Enterprise Mentoring, Meet HR

Randy Emelo

Talent managers can make mentoring a critical part of organizational and strategic goals by integrating it with HR.

They are four traits critical to an employee's future success: collaboration, communication, creativity and flexibility. The report that identified these traits — a 2012 IBM CEO study titled "Leading Through Connections" — states that companies can help employees develop these traits by creating unconventional teams, concentrating on experiential learning, empowering high-value employee networks and providing the means to collaborate at scale. One way to do this is through enterprise-wide mentoring, which can impact all employees and create a collaborative knowledge exchange among colleagues.

"Mentoring is a business and a professional imperative and, as such, it is an important aspect of talent development, helps to reduce attrition, improves performance and bridges expertise gaps," said Sheila Forte-Trammell, co-author of *Intelligent Mentoring: How IBM Creates Value Through People, Knowledge, and Relationships.* "Because mentoring has the potential to help the organization develop a repository of requisite skills, and in essence develop the talent pool, everyone in the organization is in a position to gain professional and business benefit."

Must-Have Traits

These traits are critical to an employee's success:

- Collaboration.
- Communication.
- Creativity.
- Flexibility.

To amplify these benefits, talent managers can make mentoring a critical part of their organizational and strategic goals by integrating it with key HR processes, including talent management, performance management and learning management.

Connect the Dots for Holistic Learning

Health care company Humana's mentoring program — which is available to more than 30,000 associates — is aimed at driving innovation and growth by enabling associates to learn from one another by sharing knowledge and experience.

"Our focus at Humana is taking down walls that separate people within an organization," said Pam Cradic, learning analyst for the talent management and development team at Humana.

The company connects its online mentoring software — The Knowledge Exchange — to its talent management efforts. "Where our talent management system is the macro view of developing Humana's talent, The Knowledge Exchange offers a micro view in which associates can own their development through informal experiential learning and development," Cradic said.

Connecting mentoring to talent management is a natural fit for many companies, and is a way mentoring can fit seamlessly into other HR processes.

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"Given the advantages that mentoring presents, it is important to integrate mentoring in the overall learning strategy of the organization. The power of mentoring is minimized if it is seen as a stand-alone learning activity," Forte-Trammell said.

Figure 1 indicates how enterprise mentoring can go hand-in-hand with talent initiatives, including performance management, learning strategy and workforce planning. But the greatest value comes from integrating mentoring with organizational competencies, individuals' expertise profiles and company databases so employees receive a complete, seamless system. This allows them to have a one-stop shop for all development needs; it also connects employees' actions within the mentoring software back to organizational programs and strategic goals.

"Programs cannot be delivered to the workforce in a disjointed and unstructured manner," Forte-Trammell said. "Instead, there should be an obvious line that connects all HR programs, and employees should be made aware of the linkages and how to leverage the various components of the HR programs."
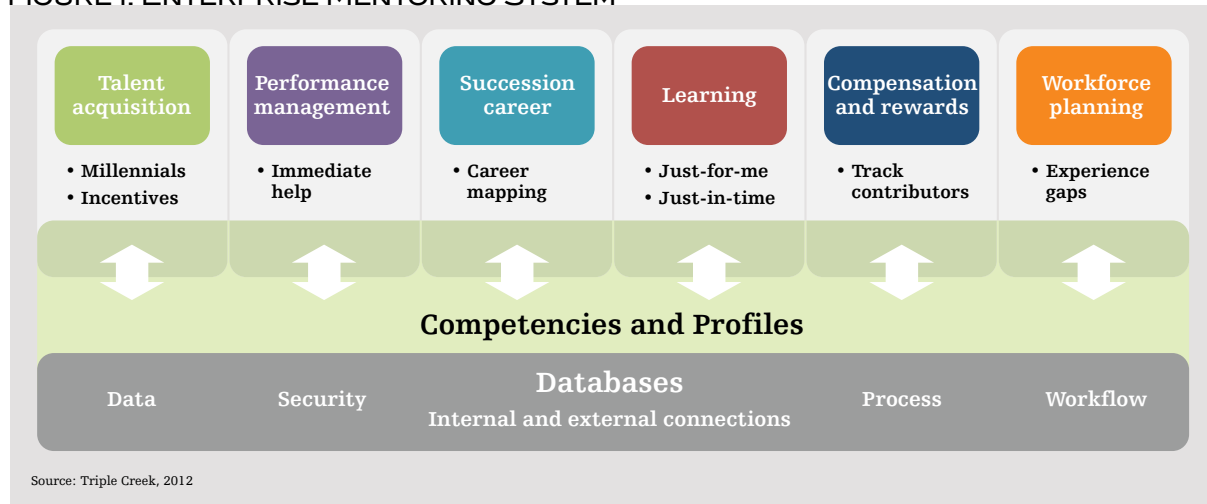
Sounds good in theory, but here's how organizations can put this into practice when it comes to mentoring (Figure 1).

Talent acquisition: Employees want open and inclusive mentoring, not antiquated programs where people meet face-to-face so a senior employee can guide a junior one, or where employees have to be part of a select group to participate. Organizations are opening up mentoring programs across the enterprise and using them as an incentive to attract new employees — millennials in particular.

Companies also can leverage mentoring to expand in-house talent by using it to identify existing high-potential employees in the workforce — looking at the skills, knowledge and experience people share and gain through mentoring — and building a more robust talent pipeline based on that information.

Performance management: When it comes to performance management, companies use mentoring

Figure 1: Enterprise Mentoring System

Talent acquisition	Performance management	Succession career	Learning	Compensation and rewards	Workforce planning
• Millennials • Incentives	• Immediate help	• Career mapping	• Just-for-me • Just-in-time	• Track contributors	• Experience gaps

Competencies and Profiles

Databases
Internal and external connections

| Data | Security | | Process | Workflow |

Source: Triple Creek, 2012

as a follow-up tool to performance reviews because enterprise mentoring allows employees to get immediate help with performance needs.

"Many of our front-line leaders and team leaders ... seek the opportunity to engage their teams in the accomplishment of goals," Cradic said. By using The Knowledge Exchange, Humana leaders can put the tools for success directly into each employee's hands so they can address their own unique performance issue in a way that makes sense to that individual.

Succession planning/career guidance: Humana also uses mentoring for succession planning and career guidance, which is a common integration point for many companies. Mentoring has been used for decades to groom the next generation of leaders, but this can sometimes lead companies to only choose select participants. As companies broaden the use of mentoring among the entire workforce and offer

Learning: Personalized learning that occurs at the moment of need is effective, but accomplishing this on a large scale can be daunting for companies and often can miss the mark for employees if organizations go about it in a traditional way, such as classroom learning or e-learning.

An increasing number of companies are turning to online mentoring for just-in-time learning. "Mentoring is a key experiential and tacit learning tool, which offers a practical approach to the learning process," Forte-Trammell said. "Experiential learning creates opportunities for practice, application, observation and timely feedback in a safe environment. This atmosphere fosters collaborative learning, learning agility and speed to competence." Implementing it on a large-scale enterprise basis amplifies those effects.

Compensation and rewards: People want to be acknowledged and rewarded for their contributions. Recognition is among the top four drivers most likely

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it as a development tool to all employees, it has the potential to become even more powerful, reaching the masses and helping to build deep and perhaps untapped future leadership reserves.

Employees can use mentoring to connect with peers from other functions or other levels in the organization as a way to explore and analyze work opportunities and future career direction. By collaborating with peers from diverse work backgrounds, they can network with colleagues they normally wouldn't network with, share aspirations with people who may have a different take on situations, and get guidance and feedback on areas they may not have looked at before. As a bonus, these interactions can facilitate more productive work relationships.

to get the highest return on investment when it comes to employee engagement, according to Aon Hewitt's 2012 Global Employee Engagement report.

Online mentoring can play a role by enabling employees to build their online reputations and receive accolades for their contributions via the program. In turn, companies can track and determine which employees generously give their knowledge and insights and identify where roadblocks exist. Identifying top contributors and vetting their input through the lens of how others experienced them in mentoring engagements can help companies locate hidden talent and keep critical knowledge sources engaged in the process.

Workforce planning: Like many companies, Humana actively looks for ways to close experience gaps within its workforce. While methods such as formal training and classroom learning can help accomplish this, the company also has begun to incorporate its online mentoring program into the mix. Helping people close their experience gaps through practical, personal mentoring means that employees can become more productive and effective in a shorter time span.

"Because of the experiential and practical nature of mentoring, employees who engage in this relationship are in a position to gain insights on new and different perspectives on ways to execute various tasks," Forte-Trammell said. Employees are able to apply new knowledge more rapidly without losing time on the job.

Make It Work

As talent managers begin to integrate enterprise mentoring into HR processes, they need to analyze the situation and put together a plan of action. These questions can help start the process:

1. What are the organizational and individual benefits that mentoring can bring to an HR program or initiative?

2. How can mentoring be integrated into the HR program or initiative?

3. What core organizational goals can mentoring align with to help amplify the benefits of both the HR process and of mentoring itself?

4. How can this support and align with overall strategic imperatives of the organization?

5. How do talent leaders intend to measure overall value for the organization?

6. What program design elements should be considered to integrate mentoring with a particular HR process or initiative?

7. How can integrated programs impact the entire organization?

8. What does success look like for these integrated programs?

9. How can talent leaders gain support from other stakeholders throughout the organization, as well as from individual employees?

Ultimately, the programs will be shaped by organizational factors, but the key is to never forget that mentoring is about personal learning and practical application. ™

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Six: Redesign Work to Suit Existing Skills

When AltaMed Health Services, a community health center in California, couldn't recruit enough registered nurses, it redesigned its jobs to concentrate the most highly skilled portion of the work into a smaller number of critical jobs.

Instead of having registered nurses interact directly with patients, AltaMed placed them in leadership and teaching roles to oversee licensed vocational nurses and certified medical assistants — positions that require less training and skill, and for which there is a greater supply of talent.

Alternatively, work can be redesigned so there is more flexibility in how skills are deployed. People can be moved around from project to project based on rapidly changing business needs instead of on the notion of who is "owned" by a part of the organization.

Seven: Create Transparency

To develop the skills organizations need, employees must know what those skills are and when and where they are needed. However, only 49 percent of the 1,088 U.S. workers surveyed in a 2011 Accenture Skills Gap Survey agreed their organizations provided clear visibility into skills required in different roles and career paths. Further, only 20 percent of workers reported that they developed new skills in the past five years based on the needs of the job market, and only 28 percent understood the skills required in their chosen career when they embarked on it.

To solve this dilemma, not only are leading companies posting jobs on a centralized site along with behaviors and skills, but they're increasingly providing more visibility into work by offering realistic job previews, video tours, simulations of actual work and video interviews of employees describing their work.

L'Oreal's Brandstorm program, for example, allows people to compete in teams to help them assess and try out their potential marketing skills. Many organizations now work with educational institutions to communicate their skill needs and to provide input into curricula.

These seven strategies can help organizations close their most daunting skills gaps. Whether it's broadening their view beyond specific skills, mining talent hidden in the organization, tapping external talent through creative means or leveraging external talent networks, these strategies can help organizations achieve a true talent advantage. ™

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