

The magic of mentoring

How to mentor junior employees.

Mentoring junior staff is not just about paying some good deeds forward. It's an important way to ensure the lasting success of your company.

Sometimes we get so caught up in doing our own job that we forget about the bigger picture. But whatever happened to the importance of teamwork?

"In today's aggressively competitive market place, employee productivity is ultimately going to dice between those who go up and those who keep going in circles, regardless of whether you're the CEO, sales person or cleaner," says Simon Kozlowski, owner of Area37, who

works with executives who are struggling to unlock the human potential within their business. He aligns their human performance with their business objectives to achieve supercharged success.

What's important about mentoring is that both parties recognise their abilities and limitations so that future development can occur. Here's how to offer a lending hand.

Clear expectations

"Winnie the Pooh said it best: 'Before beginning a hunt, it's wise to ask someone what you're looking for before you begin looking for it,'" Kozlowski says. Ensure you have clear expectations for the company, yourself as a mentor, as

well as the protégé. Kozlowski offers some questions that are vital to ask of yourself before you try to help the junior staff, such as:

- What is the desired destination – what knowledge, competency or behaviour should a successfully guided/mentored employee be able to demonstrate?
- What is a reasonable time frame in which an employee could gain these outcomes?
- How will success be measured?

Take the initiative

If you want to help out a junior member of staff, reach out. "Talk directly to your junior counterpart about their goals •

and look for ways to help them move forward," Kozlowski suggests. An example could be to let junior employees sit in on senior meetings and then to have a discussion afterwards to embed the learning and highlight why a certain approach was used.

Be more human

We're often told that you shouldn't show your emotional side at work because it's not the right setting. But sometimes showing a bit of your human side can be invaluable to building trust and rapport with junior staff. "Seniors can openly share their own job dilemmas with junior

trap of thinking mentoring is a one-way traffic lane. "Modern workplace mentors must be open to a two-way dynamic exchange of ideas," Kozlowski says. Although as an experienced senior employee you can impart skills and competencies, a junior employee with experience in new technologies could help you learn a thing or two about it. "Having multiple generations not only working together, but listening and communicating with one another, as well as working toward mutual development enriches not only the individuals involved, but the overall organisational culture too," Kozlowski explains.

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staff, including the options they're considering, the various factors they've taken into consideration, why they're making certain decisions, and so on," Kozlowski says. "Inviting insight and perspective is extremely valuable, as it creates room for junior employees to hone their own instincts."

Avoid the obstacles

Of course, there are some difficulties that arise in the case of mentoring junior employees. You might fall into the

Know your limits

Although your guidance could be extremely valuable to a junior employee, try not to keep shouting out orders. Lynelle Smith, governance coach and executive partner at Crest Consulting, says that while it's important to guide junior employees on the right track, 'telling' is not always the best approach to develop them.

"Based on the neuro-science of the brain, a much better approach is to remind them what the target is, and then let

SCARF model by Dr David Rock

David Rock, who coined the term 'NeuroLeadership' and co-founded the Neuro-Leadership Institute, initiated the SCARF model that was developed from years of neuro-scientific leadership research. The model enables a stronger work team and improved engagement with junior staff.

S – Status: make juniors feel important and openly praise or give positive feedback in front of others.

C – Certainty: give instructions, speak about expectations and deal with issues as they crop up.

A – Autonomy: give juniors some control and flexibility. For instance, give them options and allow them to make some choices.

R – Relatedness: make time to connect with juniors, resolving issues together.

F – Fairness: define a fair set of rules and apply them to every team member.

them reflect on whether they're on track," Smith explains. "If you see a junior going off track, don't tell but rather ask them to reflect and decide for themselves what they think will work better, all the while guiding them until their thinking is on track." This is more empowering for younger employees.

How helping helps you

"Senior members of staff need to stay current in their field in order to teach juniors," Smith reminds. "Mentoring therefore continuously develops the senior who needs to stay ahead of his or her game in order to teach the juniors." This has the result of bringing more confidence to the workplace, since everyone improves. When every employee and team is strong, the company can reach its goals. 📁



Text: Giulia Simoio
Photography: visi.stock