Supporting Professional Growth Through Mentoring and Coaching

Linda M. Kutilek
Ohio State University Extension, kutilek.1@osu.edu

Garee W. Earnest
Ohio State University Extension, earnest.1@osu.edu

PREVIOUS ARTICLE | ISSUE CONTENTS | NEXT ARTICLE

Supporting Professional Growth Through Mentoring and Coaching

Abstract
This article focuses on approaches for mentoring and coaching employees within Extension. Through presentation of research and discussion of current applications, the authors explore mutual benefits and differences between coaching and mentoring. Several examples are shared of processes that have been implemented within the Ohio State University Extension to support these concepts.

Linda M. Kutilek
Associate Professor, New Personnel Development
Internet Address: kutilek.1@osu.edu

Garee W. Earnest
Associate Professor, OSU Leadership Center
Internet Address: earnest.1@osu.edu

Ohio State University Extension
Columbus, Ohio

Background

Mentoring and coaching are about supporting individuals. Articles in the popular press, as well as in academic journals, cite increasing evidence that mentors and coaches play a major role in people's career development (Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998; Oncken, III, 1997; Zey, 1997). The process of mentoring and coaching has been described as continuous, rather than a one-time event. The roles of mentor and coach are directed toward the improvement of three functions: skills, performance, and development.

Mentoring and coaching have become a part of the everyday workplace contributing to increased job satisfaction, personal productivity, and employment stability within an organization. Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, tells the story of Odysseus who leaves his home and son to the care of his friend, Mentor. Just as Mentor became a trusted friend and guide for the young son, mentors in organizations fulfill similar roles. These many roles include "...advisor, sponsor, tutor, advocate, coach, protector, role model and guide" (Hadden, 1997, p. 17).

Hadden (1997) described coaching as "the discussion process between two partners aimed at exerting a positive influence. Since coaching is a critical part of mentoring, an effective mentor will have well developed coaching skills" (p. 17). In the past, coaching has focused mostly on increasing competence of employees. Recent research, however, shows competence is strengthened by adding the objective of building mutual commitment of the employee, assuming that the coach and the employee are engaged in co-learning (Chawla & Renesch, 1995).

With the increase of diversity in the workplace, as well as the fast-paced changing work environment, mentoring and coaching have become essential components for managers and leaders. "Coaching subordinates isn't an addition to a manager's job; it's an integral part of it." (Odiorne, as cited in Zemke, 1997). Without major effort in organizational coaching and mentoring programs, organizations and companies will not benefit from employees' abilities and potential. Researchers and practitioners have shared and adapted approaches through participation in professional conferences on mentoring since the mid 1980's.

Mentoring and OSU Extension

Although Extension is not a corporate entity, the organization is interested in the assimilation and success of its employees. In the past, Extension professionals were often paired as assistants with experienced agents to assist in the process of assimilation into the organization. During the last decade, Ohio State University Extension and the OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences have adapted peer mentoring, peer coaching, and executive coaching practices in their efforts to provide employee support and enhance organizational effectiveness. Figure 1 illustrates characteristics of these three organizational examples. This article addresses the impact of peer mentoring and peer coaching.

Figure 1
Characteristics of Three Employee Support Systems

Concept	Peer Mentoring	Peer Coaching	Executive Coaching
Organizational Level	Not in individual's chain of command.	Not in individual's chain of command.	Often targets high performers.
Relationship	Trusted friend; guide; advisor, sponsor, advocate, role model.	Trusted guide; advisor; sounding board.	Trusted guide; advisor; sounding board.
Context	Creates a safe context for growth.	Helps to identify training needs and problem solving approaches with the individual.	Helps to identify training needs and problem solving approaches with the individual.
Purpose	Motivates others.	Motivates others.	Motivates others.
	Committed to providing upward support and mobility of protégés career.	Makes it possible for individual to succeed in areas where he/she is most stuck or ineffective.	May not be focused on answers but rather on inquiry; process of asking questions produces transformational insights for the executive.
Focus	Focuses on development of the individual.	Focus is on the performance of the individual for the organization in their position; specifically skills.	Focus is on helping the executive to move the organization forward. Increasing leadership/management effectiveness of individual.
Goals	Assists protégé in their connection & identification with the organization.	Commitment is for the individual and their challenges.	Commitment is for the individual and their challenges.
Responsibility	Vision builder; value shaper.	Vision builder; value shaper.	Vision builder; value shaper.
	Understands individual development needs.	Understands individual development needs.	Understands individual development needs.
	Creates learning	Creates learning	Creates learning opportunities.

	opportunities.	opportunities.	
Outcomes	Both parties develop and grow from the relationship.	Both parties develop and grow from the relationship.	Both parties develop and grow from the relationship.
References: Bell (1996), Hadden, (1997), Hargrove (1995), Wells (1997), and Witherspoon (1997).			

Peer Mentoring

To assist with the assimilation of new staff into OSU Extension, a peer mentor is assigned within the first month of employment. The mentor, usually employed in a similar job, helps to develop familiarity with the organization while building trust and mutual respect through this interaction.

To help in creating mentoring pairs, each potential mentor and protégé is asked to complete a bio-sketch form that includes information about background, experience, and work-related interests; specializations; and hobbies, non-work interests, and family. Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998) support this process by recommending that successful initiation of the relationship can be assisted through sharing biodata between mentor and protégé.

Mentors are trained and matched to a new employee (protégé) through the use of the completed bio-sketch form. The mentor/protégé pair is identified for a 1-year period and work together in establishing their goals and expectations. An evaluation is conducted after 3 and 12 months to assess satisfaction with the pairing and the process.

The goals for the peer mentoring program are to:

- Provide an open atmosphere for dialogue;
- Enhance and provide motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibilities with confidence;
- Provide assistance with process skills and direction toward available resources, and develop potential for professional growth and development;
- Provide a practical view and assist in focusing more sharply on particular roles and responsibilities, along with updated approaches to carrying out responsibilities;
- Develop a continuing sensitivity to social, economic, and political changes and provide practical competencies to deal with these situations; and
- Enhance the concept of the total program of the organization by experiencing differing situations and environments, and thus expanding the new employee's competencies.

A unique feature of this program has been the establishment of a district mentoring contact. Contacts are identified peers within the district with responsibility for maintaining regular communication with the pairs, for providing follow-up with protégés 2 weeks and 3 months after pairing, and for assisting mentors with information about upcoming events and programs to share with their protégés. The district mentoring contact provides local, individualized support to the mentoring pairs.

Peer Coaching

Peer coaches have been assigned to OSU Extension professionals who have been employed less than 3 years and have participated in a leadership skills assessment workshop, the Action Leadership Retreat (ALR). The ALR is a 2-day developmental experience for individuals who participate in simulated exercises, are observed by trained observers, and receive feedback from the observers upon completion of each activity. These activities center around 12 behavioral anchors:

- Organizational skills,
- Interpersonal skills,
- Sensitivity,
- Communication skills,
- Change management skills,
- Diplomacy,
- Decision making skills,
- Conflict management skills,
- Collaborativeness,
- Self directedness,
- Visionary skills, and
- Assertiveness.

Nine Extension professionals in September 1996 (Group 1), 11 Extension professionals in May 1997 (Group 2), and 10 Extension professionals in February 1999 (Group 3) participated in an ALR. Each Extension professional created a professional development plan to improve his/her skills around each behavioral anchor. Extension professionals were randomly chosen each time from these 30 participants, with a total of 14 being assigned a peer coach. The remaining Extension professionals did not receive any peer coaching.

The peer coaches received instruction on how to serve as a coach and were given an *ALR Coaches Handbook* that focused on the 12 behavioral anchors with additional resources listed for each anchor. The peer coaches were asked to contact their assigned Extension professional and the peer coaching took place over a 12-month period. The purpose of these coaches was to keep the employees focused on the professional development plans they made during the ALR, to serve as a sounding board, and to provide the employees with a set time to focus on each of the behavioral anchors and themselves as professionals.

Methodology

The effect of pairing these peer coaches with new employees was studied using a quasi-experimental research design research (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). This research used the 360° pre/post evaluations conducted by self and their support team members on the 12 behavioral anchors. The Extension professionals and support team members completed a pre-evaluation prior to participating in the ALR and a post evaluation 1 year after participating in the ALR.

The control groups were also asked to complete the pre- and post-evaluations at these same times. Their district director, the appropriate district specialist(s), and their county chair serve as the support team for these Extension professionals. In addition, control groups of Extension professionals, who chose not to participate in the ALR, were also used as comparisons for each of the three groups of Extension professionals that participated in the ALR.

Frequencies and descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the groups on the 12 behavioral anchors. A review of this data indicated some missing scores within these 12 behavioral anchors for the three groups of Extension professionals. Due to the small "n" within each group, missing data for these three groups were replaced with the mean scores from each group. A pre and post leadership effectiveness score was calculated by summating the pre and post 12 behavioral anchor scores.

Findings and Discussion

The pre- and post-leadership effectiveness mean scores for the Extension professionals, Support Team members, and the control group members are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Group Mean Scores for Leadership Effectiveness

Group	Pre-Leadership Effectiveness			Post-Leadership Effectiveness		
	n	Score	sd	n	Score	sd
Coached Professionals						
Group 1	4	37.66	3.22	4	47.78	2.98
Group 2	5	43.20	4.97	5	45.60	5.22
Group 3	5	39.80	3.49	5	49.00	6.56
Non-Coached Professionals						
Group 1	5	43.05	1.94	5	47.60	2.07
Group 2	6	41.67	6.68	6	45.17	8.42
Group 3	5	39.84	2.94	3	47.95	2.67
Support Team of Coached						
Group 1	10	44.70	6.25	9	45.89	6.37
Group 2	11	39.81	7.44	10	44.10	8.24
Group 3	13	43.31	8.74	12	46.00	9.15
Support Team of Non-Coached						
Group 1	12	35.75	4.97	15	44.00	4.97
Group 2	12	39.17	5.02	8	44.38	4.50
Group 3	14	46.21	5.94	9	50.56	6.17

Control Group							
Group 1	6	51.17	5.71	7	52.00	4.32
Group 2	9	47.67	4.61	6	47.67	3.44
Group 3	8	46.13	6.98	6	44.17	4.96
Support Team of Control Group							
Group 1	21	48.38	6.98	18	50.50	7.01
Group 2	21	41.33	9.97	15	44.80	8.40
Group 3	20	44.05	9.03	14	44.64	10.46
Note: Scale = 12 to 60							

Extension Professionals

ANOVA was used to test for differences on the pre-leadership effectiveness scores between the Extension professionals who received coaching and those who did not receive any coaching. No significant difference was found. ANOVA was then used to test for differences on the post leadership effectiveness scores, and no significant difference was found.

ANOVA was used to test for differences on the pre-leadership effectiveness scores between the Extension professionals participating in the ALR and the control group. A significant difference was found. ANCOVA was then used with the pre-leadership effectiveness score as the covariate to test for differences on the post-leadership effectiveness scores, and no significant difference was found. See Table 2.

Table 2
ANCOVA of Extension Professionals Coached and Control Group

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Covariate	287.97	1	287.97	13.22	.00
Between	53.28	1	53.28	2.45	.13
Within	914.91	42	21.78		

Tests for differences between each Extension professional group that participated in the ALR and their respective control groups were analyzed using ANCOVA. The pre-leadership effectiveness score was used as the covariate because it was found to be significantly different for each group. No significant differences were found on the post-leadership effectiveness scores between group 1 and their respective control group or between Group 2 and their respective control group. However, a significant difference was found on the post-leadership effectiveness scores between Group 3 and their control group. Group 3 Extension professionals scored themselves significantly higher than did their respective control group. See Table 3.

Table 3
ANCOVA of Group 3 Extension Professionals and Control Group

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Covariate	61.28	1	61.28	2.70	.13
Between	122.97	1	122.97	5.41	.04
Within	249.91	11	22.72		

Support Team

The test for differences between how the Support Team members scored the coached and the non-coached Extension professionals was calculated on the pre-leadership effectiveness score using ANOVA. No significant difference was found. ANOVA was then used to test for differences on the post-leadership effectiveness scores. and no significant difference was found.

To test for differences between how the Support Team members scored the Extension professionals who participated in the ALR and the control group was calculated on the pre-leadership effectiveness scores using ANOVA. A significant difference was found. ANCOVA was then used with the pre-leadership effectiveness score as the covariate to test for differences on the post leadership effectiveness scores, and no significant difference was found. See Table 4.

Table 4
ANCOVA of Support Team of Extension Professionals and Support Team of Control Group

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Covariate	2775.74	1	2775.74	86.91	.00
Between	92.89	1	92.89	2.91	.09
Within	2970.23	93	31.94		

Tests for differences between the Support Team members for each Extension professional group that participated in the ALR and the Support Team members for their respective control groups on the pre-leadership effectiveness scores were analyzed using ANOVA. A significant difference was found between Group 1 Support Team members and their respective control Support Team members, but no significant differences were found between Groups 2 and 3 Support Team members and their respective control Support Team members groups. ANOVA was then used to test for differences between Support Team member Groups 2 and 3 and their respective control Support Team members groups on the post leadership effectiveness scores. No differences were found.

ANCOVA was used to test for differences between the Group 1 Support Team members and the control Support Team members group on the post leadership effectiveness scores using the pre-leadership effectiveness scores as the covariate. No significant differences were found. See Table 5.

Table 5
ANCOVA of Support Team of Group 1 Professionals and Support Team of Control Group

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Covariate	144.13	1	144.13	4.43	.04
Between	77.63	1	77.63	2.39	.13
Within	1106.55	34	32.55		

Summary

Since 1995, more than 100 individuals have been trained as mentors within OSU Extension. Annual evaluation of the mentoring program has found that a majority of the protégés feel mentoring has increased their skills in program planning and implementation, and has helped them develop an understanding of the political and economic climate in the workplace. Mentors and protégés reported that the communication between them was conducted in a calm, relaxed atmosphere.

Both mentors and protégés listed the most significant barriers to a successful mentoring relationship as distance and schedule conflicts (time), although the majority of pairs met (61%) met more than six times a year. Protégés indicated that the most helpful methods used in developing the mentoring relationship included meeting face-to-face and having a supportive mentor who encouraged questions.

The authors would encourage implementation of mentoring and coaching within not-for-profit organizations as a means of employee support. The Group 3 of Extension professionals improved their overall leadership effectiveness as Extension professionals as a result of participating in the ALR. No other significant differences were found within the post-leadership effectiveness scores. However, based upon the collection of qualitative data, we have identified certain desirable features and are integrating them into our programs.

- Peer coaching is more successful over a shorter time frame, i.e., less than 4 months.
- A follow-up system is needed for coaches and mentors after a 3 to 5 month period to prompt their continued interaction with the employee or protégé.
- Stipends have not been expected or necessary for the mentors or coaches.
- Peer coaches have appreciated the use of a suggested outline or handbook as they work with the employees.

References

Bell, C. R. (1996). Managers as mentors: Building partnerships for learning. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1966). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Chawla, S. & Renesch, J. (Eds.). (1995). Learning organizations: Developing cultures for tomorrow's workplace. Portland, OR: Productivity Press.

Hadden, R. (1997, April). Mentoring and coaching. Executive excellence, 14(4), 17.

Hargrove, R. A. (1995). Masterful coaching: Extraordinary results by transforming people and the way they think and work together. San Diego: Pfeiffer & Company.

Mincemoyer, C. C. & Thomson, J. S. (1998). Establishing effective mentoring relationships for

individual and organizational change. Journal of Extension [On-line], 36,(2). Available: http://www.joe.org/joe/1998april/a2.html

Oncken, III, W. (1997, April). A coaching key for any century. Executive excellence, 14(4), 9-10.

Trefz, M. K. (1998). Responses to executive coaching experience. Unpublished manuscript, The Ohio State University at Columbus.

Wells, S. (1997). From sage to artisan: The nine roles of the value-driven leader. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.

Witherspoon, R. & White, R. (1997). Four essential ways that coaching can help executives. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Zemke, R. (1997, April). Service coach. Executive excellence, 14(4), 20.

Zey, M. (1991). The mentor connection: Strategic alliances in corporate life. New York: Transaction Publishers.