Facilitating Protégé Career Development through Roles of Mentors in Software Companies

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Abstract

The success of protégé contribution in any organization today depends more on the type of relationship that an organization establishes with the support of mentors. In this paper, the author is making an effort is making suggestion on how protégé career development can be achieved through the new roles of the Mentors, in the near future. By practising new roles, mentors in organizations can facilitate healthy relationships between the levels of management and in turn, try to achieve individual goals and organizational goals. In this article, the investigator has attempted to explore new roles for effective mentors to contemplate upon in order to facilitate protégé career development in software companies in Bengaluru.

Keywords: Counselling, Protégé, Career development

Introduction

In today's challenging business environment, employee development has never been more important as a means to maintain a competitive advantage and keep employees engaged. Studies are now projecting massive employment turnovers in the coming years, and it is evident that organizations are not working

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to mitigate this risk. Studies further show that attributes such as career development and internal mobility are vitally important to a growing majority of today's global workforce. Tackling the issue of employee engagement has been and remains a top priority for many organizations. There is a need to reflect on experiences relating to career development and transform employees into the majorstakeholders of that process and provide multiple pathways for growth. Mentoring and mentoring practices are relevant here, as they indicate how mentors can facilitate protégé career development and organizational goals through mentoring skills. Some of the facts published also show how, in the days to come, mentoring becomes key for organizational success.:

- According to Terri A. Scandura, Management Professor and Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Miami, most Fortune 500 companies see mentoring as an important employee development tool, with 71% of them conducting mentoring programs.

- According to Forbes Magazine, 76% of Fortune's top 25 companies offer mentoring programs.

- According to Association for Talent Development (ATD), formerly *ASTD* (American Society for Training & Development)71% of Fortune 500 companies use mentoring to ensure learning occurs in their organizations.

- ATD also states that 75% of executives point to mentoring as playing and having played a key role in their careers.

The term 'software' refers to the set of electronic program instructions or data that a computer processor reads in order to perform a task or operation. Systems software includes the programs that are dedicated to managing the computer itself, such as the operating system, file management utilities and disk operating system (or DOS). "Software" refers to computer program or data (bits and bytes stored) that can be stored electronically. It is used by the computer processor to perform various tasks. The operating system manages the computer hardware resources in addition to applications and data. Without systems software installed onour computers, we would have to type instructions manually for every action we want the computer

to perform. Software can be categorized according to what it is designed to accomplish. There are two main types of systems software, application software and utility Software. Bangalore accounts for more than 36% of India's global IT software and services including IT Enabled Services (ITES) / BPO exports. The main IT clusters in Bangalore are:

- Software Technology Parks of India (STPI);
- International Tech Park Ltd. (ITPL)
- Electronic City

The scope for Information Technology industry, especially in software, globally, nationally and in Bengaluru is very high. Similarly, addressing challenges in terms of technology, competition, cyberlaw, clients and customer expectations are also high. Most importantly the intellectual workforce management in Information technology industry will be a real nightmare for human resource managers shortly. In this regard,further investigationcan determine how mentors will facilitate protégé career development in software companies.

Mentoring

Gorman says, "Best companies are figuring how to engage top performers by helping them map their career paths and develop desired knowledge and skills."

Mentoring brings a person looking for initial guidance and direction (the 'mentee') together with another person who can help provide this (the 'mentor'). They work collaboratively to obtain the desired results. It has been defined as "an alliance of two people that creates a space for dialogue which results in reflection, action and learning for both" (Rolfe, 2006).

Mentoring is typically a one-on-one relationship between a more experienced and a less experienced employee which is basedon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to share and learn.

A mentor is seen as a "wise guide" who don't necessarily have to be an expert in the field of interest but is able to ask useful questions that stimulate the mentee to explore their situation. Being

a good mentor is more about asking the right questions, rather than giving the right answers.

In some cases, established relationships may not exist in a formal mentoring program. Mentors from outside the mentee's usual network may be needed to meet the learning objectives of the mentee. Time and effort must be spent to identify a mentor that will meet the needs of the mentee and to establish a mutually rewarding relationship at the beginning of the mentoring association. The term protégé originated from French. A protégé is someone who is sponsored and promoted by an individual who has greater experience and influence. The relationship tends to be long-term, with the pair working closely together or frequently checking in with each other.

Career Development is the process of moving from one level to another in one's career through a process of continuous acquisition of authority and responsibility, (Higgins, M. C., & Thomas, D. A.,2001). This may be achieved by facilitating employee career growth through continuous coaching, mentoring and counselling. (Orpen, C., 1995).

Why are the roles of the Mentor?:A basic prerequisite

Companies often invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in recruiting talent. However, by stopping there, they miss out on the opportunity to get the best return on their hiring investment. Mentoring is one of the most effective strategies as a standalone program or as part of an existing workforce development program. Roles, qualities and skills of mentors in the processes of facilitating protégé career development compel the management to scale up investing on mentors. According to Ridley, W. B. (2004), one important way to practice humility is to be, what we refer to as, an "altruistic individual." This means that individuals demonstrate an unselfish regard for the welfare of their protégé, rather than being preoccupied with their self-interests. It means giving credit to the protégé for day-to-day successes. It also means leading and acting in the organization's best interests, rather than being self-absorbed with one's personal agenda. Too often, very successful mentors assume that they no longer need to learn and gain new ideas. The challenge here is to identify the role which distinguishes the roles

of the mentor with that of counsellors, leaders and so on. In this regard, an attempt has been made by the authors to identify the most important roles that mentors should acquire, learn and continuously strive to ponder upon in order to improve their effectiveness as a mentor.

Attributes Essential for Mentors to facilitate Career Development of the protégé

Practices humility

It is important for mentors to practice humility. The predominant approach of mentors in organizations is often a style that is brash and brimming with arrogance and overconfidence. While confidence is critical to a mentor's success, overconfidence bordering on personal arrogance can lead to ineffectiveness and potential derailment. Capable mentors acquire a perspective that comes from a commitment to learning and to continually challenging themselves to see the world in new and different ways. They are never completely comfortable with how they have done things in the past. From this perspective, mentors and protégé can think more strategically and make effective decisions. All this is possible only if the mentor has humility. Humility is the key to building mentors. It is a great honour to be a mentor as being assigned this role implies that one is accomplished enough to provide guidance to another person. No one likes dealing with egomaniacs. In certain situations, when the mentor has a prominent role and is accomplished, he or she might view themselves as being better than others or above the rules. This will be off-putting to others. It is important to stay humble as everyone has low points in their career at some point and it is a person's humility that comes to one's rescue at that point since the people around you will want to help you and not knock you down further. Embracing humility helps ensure that people are inclined to build you up when you fail, rather than revel in your misfortune.

Never Exploits

Good mentors are respected by their protégés and vice versa. A protégé can learn a lot from their mentor simply by watching how their mentor behaves in any particular situation. Good mentors will

also look out for experiences, or even create situations in which their protégés can become involved in learning new things, for example, providing a look behind the scenes or a glimpse at how other people live or do things. If a mentor is very demanding, the protégé is likely to give in and work hard to meet the mentor's expectations.However, they will also resent the mentor causing the irreparable harm to the relationship.

Inappropriate delegation is when a mentor manipulates a protégé into doing work that the mentor should be doing. It can also involve withholding assignments. A protégé who has long awaited a particularly challenging assignment may find at the 11th hour that the mentor has decided to take the assignment. Protégés in situations like these may find their career development stymied. Too often, they end up never taking on work that will develop the skills that they need to gain more responsibility and receive attention from senior management.

Politicking involves more malicious acts, such as sabotage and taking undue credit.

Never Harms

During the enabling phase, the mentor is liable to encounter a number of obstacles. Every partnership faces obstacles at one time or another. These may be personal, related to the protégé's experience, belief systems, or biases; or organizational, related to the protégé's work situation, understanding his job or career plans. Some obstacles may originate from the protégé. The protégé may be unfocused orseemingly unable to follow through. He or she may cause harm by being manipulative and seek to control the relationship without committing to the hard work of self-assessment and learning. He or she may display apathy, displaying energy only when seeking immediate gratification. Mentors must be prepared to challenge and encourage protégé's agreement, by revisiting goals and strategies and examining the consequences of their behaviour. Jealousy can cause harm for both mentor and protégé. The mentor may become jealous of the protégé's progress, imagining the protégé will become more successful and recognized than himself. The protégé may become jealous of his own progress

and insights and perceive the mentor as holding him back, even subverting his progress.

Tells the Truth

In the professional field, it is important that the professionals are attuned to hearing and seeing reality as it is. A mentor is expected to give unvarnished guidance and the genuinely profitable counsel that mentees from your companions or frequently even from your manager. Most individuals, who aresharp-witted and have a higher than normal IQ and are defensive when confronted with feedback. Such mentee behaviour is not good for a mentor-mentee relationship. At the point when things turn out badly with a protégé, a mentor can simply exacerbate the situation, could choose not to examine the issue, address it externally, or be untruthful. Such evasive strategies by the mentor is also another danger to the relationship.Similarly, as mentors must lead the pack in illuminating desires with the protégé ahead of schedule in the relationship, they should assume liability for alarming the protégé to early indications of relationship and execution issues. At the point when a mentor endeavours to impart worries about the protégé through inconspicuous allusion or nonverbal prompts, he or she is really performing the role of an empowering influence of a useless and stagnant mentorship.

Documents carefully

Documentation will incorporate proof of reflection on issues, endeavours to address any contention and reestablish the relationship. For instance, when solicited to compose letters of recommendations for a past protégé, a little organizer of documentation will prove profitable and will allow the mentor to build an exhaustive and exact picture of the protégé.

Accept Endings

All relationships change over time, and mentoring relationships are no exceptions to this rule. When a mentor first begins a mentoring relationship as protégé, one probably had a great desire to help bring in progress in a certain aspect of another person's career or life. As a mentor, one may have had the motivation, time and energy to invest in helping another person in the field. Over time,

however, any of our needs, availability and priorities change. While many mentoring relationships will last six months, changes are natural and inevitable. With a little foresight, one can handle the situation gracefully. It would be in the best interest of the protégé, if the mentor alerts the protégé as soon as a new job is on offer to the mentor. With this notice, the protégé will be able to use the last sessions strategically and can also begin to seek another mentor if needed. By noticing and drawing attention to the protégé's progress, the mentor may provide encouragement that is likely to motivate more growth and action on the part of the protégé. It would also be in the interest of the protégé for the mentor to acknowledge challenges and obstacles that the protégé faced. A mentor's acknowledgement of the protégé's efforts will help the protégé to understand his or her individual strengths and weaknesses. Overall, a good mentor-protégé relationship should end with an assurance that the protégé has a new support system and carries forward the work done by the mentor.

There is a wide-ranging scope for research in measuring the effectiveness of mentoring across industries globally, which is a challenge are for modern research (Ridley W.B.,2004). According to the American Society for Training and Development (2012), training alone increases managerial productivity by 24% and the combination of mentoring and coaching increases productivity by 84%. Mentors are not able to define the expectations of the protégés and in turn, the protégés are not able to identify how mentoring can facilitate their career growth. There is a huge gap in Information Technology Industry today in meeting the needs of the protégés by potential mentors. There is urgency in bridging this gap because of the Information Technology Industry's immense contribution to economic growth, particularly Software Companies (NASSCOM, 2012). In a survey conducted in 2012 among the Fortune 500 CEOs globally, respondents state one of the top three factors affecting career growth is mentoring. These exclusive determinants are considered for the current research as they were not considered under the scope of earlier research in this field.

Statement of problem

Employees feel insecure and have no one to listen to, guide and transform them when it comes to their career and personal aspects. Employers are not able to identify employee's actual potentials and match their roles accordingly. Companies are looking for an intervention that can bring back the charm, talent, innovation, creativity, leadership, participation, morale, growth and development of individuals, organizations and society. This research is an attempt to facilitate such a method among software companies by communicating the significance of mentoring in addressing protégé career development.

Objectives

To identify the roles of mentors in strengthening Protégé Career Development.

Hypotheses development

Hypotheses 1-$H1_0$: There is no significant relationship between Roles of mentor and expectations of protégé career development.

Research Methodology

Descriptive Research methodology was adopted for the current research in an attempt to examine the mentor and protégés' expectations and delivery. The instrument was validated in stages with review done by academicians, industry experts, language experts and a pilot study. A Structured Questionnaire was used to collect data through the Interview method. Journals, magazines, newspapers, textbooks and web-based resources were part of the secondary data used. The 7-point Likert Scale (1 to 7 for Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree and Not Applicable) which was developed for the first time from the book titled "The Elements of Mentoring" by Ridley, W. B. (2004) was used for the study along with continuous interaction with senior executives across the software companies in Bengaluru. Through judgmental sampling for 245 Mentors and 261 Protégés in Software Companies, Bengaluru, the questionnaire was

filled for analysis. The independent t-test is used to test the formulated hypothesis.

Protégé Expectation and Mentor Performance Gap item wise

To test the mentoring effectiveness, t-teston the expectations of protégés versus performance of mentors was conducted.

Table 1 reveals Protégé Expectation and Mentor Performance Gap item wise. The test results presented in Table 1 reveals that the p-value for role of mentors namely ROLQ2-Never Exploit (.000), ROLQ3-Never Harm (.000), ROLQ4-Tell the Truth (.000), ROLQ5-Document carefully (.000), ROLQ6-Accept Endings (.000), indicates strong evidence that expectations do not match the performance. ROLQ1- Practices humility (.896) is the only role with apositive difference where mentors meet the expectations of the protégé more than required.

Table 1 Protégé Expectation and Mentor Performance Gap item wise

S.No.	Variable	Mean Diff E - P	t	Sig (P value)
1	ROLQ1	-0.008	-0.130	.896
2	ROLQ2	1.988	27.834	.000
3	ROLQ3	2.009	27.608	.000
4	ROLQ4	1.986	31.163	.000
5	ROLQ5	2.064	28.380	.000
6	ROLQ6	3.905	65.920	.000

Hypotheses Testing

To test the mentoring effectiveness t-test on the expectations of protégés versus performance of mentors was conducted. A small p-value (typically ≤ 0.05) indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, so the null hypothesis is rejected. A large p-value (> 0.05) indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected. A good definition of p-value is "the probability of observing a test statistic at least as large as the one calculated assuming the null hypothesis is true". The problem with that is it requires an understanding of "test statistic" and "null hypothesis". The null hypothesis is either rejected (which means it is statistically very unlikely the null hypothesis is true) or failed tobe rejected. Failing to reject it does not mean it is accepted. It only means that the researchers don't have enough evidence to reject it.

$H1_0$: There is no significant relationship between roles of mentors and expectations of protégé career development.

The test which is presented in Table 2 reveals that the Sig (2-tailed) value for Roles of Mentors is 0.07. This value is more than 0.05. From this we can conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between the roles of mentors and the expectations of the protégé career development. Since there is strong evidence in favor of the null hypothesis, we accept the null hypothesis H_0. Test stress to reject alternative hypotheses $H1_1$.

It can be inferred that there are no significant differences between Expectations of the Protégés career development and the performance of mentors, where performance is the construct called Roles of Mentors. It also justifies that expectations match the performance.

Practices humility, Never Exploits, Never Harms, Tells the Truth, Documents Carefully and Accepts Endings are the five roles of mentors considered for the purpose of investigation in software companies. It is visible that there exists a healthy environment in some of the software companies where protégés are really taken through the stages of their career growth with proper documentation. Trust and humility surpass the formality of the mentorship process. Mentors should always create mentors is the moral of this construct. In the software industry, we have seen that the scope for creating world-class mentors is very high.

Regression Analysis

A measure of the strength of the computed equation is R-square, sometimes called the coefficient of determination. R-square is simply the square of the multiple correlation coefficients listed under R in the Model Summary Table 2 and represents the proportion of variance accounted for in the dependent variable (Protégé Career Development) by the predictor variable (Role of Mentors). The multiple correlation coefficients (R) are 0.770, and the R-square is 0.592. Therefore, the predictor variable of Role of Mentors explained is 59.0% of the variance in the dependent variable of Protégé Career Development.

The ANOVA table presents results from the test of the null hypothesis that R-square is zero. An R-square of zero indicates no linear relationship between the predictor and dependent variable. The ANOVA table shows that the computed F statistic is 144.983, with an observed significance level of less than 0.001. Thus, the hypothesis that there is no linear relationship between the Role of Mentors and Protégé Career Development is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that the Roles of Mentors can predict the Protégé Career Development or influence it.

The Coefficients table shows the standardized Beta coefficient between the predictor variable Roles of Mentors and the dependent variable 'Protégé Career Development'. The Beta coefficient is shown to be positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level (Beta = .232, t = 12.888, p < .001 for Roles of mentors). Thus, the higher the roles of mentors the higher is the protégé's career development towards achieving mentoring effectiveness.

Thus, the prediction equations can be written as:

Protégé Career Development = 1.761 + (12.888 Roles of Mentor)

Table 2 Regression between Role of Mentors and Protégé career development

Model Summary					
Independent or Prediction Variable Role			Dependent Variable Protégé Career Development		
R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
.770a		.592	.588		.860
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	536.225	5	107.245	144.983	.000
Residual	369.114	499	.740		
Total	905.339	504			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.761	.325		5.410	.000
Role	.205	.031	.232	12.888	.000

Salient Features of the findings and conclusion

Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was conducted to estimate the internal consistency and it was found that all the constructs are reliable. The characteristics of the demographic profile of the respondent and the descriptive profile of the investigated variables are presented. Factor analysis is applied to identify itsunderlying dimensions. Through ANOVA, mentor and protégé variations in their opinions/ attitudes/behaviors are analyzed. An attempt was made to identify a relationship between variables, through correlation. Regression analysis was done to measure the cause and effect of variables. Further, the hypotheses are verified through paired t-test to measure the effectiveness of mentoring in the protégé's career development in software companies. It was found through analysis that roles of mentors met the expectations of the protégé's career development. Recommendations were arrived upon for the same and shared with successful mentors and protégés as a part of research outcome.

Recommendation

Humility is the key to build mentors. Capable mentors understand that the greatest reward that a mentor can provide to a protégé is to create opportunities for them to lead. Unfortunately, often domineering and over-controlling mentors minimise the opportunities for their protégé to develop leadership abilities.

Capable mentors try to build mentors at all levels by always searching for ways to allow their inner mentor potential to surface. Protégés have fewer means at their disposal, but they too can use manipulation to benefit themselves and sometimes to harm a mentor's reputation and career. This is the outcome of exploitation. Mentors are putting themselves on the line by asserting they believe in their protégé's ability and future at the company. Such endorsements can backfire.

Even in a grave situation mentors should never harm the protégé, they should support, challenge and offer to facilitate the protégé's growth and development, despite the obstacles they face. Mentors should not underestimate the presence of obstacles to mentoring

relationships and should attempt to anticipate problems that can undermine productive relationships.

Being honest or truthful with the protégé in the long run, which every protégé expects from theirmentor is also an important area for research in software companies, in coming days or years.

Documenting the outcomes of mentoring is not practised by mentors, according to protégés. But in reality, research proves that mentors do maintain confidential records. Mentor's have to ideally be informed in person of the endof formal mentoring by the protégé.

Conclusion

When the focus is on improving protégé career development in the long run, traditional roles will morph into a new set of roles that mentors are forced to adopt. In this regard, through literature review and continuous expert interaction from industry and academia, the authors have made an effort to identify the new roles that mentors should ruminate over in order to facilitate their protégé's career development. By implementing these mentoring roles systematically and at regular intervals, corporations can promote mutual learning to challenge and stimulate protégés at all levels within the organization. It becomes the sole responsibility of mentors to sharpen these new roles, which make the mentoring process effective in this ever-changing, competitive and technology-driven industry. In software companies, the recommendations give in this article should acquire primary importance in order to facilitate protégé career development.

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