MENTORING: ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES, APPLICATIONS IN A SALES AND MARKETING CAREER

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ABSTRACT

Mentorship can be developed in one of two ways: formal and informal. In a formal program, the mentor and the mentee can define clear objectives and use a certain approach to accomplish goals, and the mentees are paired with mentors to serve their needs. Studies that specifically study the key constructs of effective mentorship in a sales management context are limited and lack insight from sales managers and individuals with significant sales management experience. The purpose of his study is to identify the antecedents and consequences of effective mentorship in the sales management context and identify how to operationalize key constructs of effective mentorship in a sales environment.

INTRODUCTION

Effective Mentorship defined as "to transfer knowledge or psychological support related to work, professional and/or personal development" Adam (2002); (Guillot, 2014). This study aims to identify the antecedents and consequences of effective mentorship in the sales management context and identify how to operationalize key constructs of effective mentorship in a sales environment. Prior studies have shown that mentorship utilizes resources to teach critical thinking, develop interpersonal skills, increase employee engagement, and transfer company knowledge (Iverson, 2019). Studies that specifically study the key constructs of effective mentorship in a sales management context are limited and lack insight from sales managers and individuals with significant sales management knowledge. The million-dollar question is how do sales managers implement an effective mentorship program and operationalize key constructs identified through literary research. A successful mentoring program can aid in developing workplace talent, identifying future organizational leaders, increasing employee engagement, developing leadership skills, integrating corporate and institutional knowledge, improving employee retention, increasing job and career satisfaction, and projecting a positive employer brand (Iverson, 2019). This study aims to identify constructs that effective mentorship entails and how to operationalize said constructs.

Mentorship can be developed in one of two ways: formal and informal. In a formal program, the mentor and the mentee can define clear objectives and use a certain approach to accomplish goals, and the mentees are paired with mentors to serve their needs. The formal program structure offers a high chance that goals will be accomplished. In an informal program,

two people develop a mutual interest in each other's career progression. In this case, enthusiasm and a willingness to participate fuel the success of mentoring (Guillot, 2014).

Historically, workplace organizations have the best results with a formal mentorship program paired with training. Implementing a mentorship program has significant and lasting effects on organizations, such as helping organizations attract the right people, develop future leaders, and maintain long-term loyalty. Mentoring also allows participants to develop long-term connections with an individual. In a competitive hiring environment, any extra advantage in attracting and retaining the best employees is critical. Mentoring offers an attractive option for companies seeking to develop tomorrow's leaders and stay competitive in the global war for talent (Bergelson, 2014).

Existing studies have not been completed in a sales management context, which is why a study such as this one is important and relevant to existing sales organizations and managers. Previous studies were completed within a non-sales context or ignored identifying how to operationalize identified constructs and factors. As markets get filled with competition, the need for differentiating between competitors is imperative. Many corporations have begun moving toward implementing mentorship programs within the company as an attraction point for quality candidates that are eager to enhance their career by engaging in a lasting effective mentorship formally created by the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective Mentorship

The Implementation of mentorship programs offers viable results that aid the enhancement of organizational efforts. Within a sales environment, constant training and reeducation is needed to ensure superior service and strong knowledge of organizational structure is present. Mentorship programs can be utilized as training tools to aid new and existing sales personnel. Implementing said programs is also a viable alternative to traditional training programs and regiments that otherwise would be very costly.

Mentoring has been defined in many ways. Some authors describe mentoring as a developmental, meaningful relationship within a developing adult. Mentees are developed by transmitting knowledge, experience, and status from the mentor. In doing so, the mentor may be aiding in employee retention (Brashear, et al. 2019). Successful faculty mentorship has been shown to affect faculty recruitment and retention positively. In today's job market companies are fighting for high-quality candidates. Many individuals today are looking for more than just monetary compensation, they want to ensure that the company that they are employed by care about the progression and enhancements of employees. Implementing effective mentorship programs may also aid in the retention of not only employees but valuable company information and knowledge. Retention is vital during this time when turnover is so high for many industries (Gazza, 2004). As organizations begin to grow and employee's age, the accumulation of organizational information becomes massive. As employees begin to retire earlier, it is essential to have controls in place where organizational knowledge is passed onto new and existing personnel of the firm. The implementation of mentorship programs may enhance the level of organizational commitment that is held by the sales individuals.

Effective mentorship programs provide benefits to organizational efforts and aid in the enhancement of the workforce but individuals within the relationship experience benefits of their own that provide massive improvements to both professional and personal life. Sales personnel occupy a position responsible for a plethora of responsibilities. Salespeople are expected to be the front face of the organization, which means individuals are demanded to deal with emotional, physical, and social roles. With the added responsibility and boundaries, salespeople have to work through, the use of a mentor may provide emotional and technical relief, which is said to be more useful within a selling environment (Brashear, et al. 2006). Mentoring is a form of relationship that is used to develop support for the advancement of an individual's career and organizational work experience. Mentors can be described as an individual who has experience and expertise to provide support in advancing in one's career. A primary factor in the mentoring relationship is the extent to which the mentor and protégé identify with each other and the extent to which the mentor sees him or herself in the protégé. It appears that the majority of supervisor–subordinate relationships do not constitute mentor–protégé relationships (Brashear, et al. 2006). Mentees within an effective mentorship relationship may have a heightened feeling of job satisfaction. Ensuring that managers ensure that employees know what and how to accomplish a task is negatively related to levels of role stress. The presence of job satisfaction is vital for a salesforce setting and can be defined as the extent to which employees understand the duties, responsibilities and expectations associated with the position and organization. Research has linked having a mentor with heightened levels of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has also been linked to role clarity.

Mentees within effective mentorships may receive vital benefits from active participation in the relationship. Mentees need to be clear about their personal goals and what they hope to get out of the relationship. They must be committed to learning and growth, and be proactive in taking the initiative to begin a mentoring relationship. Mentors, on the other hand, need to set clear time-management expectations and what they can offer to the mentee. They need to be engaged and open to sharing their knowledge, expertise, and experience. And most importantly, they must practice the skills of relational intelligence. Intelligent mentors know how to establish rapport in the initial stages of a mentor-mentee relationship creating an initial positive connection. They develop trust by showing vulnerability and authenticity when strengthening their mentoring relationships over time.

Mentors receive essential benefits as well such satisfaction aiding in the professional and personal progression of the mentee. The mentors within an effective relationship may also find themselves rejuvenated in their work positions. Mentors may find themselves gaining new knowledge that may have been foreign to them in the past. For example, social media is a large component of sales and marketing. An older individual who has been in the industry for while may not be familiar with how it works or how to cultivate an audience within specific social media platforms. A younger individual most likely grew up utilizing social media and may be able to enhance the knowledge of the culture related to desired platforms.

Smart dedicated mentors should be fully committed to getting to know their mentees on a deeper level. They practice active listening and ensure to not dominate the conversation doing so can shut down the conversation and cause detrimental long-term effects. Many mentors get satisfaction from helping less experienced or new individuals. Mentors within a mentorship relationship may find themselves rejuvenized and with heightened creativity (Hunt, Michael 1983).

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the key factors that support effective mentorship in a sales/marketing career? The best mentoring relationships are bonded in common interests and friendship. But mentors and mentees also can improve their relationships by establishing goals, engaging in regular face-to-face meetings, and promoting honesty and trust (Guillot, 2014). A successful mentoring program can aid in the development of workplace talent, identify future organizational leaders, increase employee engagement, develop leadership skills, integrate a corporate and institutional knowledge, improve employee retention, increase job and career satisfaction and project a positive employer brand (Iverson 2019).

RQ2: How to operationalize building trust? The level of trust between an employee and his or her supervisor is an important determinant of the amount of mentoring received by the employee. Supervisors are more willing to invest time and effort in mentoring employees who exhibit greater levels of trust in them (Richard, et al. 2008)

RQ3: How to operationalize Purposeful Pairing? Talented proteges can be identified, mentors located and matched with them, and successful training relationships developed that will progress through developmental stages in which skills and knowledge are passed on from successful mentors to organizations' future managers (Hunt, Michael 1983)

RQ4: How to operationalize Role Clarity? Clearly defined mentor and mentee roles and goals will aid and empower participants in the program. The mentee must clearly understand his/her role as a mentee. He/she should identify his/ her desired outcomes of the mentoring program. This will enhance the outcomes of the mentoring relationship (Iverson 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Data was gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Respondents were selected using a simple random sampling method among people with sales and marketing background. These respondents included business students taking marketing classes at a small size U.S. University, a marketing professor, and a sales manager. Participants of the study were interviewed in various group sizes. Prior to beginning the interview individuals received two documents, a consent form that included the purpose of the study and an overview of what was going to take place during the interview and an optional demographic sheet that included age, gender, and ethnicity. Researchers explained the document and allowed time for all individuals to read the consent form in its entirety. After all individuals completed their documents the interview began.

Data Collection

The respondents had to be 18 years of age or older. Even though no specific distribution of gender, age or ethnicity was sought after, the diversity of the three aspects was appreciated as it gave a broader perspective. The table 1 below outlines the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF INTERVIEWEES			
Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Career/ Profession
51	Hispanic	Male	Sales Manager
36	Asian	Female	Marketing Professor
31	Hispanic	Male	Business Student

21		Female	Business Student
21	Hispanic/Asian	Male	Business Student
23	White	Male	Business Student
22	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
24	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
22	Hispanic/White	Female	Business Student
23	White	Male	Business Student
21	White Caucasian	Male	Business Student
21	White	Male	Business Student
21	Hispanic	Male	Business Student
27	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
23	White	Female	Business Student
20	Asian-India	Female	Business Student
22	Mexican	Female	Business Student
21	White	Male	Business Student
20	Black/African American	Female	Business Student
20	Asian-Indian	Male	Business Student
22	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
21	White	Male	Business Student
26	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
22	White	Male	Business Student
22	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
21	Hispanic	Female	Business Student
22	Hispanic	Male	Business Student
21	Asian	Female	Business Student
24	Hispanic	Male	Business Student
21	Hispanic/Asian	Male	Business Student
21	White	Female	Business Student
24	White	Male	Business Student

Data

During a literary study, three main constructs were identified that contribute to the effectiveness of mentorship. Participants were required to possess significant sales management experience Tables 2-4.

Table 2 BUILDING TRUST					
2 students	1 student	Business Professor	Sales Marketing Class	Sales Marketing Class	Sales Manager
-It is important. -They need to work together and allocate a specific amount of time spent together to build trust. -They know trust has been established when the mentee can go to the mentor if they have a problem.	-Trust is having faith in a person and having a transparent relationship. -There needs to be an in-person interaction for it to be established. -Trust is established when the mentee can go to the mentor in case of a challenge	-Needs a long-term effort before its established and the mentor needs to be highly skilled. -The mentor should care personally and professionally. -The mentor should support the mentee's good behavior and ideas.	-Trust is having an honest open communication with continuous feedback. -Achieved if the support is not only professional but also personal/psychosocial. -It is better if the communication is face to face. - Built through active listening, allocating more time to be around each other. -To build trust there needs to be patience between mentor and mentee. Trust has been established when mentee can go to the mentor with any problem. Not necessarily work related.	-Trust is built over time. -It needs to have boundaries to avoid overstepping. -There needs to be respect, understanding and knowledge. -It is built by open communication and needs the mentor to reach out to the mentee and be understanding. -There needs to be transparency both parties talk when they have concerns. -They need to spend more time around each other, there is need for consistency. -Trust is established when the mentee is comfortable speaking to the mentor; when	-It is important. -It requires transparency between mentor and mentee. -Mentors should show support to mentees and work with them. -The mentor does not have to impose his authority on mentees. -Trust is established when the mentor sees more traffic to their office, where mentees are offering new ideas to better the business.

				the mentor and mentee maintain confidentiality; when the mentor gives mentee more important tasks; and when the mentor is understanding and cares about the mentee beyond work.	

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Table 3 PURPOSEFUL PAIRING					
2 students	1 student	Business Professor	Sales Marketing Class	Sales Marketing Class	Sales Manager
-Pairing skilled mentor with unskilled mentee would work better -To be effective, there needs be a consideration of a smaller age gap, that way they can communicate better and better understand each other. -Informal pairing where the mentee gets to choose their own mentor	-Different backgrounds enables them to feed off each other; knowledge & education. -Mentees choose their own mentor	-To be effective, the ratio mentee to mentees should be smaller. -Similarities between mentor and mentee work better: same gender, educational background, family status, age, country of origin.	-Mentor has to be experienced. -Both need to have similar interests; same sex pairing is more effective. -some argued that wider age difference was more beneficial while others think the closer the age range, the better they can relate. -Mentorship should be in a formal setting if the relationship is aimed towards professional growth and informal if its is after	-It needs a mutual effort where everybody plays their part, -Pairing people with different strengths. -The mentee should choose their mentor. -Personality matters, prefer similar personalities. -Some said that intradepartmental is more beneficial as they have the same backgrounds, while others believe that interdepartmental helps to share knowledge. -The mentor and mentee should both be willing and motivated to participate but not feel forced. -They need to have similar backgrounds.	-Has experience with corporate level pairing, where individuals are assigned to mentors (managers). -Mentees should be placed in the place where they will benefit the most. -Strengths and weaknesses should be considered. -Interdepartmental pairing is much more beneficial. -Face to face mentoring is better than remote, it is even better when they are working alongside each other. -It requires patience from mentors.

		personal growth. -Pairing is dependent on areas of interest, knowledge, experience and personality			

Table 4 ROLE CLARITY					
2 students	1 student	Business Professor	Sales Marketing Class	Sales Marketing Class	Sales Manager
-There needs to be a clear job description, -Leads to job satisfaction, the younger mentee can help with technological changes because an older mentor could be stuck in the older ways -Supervision helps, but it should be close when starting out then lesser when the mentee has been in the program for a while	-It defines direction. -Job definition- for the mentee to do their job first before seeking out the mentor for help. -Supervision helps but it should be minimal and not to the extent of micromanaging	-The mentor should be good in selling. -The level of mentor participation matters. -The mentor should be a good role model. -To improve role clarity, the mentor should work with the mentee instead of giving orders.	-When everybody has a clear job description. -Boundaries are set to avoid instances of overstepping. -Supervision is necessary to know whether the mentor can trust the mentee to do the right thing and to give directions to foster success. -Provide feedback but do not focus on the negative. Acknowledge good work too.	-They need to have clear job description, limitations and boundaries need to be established. -It leads to job satisfaction and reduces stress. -As a supervisor the mentor should give details of the job and the mentee should be able to work alone but occasionally check with mentor. -To the mentor, they learn from mentees how	-Detailed job description is needed. -Leads to job satisfaction if they like what they are doing, -The younger generation brings rejuvenation into the company and to the mentors. -Exercise supervision to decide whether the mentees are fit for the position, reconsider mentoring strategy if the mentee does not seem to be getting it. -Boundaries should be set

				to use technology, assuming a wide age gap.	to decrease instances of mentees getting too comfortable and crossing the line

Steps in Operationalization of the Factors

Building Trust: Definition

Trust, which may take time to build, given the confidential nature of the partnership. Build trust with consistency, confidentiality, reflective listening, and respect. Open-ended questions designed to encourage meaningful responses are especially effective (Richmond 2020).

Operationalization

Participants within the study were in a collective agreement that trust needed to be present for effective mentorship to exist. The building of trust takes time and both participants within the relationship must allocate effort toward enhancing the mentor/mentee relationship. Participants placed a heightened focus on communication both physically and digitally. Ensuring that the mentorship relationship contains physical interaction as well as interacting through digital channels such as text, social media, video chat, etc. to ensure that the relationships entail easy and constant communication through a variety of channels.

Participants throughout the study placed a heightened focus on transparency being present to build trust. In order for effective mentorship to be established the mentor must present themselves authentically and openly without deception, with an open line of communication and conversation mentorship can be a viable tool for organizations. Participants in the survey also included viable thoughts about Feedback; surveyed individuals agreed that feedback was essential when it came to the establishment of trust. When asked how much Feedback was necessary for trust to be established, participants explained that it depended on the employee and that each individual should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Purposeful Pairing: Definition

Implementing a formal mentorship program and providing specific points and topics of discussion with objectives and goals that give the foundation to facilitate a strong relationship. Preassigning mentors and mentees provide a point of contact and provide mentees with reliable resources to lead them and cultivate their interests and needs.

Operationalization

When attempting to establish Effective Mentorship the strongest foundation for the relationship is ensuring that individuals are paired correctly. Individuals within the study were all in agreement that Purposeful Pairing was important and was a major factor in the success of a mentorship relationship. Participants emphasized the importance of both individuals placing

effort and commitment to the relationship. The individuals within the relationship must agree to be in the relationship and have positive intentions for the outcome of the relationship.

When participants were asked about experience levels many of the individuals explained that a difference in the level of experience was most vital and offers the best path for successful mentorship programs. Participants were asked what attributes should be considered concerning Purposeful Pairing, common answers included age, education, gender, family dynamic, and national origin.

Role Clarity: Definition

Mentors may receive assistance in doing their job as well as gaining valuable information loyalty and prestige from the established relationship. Mentees receive an increase in role clarity, enhanced promotion opportunities and political protection. Organizational benefits gained from the enhancement of employee talent, vary from heightened performance and job satisfaction to lessen turnover (Brashear, et al. 2019).

Operationalization

When an individual begins a new position or starts at a new company, managers are tasked with the training and upbringing of new employees. When participants were asked about Role Clarity there was a general agreement that individuals will only be able to be successful within their position if they have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities tied to said role. Participants believe that mentors should serve as role models for not only the position but also for company culture. When asked about supervision individuals believed that it was important to Role Clarity but when asked about frequency answers varied, there was a consensus that supervision frequency should be dependent on the individual and what their needs are.

Participants of the survey offered insights into how Role Clarity and Job Satisfaction are interlinked. Participants believed that when individuals have a clear understanding of their role and what is expected of them levels of anxiety are lowered and heighten job satisfaction may be possible.

Managerial Implications

Sales managers have long tried to work on effective mentoring programs to support and retain sales personnel. There are some managerial implications for the sales leaders based on the research:

Sales leaders need to understand trust in the context, define it to all in the sales eco-system, and take steps to improve trust levels. Better communication, optimum interaction and training, increased transparency, encourage feedback, take steps for consultative problem definition and solving.

Sales leaders need to understand and explain the role of purposeful pairing. Estimate the level of experience, commitment to the cause, maturity, and empathy will help in the pairing process. Sometimes understanding and matching demographics of the mentor and mentee may also help in better pairing and hence performance.

Role clarity should be used by Sales leaders in the mentoring situation. Role definition, understanding, and communication of the role's meaningfulness will contribute to the goal attainment; will enhance the performance of sales personnel.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of mentorship programs within sales/marketing firms is a viable choice for managers looking to maximize organizational efforts. Effective mentorship programs offer organizations the ability to not only develop and enhance existing talent but attract individuals who are looking for companies that offer aid in the enhancement of professional and personal achievement. In order for effective mentorship programs to thrive trust must be present within the relationship. Trust is the confidence or belief in another person, idea, or entity. Trust entails the expectation that the other party is going to act in a responsible, honest, and transparent manner. The presence of trust is important in every relationship and requires time and consistency to build. Managers may be able to enhance trust within the workplace by creating an open line of communication where comments, questions, and concerns can be addressed openly, without fear of consequence or embarrassment. Communication should be available both face-to-face and via phone, text, or social media. Accessibility and approachability should be heightened within an effective mentorship program. Individuals within the mentorship relationship should have easy access to one another and dedicate time and energy to the maintenance and progression of the relationship.

The implementation of a mentorship program is not enough; managers should take great care when pairing individuals. Purposeful Pairing is vital to the success and longevity of an Effective Mentorship program. Managers should consider attributes such as age, race, experience, and country of origin, personality should also be considered. Managers should attempt to place both mentees and mentors in positions where they can be successful and grow as individuals.

Effective mentorship relationships allow for heightened role clarity for the mentee and mentor. The mentees receive guidance from a more experienced individual both personally and professionally. Mentees are able to receive company knowledge and get insights into company culture to better settle into the work environment. Mentoring programs provide a role model segment that helps relay necessary skills such as sales, interpersonal skills and technical areas, ultimately resulting in enhanced organizational performance. Role modeling provides a fertile environment for training and learning by the mentee. By doing this, roles are more understood because it was observed in a proper context and not simply explained (Thomas G. Brashear, Danny N. Bellenger, James S. Boles, and Hiram C. Barksdale Jr).

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