

The Mentoring Mindset

By: Debbie Peterson

Hello, AENC! It was such a pleasure to meet many of you this year at the Fall Conference, and I really appreciated having a chance to share my mentoring program, The Successful Mentoring Mindset, with you. I wanted to follow up with you and share some strategies to continue to move forward.

As an individual, mentoring is such a powerful tool to advance in your career. Why? Because it's a short cut for you. People enjoy helping other people, and mentoring is just that. It is when someone more experienced or knowledgeable helps guide someone less experienced or knowledgeable. That's it! Mentoring allows you to have a way to brainstorm with others. It can open doors for you through introductions. There is also research that points to mentored employees being more *promotable*.

As an organization, it's not only a way to advance and create career paths for your employees; it is a way to foster loyalty and engage and retain your teams because they feel valued. Mentoring is a way to more deeply incorporate diversity initiatives into your company when you have people mentoring one another from different backgrounds, ways of thinking, and cultures. It is a way for your emerging leaders to incorporate what they have learned to build their leadership skills by mentoring others.

The best part? It doesn't have to cost a lot of money.

But where do you start if you don't have a mentoring program in place in your organization? Good question; let's dive into some options.

As an individual, you have to be willing to *ask* for what you need from a mentor so you need clarity on what that is. What is out in front of you in your career? What's next for you? Getting curious and uncovering where you would like to go in your career is essential. Are you looking to map out a career path? Get promoted? Acquire more or different skills? You have to determine this first because then you know what type of mentor you are seeking.

Types of mentors you say? Yes! Here are some types of mentors or mentoring categories to consider.

Career Mentors – This is someone you meet with routinely and for a specified period, say 6 or 9 months or more. In a more formal career mentoring relationship, you'd be wise to have structure and goals around what you wish to accomplish with your (and their) time. This gets you the guidance you need to develop your career overall.

Group Mentoring – This is when someone mentors a group of individuals. I recently spoke at a women's affinity group on this exact topic, and essentially, I was mentoring them on mentoring. Perhaps someone in your office is willing to present their knowledge about a specific topic to a group of people for a group mentoring experience. What do you want to learn? Chances are there are others who do too.

Mentoring Moments – This happens when you make an ask for a specific reason and at a particular time but it's not long term. Perhaps you want to increase your negotiation skills so the next time someone in purchasing has a call or meeting, you can sit in and then debrief after. Maybe you want to understand contracts better, so if you know someone from legal, you might ask them to explain some of the legal jargon in layman's terms.

There are also **Virtual Mentors**. These are the books you read, the courses you take, coaches you work with, YouTube videos you watch, all for the goal of increasing knowledge, skills and gaining advice and wisdom.

As an organization or team leader, you can take your employees through the same process. Do they know what they want next in their career? How do they want to develop? What opportunities might they be fit for or have an interest in? If they don't know, then that's your starting place. Ask them to map out where they'd like to be in 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years. This critical thinking can be difficult, especially for those in your organization that aren't used to thinking this way, but it's a valuable development tool just waiting to be utilized.

Once you have accomplished this, then you can better understand what types of mentors your employees need. Of note, not everyone wants a mentor and not everyone wants to advance, and that's ok. There can still be opportunities for you as an organization. Perhaps you have someone within your company who has been there for a considerable time. They have knowledge that is invaluable and waiting to be shared. How can you make that employee feel valued for their loyalty to the organization by mentoring others?

You can also assess your employees to see how they show up at work and where the coaching and mentoring opportunities are. I use the Predictive Index with my clients because it solely focuses on work drivers and motivations, not just personality. Others, like DISC or Meyers Briggs, could be useful too.

As an individual, once you have found a mentor, or as an organization that has placed an employee with a mentor, put a process around it. **Here are some questions to help you do that.**

What is the goal of the partnership?

How often will you meet?

What can be shared between the mentee and mentor to help the process? This might be any assessments, career values, goals, or focuses.

Where does the process need to go? As a mentor, you don't have to do it all. You may find that someone needs to develop their negotiation or presentation skills, and that's not your bag. That's ok; who does it well and is willing to assist?

Is the personality a fit? People are beautifully diverse, and not everyone learns the same way or operates the same way. Mentoring is a relationship like any other and the personalities have to gel.

Whether you are an individual looking to advance to a new level in your career or are an organization who wants to develop more talent, or create a pipeline for succession planning, consider mentoring. Be open to the many ways it can allow you or your employees to step up and show up in a new way!

Here's wishing you all the clarity you deserve!

Debbie Peterson of Getting to Clarity is a keynote speaker, career coach, and mastermind host focused on helping professionals to create career success without sacrifice. You can find out more at www.DebbiePetersonSpeaks.com and www.GettingToClarity.com