

Structured Mentoring

Corporations today are at the front end of one of the biggest knowledge drains in modern history. In addition to the daily challenges of retaining human capital, corporations are becoming more aware of the importance of critical knowledge that is leaving or is about to retire. Research suggests that up to 50% of the critical workforce that is the keeper of important tacit knowledge and experience is making plans to leave within the next seven years. Tacit knowledge refers to the stock of knowledge within an organization that is not written down or may not even be formally recognized and expressed, but is critical to an organization's long-term success. It is sometimes taken for granted and not missed until it is gone and things for some odd reason do not run the same way. This reality is putting corporations in the position to answer the following kinds of questions:

- We have a major retirement coming. How do we retain this critical knowledge before it walks out the door?
- How can we transfer critical tacit knowledge?
- How can we on-board new hires more effectively?
- How do we ensure we get core functional information to new hires in an accurate and meaningful manner?
- How do we close future knowledge gaps to maintain our competitive edge?

One way to meet this challenge is through development of a mentoring program.

Traditional mentoring has proven to be an effective way to influence professionals to develop their skill sets. Such programs provide the mentee with a dedicated person whose goal is to assist them to evolve in their career. The combination of informal relationship building, networking, and individual mentee goal setting is the core foundation for most mentoring programs. In an informal mentoring program the mentee and mentor figure out their own structure, length of mentoring, and process. A formal mentoring program provides the mentor and mentee with some expectations for time frame, meeting frequency, and set of objectives that define the goals of the program.

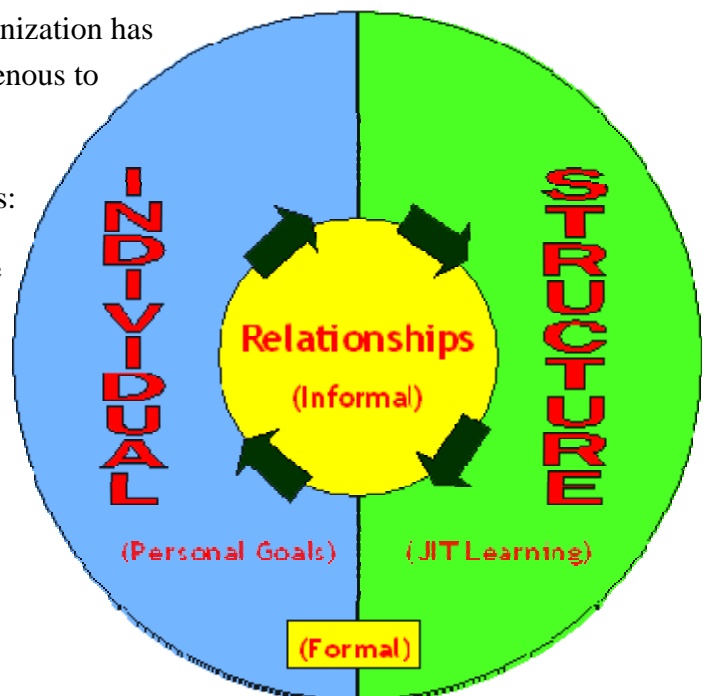
Both informal and formal mentoring can be effective. They can be platforms that support a corporation’s strategic objectives for transferring tacit knowledge, retention, on-boarding new talent, succession planning, and knowledge management. But too many mentoring programs that start out with great promise drift off into the sunset or never get utilized to their potential. Some reasons *why*:

- Mentors and mentees rush into meetings unprepared.
- Mentors are not properly trained in how to be a mentor.
- Mentors are not given a process to follow and are left with the chronic question of what to talk about.
- Mentor and mentee have no process that influences personal accountability.
- Mentoring does not have a process to ensure all mentees are getting the same critical tacit knowledge.
- Mentoring program has not been framed to teach mentors and mentees the importance and value of knowledge transfer for the company’s long-term success.

Structured Mentoring is a process that aligns both formal and informal mentoring. It’s developed inside out and tailored to the core competencies and needs of the organization. Each organization has critical tacit knowledge that is indigenous to its culture.

This strategy has a three-part process:

Discovery of Tacit Knowledge – We facilitate a process that will define and capture the critical tacit knowledge that the organization wants every mentor and mentee to explore and express.



Preparation – We facilitate a process to develop the program’s curriculum, mentoring process and evaluations, administration policies, selection and matching process, mentoring training, and material development.

Implementation – We facilitate a process that launches the program, orients mentors and mentees, monitors and measures the program with a deviation management process.

Howatt HR Consulting Orientations to Structured Mentoring

To learn more about the specifics of how this program is different than most mentoring programs and how it can increase knowledge transfer, how the program is implemented and any other questions, as well see an example of what a final product designed for a Fortune 500 company looks like, let us provide you with a short presentation that will give an overview of the value and structure of the program, requirements, costs, and benefits.

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