better, IOMA believes, so we have uncovered the most common potholes training managers often fall into, and some practical ways to anticipate and smooth them over before they sink your project or derail your budget.

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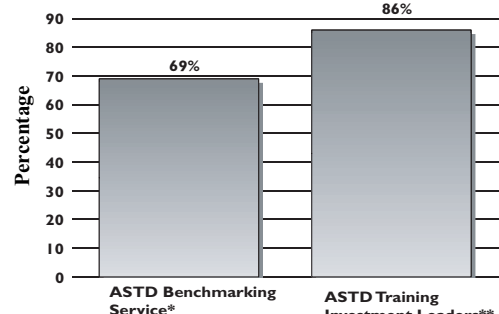
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*Typical U.S. companies
**Cos. with dedicated commitment to employee dev.

(Source: *ASTD 2002 State of the Industry Report*)

The training was so intense, in fact, that Smith and his team decided to make some changes when one trainee described the process as the most stressful week in his life, including the birth of his first child.

“We knew we had to turn down the heat a little after that. A lot of people think training is helping people out with their weaknesses. That’s just damage control. We try to play to people’s strengths.”

A revised version. The company’s strategic plan—to grow from about 32 to 100 U.S. locations—makes it impractical to continue offsite Squad Leader training, Smith says. He and his team have transferred the role-plays and modules into a training workbook that district managers use to train their own supervisors. “It’s slower, but it’s working,” says Smith. “We just can’t turn out new managers as quickly.”

Results: An average store, even with a mediocre manager, will earn about \$220,000 per year, says Smith. After Squad Leader training, some stores saw an increase in sales to \$300,000, a more than 30% jump. “Our focus is to make these guys the drivers of their business. They go back with the knowledge of what they need in their staff, why it’s not jelling, and what to do as a team leader.” One district manager said he encountered all 20 of the role-plays in the last two years. □

How to Make Fast Track Mentoring Work at Your Company

The value of mentoring programs is well known to training managers, not only as an engagement and retention tool, but also as a link to improved performance and productivity. The hard part, in many instances, is convincing harried managers to invest the time to mentor promising employees, even though they too can reap the benefits. Indeed, The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD; Alexandria, Va.) found that training augmented by mentoring increases a manager’s productivity by 88%.

A fast track to mentoring. “It’s a rare organization today that can afford to take mentoring partners offsite for extended training,” says Beverly Kaye, author, speaker, and CEO of Career Systems International (Scranton, Pa.). The alternative Kaye recommends: An easy self-study process or brief facilitated program that highlights the most important aspects of the mentoring process and gets mentors mentoring right away. The following is Kaye’s guide to implementing fast track mentoring at your organization.

What Mentors Do. Similar to—and often

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How to Make Fast Track Mentoring Work at Your Company

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confused with—coaching, a mentoring relationship involves a deeper, long-term commitment to help the “mentee” see the possibilities, both personal and professional, that are available.

A mentor—generally a more experienced person—helps a mentee or partner—generally a new or less experienced person—develop personally and professionally to achieve higher goals and accomplishments beyond his or her current job. A mentor shares personal experience and wisdom, acts as cheerleader and advocate, helping their charge to rise to the next level, both personally and professionally (for a list of selling points for mentoring relationships, see sidebar).

The experience and expertise each mentor brings to the mentoring relationship are unique, Kaye notes. Allowing mentors to begin with their strengths gives them confidence and comfort with the process.

Here are four ways mentors can work with their partners. Encourage potential mentors to start with the role that feels most comfortable to them:

AS GUIDE

- ✓ Help partners in their learning by showing them different paths and warning of potential pitfalls.
- ✓ Share strategic views of the organization.
- ✓ Help partners reflect on their attitudes, skills and patterns of behaviors and whether they help or hinder their success.
- ✓ Ask questions that challenge partners to think, analyze, and probe for meaning.

AS ALLY

- ✓ Provide a risk-free environment in which partners can vent frustrations, share difficulties, and seek other perspectives.

- ✓ Appraise behaviors and help partners see how others perceive them.
- ✓ Talk straight: neither critic nor judge, but a candid and honest partner.
- ✓ Provide specific feedback and impressions—favorable and unfavorable—to support partners’ personal growth.

AS CATALYST

- ✓ Motivate partners’ enthusiasm and initiative.
- ✓ Help partners see their future in the organization with a new insight and vision.
- ✓ See unanticipated possibilities that partners might make happen.
- ✓ Focus on encouraging partners to discuss ideas, visions, and creative concepts that might not find a forum elsewhere.

AS ADVOCATE

- ✓ Champion the ideas and interests of partners to gain visibility and exposure for them.
- ✓ Help partners by opening opportunities for specific learning experiences.
- ✓ Capture the attention of those who can help effectively connect partners.
- ✓ Use a powerful voice to bring partners’ ideas to the people in the organization that have the authority to implement them.

How mentors do what they do. Kaye uses these four simple steps that new or seasoned mentors can use to manage the mentoring process:

Step 1: Extend your reach. Managers often report high job satisfaction when they have the opportunity to share their knowledge, experiences and insight with others. Reaching beyond the daily responsibilities of their job and profoundly affecting the growth and development of others brings managers immediate rewards and the organization long-lasting benefits, Kaye notes. Fast-track mentoring education begins with offering “where and how” help to learning partners.

Step 2: Listen, don’t preach. The mentor’s job doesn’t start with giving advice—it begins

with listening, says Kaye. Mentors need to hear what their partners want from the process. It's also critical to learn about development needs and expectations. Good mentors must learn to explore the focus and understand the goals of their partners.

Step 3: Do more than teach. The traditional mentor was a teacher—but today it takes much more to be a successful mentor. Today's mentors also share their stories, encourage dialogue, debrief their partner's experiences, and help build network connections for their partners, notes Kaye, all of which stimulate learning and transmit knowledge quickly.

Step 4: Define actions for both parties. In order for mentoring partners to take responsibility for making the process work, they need specific action plans so that both parties can measure the progress of their work. A successful process should provide mentors and their partners with specifics on what to do, what to talk about, and how to take action. "The mentoring process can be a great source of personal learning and satisfaction for everyone. But much of its success depends on finding the right balance between doing too much and doing too little."

Everybody wins. While the time-honored practice of mentoring has always been with us, it is now more than ever a dynamic tool for building collaborative relationships, says Kaye. Mentoring may well be one of the most powerful ways to engage and retain both employees and managers. It should also provide a payback for the organization in the growth and development of internal talent.

Where to go for more information:

Career Systems International offers a self-study program called *PowerMentoring*[™]. For more information, call 800-577-6916 or visit www.careersystemsintl.com and click on "Solutions."

A Step-by-Step Guide to Starting an Effective Mentoring Program, by Norman H. Cohen, HR Development Press (Amherst, Mass.)

Learning Journeys: Top Management Experts Share Hard-Earned Lessons on Becoming Great Mentors and Leaders, M. Goldsmith, B. Kaye, & K. Shelton, Ed., Davies-Black Publishers (Palo Alto, Calif.).

Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring: How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Process, by Margo Murray, John Wiley & Sons (New York, N.Y.).

The Art of Mentoring: Lead, Follow, & Get Out of the Way, by Shirley Peddy, Bullion Books (Corpus Christi, Texas).

The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships. By Lois J. Zachary, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer (San Francisco, Calif.). □

Why mentor?

- Attract, retain and engage high performers
- Upgrade employee skills and knowledge
- Promote diversity of thought and style
- Develop leadership talent
- Preserve institutional memory
- Create inclusion
- Develop a line of succession
- Foster a collaborative environment
- Ease the transition to new assignments
- Strengthen competitive advantage

(Source: Beverly Kaye, Career Systems International)

IOMA's Report on Managing Training & Development welcomes news and questions from its readers

E-Mail: *from Internet:*
SPATTERSON@IOMA.COM or

Write: Susan Patterson
Editor
IOMA, Inc.

Phone: (909)-985-2126;

Fax: (909)-985-3375

For subscriber questions, call IOMA's

New York Office at (212) 244-0360