

Azzarello Group Article

The cheapest AND most effective way to develop your workforce

By *Patty Azzarello*
CEO, Azzarello Group, Inc.

I'll get right to the point.

If you don't have a mentoring program in your organization, you need one.

There is no downside.

Many management teams struggle to come up with ways to motivate and retain their top performers. There is much time spent on discussions of bonuses, stock, salary, and external education.

Yet, even with that, it is often the case that employee feedback suggests that they would like to company to do more to help them in the development of their careers. And that they would like to feel more "connected" to the strategy of the company.

Mentoring is often overlooked as a key component in the development and retention of key employees.

This may be because it requires that the leadership team across the company is interested in, and committed to, participating in such a program, but it pays huge dividends both for the individuals and the company.

And it doesn't cost salary, or bonus pay, or stock options to get a big payoff.

I have found that implementing an ongoing, supported mentoring program:

- ✦ **Elevates the management team** as one which cares, and is investing in the development of employees. It registers as something significant.
- ✦ **Retains top performers and prepares them for bigger roles.** It motivates them by creating relationships with high level executives, and gives them exposure to a broader view of the company.
- ✦ **Removes risk from your business**, not only through employee retention, but by increasing the skill level, networking skills, and information flow in your company.
- ✦ **Increases high quality communication** across your organization. Having individuals meet with executives outside their functional area creates a new flow of ideas and inputs that did not exist before. New opportunities are exposed, and key issues are resolved.
- ✦ **Builds bench strength.** Mentoring allows senior executives to pass on the more intangible skills required to network and operate at a higher level in the company that does not occur with external education.
- ✦ And it's cheap!

Mentoring is not only the low hanging fruit in terms of execution, it is also

Subscribe to Patty's Blog

Get FREE email updates on leadership, business, and career success.

Email:

Submit

Current Issue:

Ready, Set, Stall...

one of the most effective things you can do.

Many companies use the annual review process as the main opportunity to give career guidance to employees.

This doesn't work for many reasons.

- ✦ It is often not done consistently.
- ✦ It is typically designed to be the same process for all employees, so it not focused on, or effective for, the development of key individuals.
- ✦ It is not usually managed as a motivator. It's more of a dreaded task for all involved.
- ✦ It is tied to compensation so the discussions are somewhat unnatural and not focused on development and learning.
- ✦ It is done with in-line management, so the discussions are not open enough to be of the most value for the development of the employee.

A mentoring program in contrast, will allow you to easily focus your energies on motivation, retention, and developing bench strength. You can develop a unique approach for each individual, create a meaningful, "safe" relationship outside the line of management, and provide coaching and networking help, not just job related discussions.

How to implement a mentoring program

To implement a mentoring program you need to identify a group of executives who will commit to the program, and selection criterion to identify and a group of candidates.

You then need to come up with a game plan that will work in your organization to get mentors and employees matched up, and create the right amount of process that your particular organization will need to get it rolling and keep it going.

Someone needs to own it. It's best if an executive sponsor works with HR.

It will require some planning and initial training and encouragement (and scheduling), to get it started, but **once it's running it's very inexpensive to maintain.**

- ✦ You will find that there are execs in your organization who are searching for a way to give something back, and will be eager to participate.
- ✦ You will find talent in your organization that you didn't know you had. These mentoring discussions have a way of exposing talent to a wider range of managers. Employees get "air time" with the leadership team that wouldn't occur otherwise.
- ✦ You will discover a new flow of information across your company as executives start having discussions with individuals from other functions. Before these cross functional discussions would not have a reason to occur. Everyone gets stronger.

A focused mentoring program provides key employees with:

- ✦ A **safe place to ask the questions** they are afraid to ask, so they learn things they would never learn otherwise.
- ✦ An opportunity to learn from other people's experience in different roles and organizations, **so they develop a broader point of view, necessary for advancement.**
- ✦ Talented employees with "rough edges" can improve their overall effectiveness, (and annoy fewer people, and waste less time)
- ✦ A chance to **learn organizational and networking skills**, which are critical for executive positions.
- ✦ A **recognizable commitment to their development**, which is motivating and

"Build a Mentoring Program"
in your organization

✦ creates loyalty.

I can say unequivocally that mentors had a bigger impact on my career than anything else (outside of my own efforts), and I have seen the impact mentoring has had on others. It's just too good and too cheap not to do it.

You can certainly do this on your own, but if you'd like some help getting it started you can contact Azzarello Group.

Email me:

Patty Azzarello was the youngest person to become a general manager at Hewlett Packard at the age of 33. She ran a \$1B global software business at the age of 35, and became a CEO for the first time at the age of 38. A few of her roles were the VP and General Manager of HP OpenView, CEO of Euclid Software, and Chief Marketing Officer for Siebel Systems.

Patty is the CEO of Azzarello Group, www.AzzarelloGroup.com a unique services organization focused on helping business leaders actually get done what they want to do, and get a bigger payoff from their hard work. Azzarello Group delivers practical, experience-based tools to business leaders, through products and services including articles, e-books, mentoring programs, executive coaching, public speaking, small business retreats, and business execution workshops.

More articles & resources for Executives >>