MENTORING AS A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR CULTIVATING DIVERSITY

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Mentoring Defined

• The mentor is ordinarily several years older, a person of greater experience and seniority....a teacher, advisor or sponsor

• The broad range of developmental relationships between juniors and seniors and among peers

• Mentoring as relationships constellations or developmental networks
The Mentoring Advantage

- Individuals who have mentors are more likely to be promoted, earn more money, are more likely to have a career plan, are happier with their work, and are more likely to become mentors themselves than those without mentoring experiences.

- Professionals who had mentors earn between $5,600 and $22,450 more annually than those who did not have mentors.
Kram’s Mentoring Functions

- **Career Functions:** Those aspects of mentoring relationships that enhance “learning the ropes” and supporting the individual’s career advancement and professional development.
  - Sponsorship
  - Exposure & Visibility
  - Coaching
  - Protection
  - Challenging Assignments

- **Psychosocial Functions:** Those aspects of mentoring relationships that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, perceptions of organization support and overall effectiveness in one’s professional role.
  - Role Modeling
  - Acceptance & Confirmation
  - Counseling
  - Friendship
Sponsorship

• Providing career-focused support for the protégé’s advancement in the organization or within the profession.
• Mentors help the protégé attain desirable positions or career experiences
• Mentors use his/her influence to support advancement for protégé’s career
• Can be provided by formal or informal mentors, peers or mentors in other organizations
Sponsorship and Diversity

- Giscombe, Blake-Beard, Murrell & Crosby study examined the impact of race and gender on mentoring outcomes from Catalyst, Inc. “Women of Color” national survey
- Overall, only 34% of women of color report having access to a mentor. That percentage is slightly higher for African American women (38.1%) and lowest for Asian American women (26.9%). Hispanic women are in the middle (32.8%).
- Confirmation of “similarity-attraction” effect in that Asians are most like to mentor Asian women (62.5%), African Americans mentors are most likely to mentor African Americans (90.4%) and Hispanic mentors are most likely to mentor Hispanic women (88.9%).
- Women of color with mentors received more promotions, were at a higher job levels and had higher satisfaction than those w/o access to mentors.
- Women of color with white male mentors earned more money and attained a higher job level than those with mentors of color or female mentors; Women with mentors of color or female mentors reported higher job satisfaction and intent to stay.
Role Modeling

• Provides and exemplar or prototype of valued organizational norms, attributions or competencies.
• Mentor serves as a role model for protégé
• Mentor provides a model that the protégé can identify with or aspires to be
• Often can be served via contact with mentors external to the organization
Traditional View of Role Models

• Role models are informally selected by organizational members themselves rather than formally assigned by the organization.
• An observer-role model relationship does not necessarily require direct interaction between the observer and the role model.
• Role modeling only requires identification on the part of an individual who observes a model.
• Individuals are able to benefit by observing role models who have different skills and styles while expending less time and effort.
Role Models – Diversity Matters

• Burt argued that women are unable to duplicate the networks of men because they lack legitimacy in the organization.
• In order to be successful, women need to effectively “borrow” the social network of a male sponsor who is influential in the organization.
• Borrowing of social power leads others to perceive that they are actually dealing indirectly with the male manager (power by proxy).
• Women who borrowed social networks were promoted more quickly than women who attempted to develop their own networks.
Gendered Nature of Role Model Status

- Murrell & Zagenczyk’s social network study of advice-giving and advice-seeking among peer mentoring relationships showed that:
  - Females judged to be role models provided more advice than females who were not seen as role models.
  - Receiving advice within the network was not important in defining women as role models compared to non-role models.
  - Female role models received more formal awards for their performance than female non-role models.
  - Formal recognition or acknowledgement was important for women to be identified as role models. Less important for male role models.
  - Female role models had more strong advice ties than male role models.
Formal Mentoring and Diversity

• “Why make the effort to improve the mentoring process? Isn’t this just window dressing for improving interpersonal communication – a subject line for which senior managers have little time?”

• “The risks of formal mentoring programs usually outweigh the benefits.”
Challenging Access

• Cox & Nkomo study of MBA found significantly less access to mentoring by race
• Dreher & Cox study tracked careers of African American and Hispanic business graduates who were less likely to form mentoring relationships with white mentors than their counterparts
• Thomas reports that limited number of people of color in leadership positions means either cross-race mentoring, outside of unit or inter-organizational mentoring must take place for people of color
• Ragins documented the barriers to mentoring access among female managers within the context of power dynamics in organizations
Different Pathways, Different Outcomes

• Ibarra study showed that networks of high potential minorities contained balance of same and cross-race relationships; low potential minorities’ networks were dominated mostly by cross-race relationships.
• Blake-Beard found significant impact of protégé race on subjective outcomes (compensation satisfaction, career/job satisfaction).
• Thomas found different pathways and timelines for African Americans; those who “broke through” to senior levels had access to powerful mentors through cross-race and same race relationships; successful African Americans built a foundation of competence, credibility, and confidence – especially in early career stages.
Peer Mentoring – An Underdeveloped Resource

• Viewed as “lateral” relationships in contrast to traditional “hierarchical” ones
• Consists of coworkers, team members and colleagues from professional associations and networks
• Frequently cut across traditional organizational or functional boundaries
• Can be a legitimate source for a range of different mentoring functions
Peer Mentoring Relationships

• Murrell, Blake-Beard & Porter’s research examines African American managers peer mentoring based on three types:
  • Information Peers
    – Primary function is information sharing (coaching; role modeling)
  • Collegial Peers
    – Serve as career strategists (exposure & visibility; sponsorship; challenging assignments)
  • Special Peers
    – Provide confirmation and emotional support (counseling; friendship, acceptance & confirmation)
Peer Mentoring & Diversity

• Access to psychosocial support *not* available within the organization

• Source of job-related and technical knowledge to support career advancement and effectiveness

• Provides opportunities for knowledge sharing – that which is not provided by formal training programs

• May act as a “buffer” for negative impact of non-supportive environments
Mentoring is Not a Panacea

• Eby & McManus typology of negative mentoring experiences include:
  o Exploitation
  o Egocentricity
  o Malevolent deceptions
  o Sabotage
  o Harassment
  o Interpersonal difficulty
  o Benign deception
Some Final Thoughts....

• Understanding diversity and mentoring in organizations may be a useful lens for broader workplace issues (e.g., miner’s canary)
• Need to look beyond demographic similarity and toward notions of identity and diversified - dynamic mentoring relationships
• More work is needed on mentoring and diversity as a catalyst for learning and innovation
• How do we use the lessons from research to increase organization’s capability at using mentoring to enhance diversity and effectiveness