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**ASSESSING MENTORING PROGRAMMES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF  
KNOWLEDGE BASED ORGANIZATIONS<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract: Knowledge based organizations understand the importance of developing their employees and the benefits that can be obtained from mentoring programmes. Mentoring programmes play an important role in the organizational development, in achieving new performances and progress. But, in order to determine if a mentoring programme has met its goal, we need a well-structured assessment process. Evaluating mentoring programmes must lead to conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring programme and suggest corrections and improvement if necessary. This paper aims to present some assessment tools specific for mentoring programmes. The focus will be on evaluating the achievement of set goals of the mentoring programme and the benefits obtained or not by the organization.*

**Key words:** *assessing mentoring programmes, mentor's evaluation, mentee's satisfaction*

Mentoring is an one to one efficient learning method that can be successfully used in organizations to engage experienced employees in sharing their knowledge and perpetuate the company's know how to new or less experienced employees. Mentoring can eliminate the discontinuities that appear inevitably to changes in organization. Mentoring programmes are implemented in organizations to facilitate the reach of strategic goals of the company. "Organizations that continuously create value for mentoring achieve amazing results. They report increased retention rates, improved morale, increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction, accelerated leadership development, better succession planning, reduced stress, stronger and more cohesive teams, and heightened individual and organizational learning." [Zachary, 2007, p.6]

The research done on the effectiveness of mentees groups compared to non-mentee groups in the business world show that when the career benefits of mentoring were examined, mentee groups were found to be higher on measures of objective career outcomes, compensation, number of promotions and job satisfaction compared to non-mentee groups. Those on mentee groups were more likely to believe they would advance in their career and were more likely to be committed to their career, then in the non-mentee group. [Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima, 2004]. This demonstrates that mentoring programs have long term impact on the beneficiaries and help in professional development of the mentee.

"Parrot and Parrot (2005) believe there are two critical dynamics that must be present between mentors and mentees: attraction and responsiveness. Mentees must be ready to learn, which is why voluntary involvement is important, and there must be some connection or draw

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between the mentors and mentees to have a truly successful mentoring relationship.” [Byington, p33]

### **Types of evaluation**

Evaluation/quantification implies a complex process of isolation and measurement of the characteristics of a statistical collectivity, recording and encoding the information obtained in this way through comparable and repeatable value system. [Alecuc, 2012, p.140]

Evaluation of mentoring programmes is structured in different types, being influenced on the moment when the assessment process is being done, the dominant function and type of data needed. Ionel Alecuc Ciprian described in his paper *An epistemic analysis of the methods used to evaluate attributive variables*, published in 2012 [Alecuc, 2012, p.139], several types of evaluation that we will translate according to the specifics of assessing mentoring programmes.

Regarding the moment in which the assessment is being done we can have:

- Initial evaluation – being specific at the beginning of the mentoring programme. It can be used to assess the advertising of the programme that is being implemented or to evaluate the training courses for mentors and mentees and assess their knowledge regarding their role in the programme.
- Continuous evaluation – is specific for the implementation phase of the mentoring programme. It can be done through observation of the mentoring activities, interviews with mentors and mentees, discussions with direct manager or clients of the mentee. The main objective of this evaluation is to determine the level of success of the mentor-mentee matching process and monitor change registered in the mentees behaviour and knowledge.
- Summative or cumulative evaluation - usually it is done through questionnaires and gives an overview of the success and flaws of the programme. The questionnaires must generate as much quantitative data as possible that allows the evaluators to report the results and compare with past programmes or similar ones from different organizations.

According to the dominant function, the specialists identified three evaluation strategies:

- descriptive evaluation that identifies the main characteristics of a population;
- diagnostic evaluation that identifies the phenomena and laws governing a community;
- predictive evaluation that anticipates the trends in the evolution of the population under research.

Type of data needed:

- quantitative data offers an overview of the mentoring programme through statistical interpretation. It is useful to evaluate and notice the differences or particularities the target group registers, compare results between departments, gender, age or level of qualification of mentors or mentees, and many other

aspects considered relevant by the evaluators to describe the evolution/success of the mentoring programme.

- qualitative description of the emotions or feelings of the participants at the programme. Interviews, observation and analysis of mentor's journal are methods that we recommend to be used for collecting qualitative data. This type of data is the most important due to the fact that offers the evaluators the in depth view of the mentoring activities and the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Also offers feedback on the matching process done at the beginning of the mentoring programme activities.

### Overview of methods to collect information

Carter McNamara, in his book *Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design, Marketing and Evaluation*, presented the following major methods used for collecting data during evaluations. We will translate the advantages and challenges of each method presented to the specific activity of evaluating a mentoring programme.

**Table 1. Overview of methods to collect information**

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
questionnaires, surveys, checklists	to quickly and/or easily get lots of information from people in a non-threatening way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-can complete anonymously</li> <li>-inexpensive to administer</li> <li>-easy to compare and analyse</li> <li>-administer to many people</li> <li>-can get lots of data</li> <li>-many sample questionnaires already exist</li> <li>- easy to use in organizations with large number of employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-might not get careful feedback</li> <li>-wording can bias employee's responses</li> <li>-are impersonal</li> <li>-in surveys, may need sampling expert</li> <li>- doesn't get full story</li> </ul>
interviews	to fully understand someone's impressions or experiences, or learn more about their answers to questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-get full range and depth of information</li> <li>-see and interpret emotions during the interview</li> <li>-see the involvement in the mentoring activity</li> <li>-get the pulse of the relationship between mentor and mentee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-can take much time</li> <li>-can be hard to analyse and compare</li> <li>-can be costly</li> <li>-interviewer can bias employee's responses</li> <li>-need for experienced interviewer</li> </ul>

<b>Method</b>	<b>Overall Purpose</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
documentation review	to give impression of how program operates without interrupting the program; can be extracted from mentor's journal – a document where mentors record all activities with mentees, annual evaluation reports done by the human resources department, sales record, performance records, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-get comprehensive and historical information</li> <li>-doesn't interrupt the mentoring activities and programme</li> <li>-information already exists</li> <li>-few biases about information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-often takes much time</li> <li>-info may be incomplete</li> <li>-need to be quite clear about what looking for</li> <li>-not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists</li> </ul>
observation	to gather accurate information about the relationship between mentor and mentee and measure the success of the matching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-view the mentor-mentee relation as it is</li> <li>-observe the attitudes and behaviour of mentors and mentees during activities</li> <li>-measure the involvement in mentoring activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-can be difficult to interpret seen behaviours</li> <li>-can be complex to categorize observations</li> <li>-can influence behaviours of program participants</li> <li>-can be expensive</li> <li>-need for experienced observer</li> </ul>
focus groups	to explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-quickly and reliably get common impressions</li> <li>-can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time</li> <li>- can convey key information about programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-can be hard to analyse responses</li> <li>-need good facilitator for safety and closure</li> <li>-difficult to schedule 6-8 people together</li> </ul>
case studies	to fully understand or depict employee's experiences in the mentoring programme and conduct comprehensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-fully depicts employee's experience in programme input, process and results</li> <li>-powerful means to portray programme to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-usually quite time consuming to collect, organize and describe</li> <li>-represents depth of information, rather than breadth</li> </ul>

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
	examination through cross comparison of cases	stakeholders	

Source: adapted after Carter McNamara, *Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design, Marketing and Evaluation*

### The assessment process

“The relation Mentee-Mentor-Organization is a relation of interdependence and mutual support, in which each side wins. ... The mentee benefits assistance, guidance, support and good practice examples in the learning process through his mentor and opportunities of professional development, experiments, trials and applying what he had learned in the organization. An employee, when is nominated as mentor, feels valorised. He benefits of trust, professional recognition and appreciation from the organization and help in implementing projects and new learning experiences together with his mentee. The organization benefits in a short period of time of performance and innovation from the mentee, loyalty and return of investment in the professional training from the mentor.” [Ruginosu, 2014, p. 299].

In order to determine what was the positive changes and if the mentoring program was successful, organizations must carefully develop the assessment process. The aim of assessing mentoring programmes is to rate the satisfaction of the participants at the programme, mentors and mentees, analyse the impact of the programme on the organization and measure the extent in which the objectives set for the programme at the beginning were met.

**Tabel 2. Assessing mentoring programs in organizations**

What to assess	In particular	Methods	Instruments
Mentor training program	training materials trainer knowledge provided the utility of the information sent to the participants	Questionnaires	Training satisfaction questionnaire
Mentor's activity	mentee's satisfaction with his mentor	Questionnaires	Mentee satisfaction questionnaire
	Activities: frequency, type, locations	Documentation review	Mentor's journal
	Involvement and commitment in the mentoring relationship	Observation	Observation sheets
Mentee's activity	Involvement and commitment in the mentoring relationship	Documentation review	Mentor's journal

What to assess	In particular	Methods	Instruments
Mentor's satisfaction	Overview of the program success from the eyes of the mentor	Questionnaires	Satisfaction questionnaire
Mentee's satisfaction	Overview of the program success from the eyes of the mentee	Questionnaires	Satisfaction questionnaire
Impact of the mentoring programme on the organization	Change on the attitudes or behaviours of mentors and mentees	Focus group	Organized with direct managers of mentors and mentees
	Mentors and mentees performances, searching the progress and development of both in the benefit of the organization	Questionnaires Documentation review Interviews	Stakeholders questionnaire Employee's annual evaluation report In depth interviews with direct managers of mentors and mentees and clients
The reach of the objectives set at the beginning of the mentoring programme.	Comparing expected results with outcome	Documentation review	Registered data in the human resources and sales department, for example: employee's evaluation reports, sales reports, performance reports

## Conclusions

Mentoring programmes bring in organizations benefits to all actors involved, mentors, mentees and the company itself. Through mentoring, experienced employees with seniority in the company, guide and support new employees or less experienced one for professional and personal development. The activity focuses on promoting the organization's culture, developing specific skills needed at the place of work, strong and creative teams of employees that bring the organization performance and increased income, career opportunities for talents and staff personal development.

In order to measure the outcome of the mentoring programmes there needs to be set a proper evaluation system. As presented in this paper, this system is complex and covers all steps of implementing a mentoring program and uses many instruments. The important aspects are related to the development and correct use of the instruments that need to address the aims and objectives set for the mentoring programme.

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