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A study of trends in mentoring relationships existing in the Indian IT industry

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Abstract

All kinds of organisations – private or public, large or small, global or local, irrespective of the products they manufacture or the services they deliver practice Mentoring weather formally and informally. While prior mentoring research has yielded significant insights as to importance of mentoring and its outcome for the protégé, mentor and the organization. However, it has been very general and not specific to any sector. Each sector has its own peculiar way of managing people and resources. IT industry is having most robust kind of HRD practices. Thus, it is important to understand the industry specific trends of mentoring relationships. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of mentoring relationships on employees and the organization in some of the companies under Indian IT Sector. It also aims to understand the practices and methodologies followed to pair mentors and mentees that it will enable relationships to be successful & achieve program goals. The research aims to uncover the effect of various mentoring processes across the organizations in this sector, its impact on the employee's career progression, employee satisfaction, and employee commitment and its impact on the knowledge management. This study highlights on employee's perspective about the mentoring program and roles of a mentor with respect to the organisation and with respect to his protégé. The findings of the study also gave an insight into factors that affect the mentoring relationships in an organisation. The primary research was conducted through structured questionnaires and interviews of employees working in the IT Industry.

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1. Introduction

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“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” - John Crosby

Mentoring process receives a lot of attention from the researchers, providing multiple definitions and perspectives on what exactly is mentor, mentee and mentoring process. At a given point of time most of us have experiences mentoring .

Traditionally mentoring is one of the ways used to transfer knowledge. It is described as the matching of a new employee with a more experienced person in the same role. Mentoring is a human resource development process whereby a more experienced (senior) / knowledgeable person (mentor) takes the responsibility of developing and empowering a less experienced (junior) staff member (protégé or mentee). The scope is as broad as organisations would like it to be. Kram (1985) defines a mentor as an individual who is advanced, experienced, and knowledgeable and is committed to career support to protégé.

A mentor willingly invests time, interest, and support to help them with their upward mobility (Peluchette & Jeanquart, 2000 et al). A mentor provides expertise to protégés to help them for different purposes like advance their careers, enhance their education, or build their networks. Mentoring is primarily about learning and developing and is present when there are changes or transitions to go through at work and in individual lives. A mentor recognizes the links between the personal and the professional aspects of a person's life and through the mentoring process organisation can help bring the two individual together resulting in free flowing productivity at work with enhanced self esteem and confidence. Mentoring is win-win situation where mentor, mentee and organizations all have developmental benefits. The organizational benefits of mentoring are numerous and cannot be rejected. Right from empowering its employees, it aligns employees to organization's vision and goals, quickens the pace of integrating new employees into their roles in the organization and also enables employees to grow to their potential.

Organizations can apply mentoring for different reasons. For some it is a means of career development i.e. the mentor helps in the career progression of the protégé. This function includes sponsorship, protection, coaching, challenging the protégé, and giving them exposure. Scandura (1998) calls these mentoring functions ‘vocational career support.’ To others it is a means of improving the protégé’s psychosocial development (McDowall-Long, 2004). Psychosocial mentoring functions involve confirmation and acceptance, counselling, friendship, and role modelling. To some, it is way of helping the organization by monitoring the work of the protégé and assuring they work according to the standards (Covan, 2002). Irrespective of the reason why mentoring was implemented, the value of this method lies in the fact that they help the employees of the organization work more effectively and efficiently.

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993), which suggests that a mentor is a senior experienced organizational member who specifically helps a young professional develop their individual technical, interpersonal, and political skills. However, this differs slightly to the view of Burlew (1991) who states that the definition of a mentoring relationship has changed from the intense, exclusive, multiyear relationship between senior involved in a variety of short-term, low intensity interactions with peers and direct supervisors. Some authors rightly put mentoring as a “A Learning Collaboration”—a developmental caring, sharing, and helping relationship with a focus on the enhancement of the protégé's or mentee's growth and skill development. The focus of mentoring is on the mentee's career and psychosocial needs. Mentoring is just-in time help, insight into issues, and the sharing of expertise, values, skills, and perspectives. Mentors function as a catalyst-an agent that provokes a reaction that might not otherwise have taken place or speeds up a reaction that might have taken place in the future.

Study of different literature concluded that mentoring relationship impacts employee satisfaction, employee commitment, career progression and many other Developmental aspects where as mentor-mentee pairing practices, socialization process, gender, position, age, knowledge sharing, time-period of mentoring effect the mentoring relationship.

There is enough literature available about mentoring process but very specific to the IT industry practices not much is available in the various online and offline literature researcher observed.

2. Objectives and Methodology

After the study of concepts and practice of mentoring in literature, following primary objectives were decided for the study:

- To study the trends and practices of mentoring in IT Industry operating in India.

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