

Peer Mentoring for the New Employee

Making a Difference One Employee At A Time

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Developing the New Employee

Mentoring is the history of business itself. At one time the one-on-one guidance of a wise master to his/her apprentice was the only way someone could learn a trade. A person did not go out and get a job – he or she went out and recruited a mentor. With the advent of the industrial revolution, businesses changed from small to large operations and mentors were replaced with managers, supervisors and training departments.

The one-on-one guidance of a mentor was relegated to the up and coming employees who were being groomed to take rise to the top. This “old boy network” served its purpose well until minorities started coming into the workplace and it became obvious that those employees who had a mentor did better than those who did not, and minorities were far less likely to have a mentor than their non-minority counterpart.

Thus mentorship, which had become a well-understood but still unstructured corporate program, now became a structured Human Resources program for targeting women and minorities for success.

Today businesses face an aging workforce, an impending labor shortage and a severe skill shortage. At one time, employers could hire people who knew how to be employees and how to do the job with little or no additional training. That has been sometime ago.

Soon it became apparent that many employees knew how to be employees but did not have the skills to do the job. Thus corporate skill training was born much to the unhappiness of supervisors who complained that they did not have the time to train people to do the job and supervise them too.

However today we face another problem – we know how to train new employees on how to do the job but we are now seeing more and more employees who simply do not know how to be an employee. What do we do? Create a training program for “at risk applicants” to teach them how to be an employee? If not that then do we hire them and hope for the best?

The answer may be found in a new application of the oldest training tool...mentoring. Peer mentoring to be exact. The goal is to help the employee to stay on the job long enough to learn the job.

Mentoring this “at risk” population requires three things.

1. An understanding of the population to be mentored.
2. Training of the peer mentors.
3. Ongoing oversight by Human Resources for the entire process.

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BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE MENTORING

By pairing up a new employee with someone in the company who is more experienced to serve as an employee coach or mentor, you will offer encouragement, promote growth and develop employees while helping them make a greater contribution to the organization. Employee coaching and mentoring can also help an already effective employee become even more productive in his or her current position. Some of the benefits of implementing an employee coaching or mentoring process include:

- The mentor or coach can provide individual assistance to employees who encounter difficulties or who are experiencing the challenges of transition as new employees.
- The availability of a mentor or coach can empower the employee and demonstrating the employer's commitment to that person's success.
- The mentor or coach can help to establish a climate in which employee personal and career growth can take place and create a safe place for employees to bring questions and problems.
- The mentor or coach can model appropriate business behaviors that you want to cultivate in the employee.
- The mentor or coach can keep the employee informed about opportunities where his/her skills dovetail with the company's goals and strategies.

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEE MENTORING

Mutually commit to the concept of coaching

Acknowledge employee potential and show appreciation

Elicit cooperation and encourage employee ideas

Together, establish mutual goals and choose a course of action

Provide positive reinforcement for improvement

Hold periodic review meetings

Place value (thus reward) on the mentoring role

EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

Source: This is an excerpt from
Developing The New Employee Trainer's Manual,
written by Richard Pimentel

- (1) _____ Following company rules and regulations.
- (2) _____ Showing up for work on time; calling in promptly when late or sick.
- (3) _____ Maintaining good personal hygiene and dressing appropriately.
- (4) _____ Exhibiting appropriate interpersonal behavior with coworkers and customers.
- (5) _____ Maintaining professional integrity in conflict situations and managing moods and emotions appropriately.
- (6) _____ Being willing to speak up when there is a problem.
- (7) _____ Being able to respond well to constructive criticism and being able to give criticism in a constructive way.
- (8) _____ Treating coworkers with respect; not using inappropriate language in the workplace; not flirting with or teasing coworkers or telling racist or sexist jokes.
- (9) _____ Looking for ways to use time, skills and talents to the advantage of the organization; not waiting for someone else to tell them what to do but seeking ways to maintain productivity.
- (10) _____ Maintaining performance standards.
- (11) _____ Being willing to share and give credit where credit is due.
- (12) _____ Being honest regarding compensation, hours worked, etc.
- (13) _____ Being loyal to the company in terms of not sharing product or service secrets or customers with competitors.
- (14) _____ Not lying, cheating or stealing from the company, one's coworkers or customers.
- (15) _____ Not drinking alcohol or using drugs during work hours; not coming to work having consumed alcohol or drugs.

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

INSTRUCTIONAL SUMMARY

NOTES

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1. Write the following words across the top of a flipchart or overhead transparency and state that, according to the survey conducted prior to the design of this workshop, the majority of employers reported that most work-related problems fall into one of these three categories.

Attendance

Production

Behavior

2. For each of three categories, ask the following questions and record the group's responses under the appropriate column.

(a) *Can you cite some examples from your own workplaces of problems relating to (Attendance) (Production) (Behavior)?*

(b) *As we look back on the problems you have identified, at what point do we typically bring to the employee's attention that there is, in fact, a problem - the first time, second time, third time?*

Most people will agree that it is the third time or after that the employer will actually realize that there is a problem.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

3. Look over the responses recorded on the flipchart and note that most of the strategies for conflict resolution or problem correction:

(a) *Assume a minimum level of sophistication.*

(b) *Assume that employees are informed and understand what is being expected of them.*

(c) *Assume that employees know how to correct or better the situation.*

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4. Pose the following question to the group:

How would your strategy change if you knew that we were dealing with someone who had not worked before and did not know what rule he or she was breaking?

Look for responses that reflect the need to address problems when they first present themselves. The trainer should point out that not addressing a problem in the beginning with an inexperienced employee assumes that they knew it was a problem and assumes that there will be some self-correction. But if an employee does not know it is a problem, there is no chance of self-correction. The longer the supervisor waits to confront the issue, the more likely that he/she will be frustrated and angry during the confrontation.

5. Pose the following two questions to the group:

How would your approach change or differ if you knew that the employee had very low self-esteem and/or a lack of confidence in his/her ability to succeed in the workplace?

*What do you consider to be the most important elements or factors of a **healthy and constructive confrontation** with an employee who is having a problem in one of these areas?*

Elicit feedback from the group.

In the case that any of the following points are not made by someone in the group, bring them up yourself:

- **Tell the employee what he/she is doing well, and provide ways in which he/she needs to improve;**
- **Be unemotional in his/her evaluation with focus on behavior, rather than the person;**
- **Communicate the impact of the employee's behavior on the rest of the workplace;**
- **The need for a clear cut and simple plan for correction;**
- **The necessity of ensuring that the employee understands and is in agreement with the plan;**
- **The need to give weekly, sometimes daily feedback in the beginning; and,**

- **The importance of giving positive feedback once the employee begins exhibiting the desired behavior (celebrate that which you want to see more of!)**

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If you would like to receive more information on Rich Pimentel, his presentations and products that he has authored contact Milt Wright & Associates, Inc. (800) 626-3939 mwright@miltwright.com

About the Presenter

Richard Pimentel is nationally renowned as a consultant, keynote speaker, professional trainer and author on job retention, attitude change in the workplace, Disability Management return to work, workers' compensation, and cost containment. His vast and penetrating knowledge about issues related to disability and people of difference is communicated with humor and conviction.

Richard Pimentel is an acknowledged authority on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). His training has not only successfully enabled managers and supervisors to participate in cost reduction initiatives and implementation of policies and procedures to reduce work site accidents and re-injuries, but has also helped employers dispel stereotypes and embrace diversity.

Nationally acclaimed publications authored by Richard Pimentel include: **Developing the New Employee: Retaining and Enhancing a Diverse Workforce, The Taking Control Process: Beyond Light Duty, The Job Placement – ADA Connection, The Workers' Compensation ADA Connection, and The Return to Work Process: A Case Management Approach.** He has also produced award winning training videos **Return to Work for Employees and Supervisors, and Taking Control: The Workers' Compensation Return to Work Connection.**