

# Why Training Leaders to be Mentors Matters

*By Kimberly Butler*



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In today's business environment, leaders must work faster, better, and more effectively. Making an impact and generating results is imperative. This results-oriented mindset also applies to talent development strategies and specifically to the implementation of mentoring. Although some organizations assume that leaders are innately qualified to be mentors, all leaders become more effective mentors when given the right tools and skills. When organizations prepare leaders for their roles as mentors, it leverages their personal strengths, enhances their mentoring relationships and maximizes organizational impact.

## **Why prepare leaders to mentor?**

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- ◆ Leverage their strengths
- ◆ Enhance the effectiveness of mentoring relationships
- ◆ Maximize organizational impact

## **Leverage Leaders' Strengths**

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Leaders bring many strengths to a mentoring relationship. Mentor Readiness Programs create opportunities for leaders to reflect on their careers, share their stories, and ultimately increase their awareness of all that they have to offer. When leaders recognize their strengths, they become more confident mentors. In turn, mentors adopt a more productive, "strengths-based" approach with their mentees.

Successful mentors rely on their skills to ask powerful questions, listen actively and provide specific, action-based feedback. The right tools, case studies and practical examples give leaders the ability to start their mentoring relationships out strong, while using best practices. When leaders take time to prepare to mentor, they increase their effectiveness.

## **Provide Tools and Resources**

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"If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." When mentors create a road map or development plan for their mentoring relationship, they become more effective. Setting the stage for a productive mentoring partnership is an important part of the process. Mentors use tools such as questions to get acquainted, personal style inventories and outlines to define roles and responsibilities. Mentors and mentees start their partnership out strong when they follow these guidelines and establish trust.

Mentors can also use tools and resources to help their mentees set development goals. Topics such as skill development, business knowledge or executive presence gives mentors a place to start as they guide their mentees through the goal setting process. When mentors are equipped to suggest activities that reinforce learning, overall mentee development is strengthened. Participating on a task force, presenting to a leadership team and job shadowing represent these types of learning opportunities.

## Communicate Organizational Strategies and Goals

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Mentor readiness programs that integrate business and talent development strategies deliver the strongest results. When mentors are aware of the key talents and competencies needed to achieve their organization's business strategy, mentors can focus on these areas in their mentoring relationship. For instance, if a mentor knows that employee engagement is a business priority, he or she can identify opportunities to positively impact the mentee's engagement. With this added level of focus, mentors can look for ways to work with their mentee in ways that directly impact business performance.

For most leaders, one or more mentors positively impacted their lives and career. Implementing a mentor readiness program that leverages leaders' strengths, provides tools and resources, and integrates business and talent development strategies supports a positive mentoring experience and ensures a return on investment for the business.

## What leaders say about mentor readiness programs:

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- ◆ The tool kit and resources will enhance the effectiveness of my mentoring. I won't be just winging it
- ◆ The practical examples were especially helpful to challenge my thinking about how best to support my mentee
- ◆ The discussion outlines will be useful throughout the relationship
- ◆ Connecting with peers and sharing best practices highlighted the importance of developing leaders for the future

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