Peer mentoring: How to establish supportive relationships with colleagues

Jailza Pauly, PhD
March 20, 2013
Developmental Networks

Higgins & Kram, 2001

Diversity of Ties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunistic</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
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Tie Strength
Peer mentoring

A process where there is mutual involvement in encouraging and enhancing learning and development between two peers, where peers are people of similar hierarchical status or who perceive themselves as equals.

McDougall & Beattie, 1997
Traditional vs. Peer Mentoring
Kram & Isabella, 1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Mentoring</th>
<th>Peer Mentoring</th>
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**Career-related Functions**
- Sponsorship
- Coaching
- Exposure and visibility
- Protection
- Challenging work assignments

**Psychosocial Functions**
- Acceptance and confirmation
- Counseling
- Role-modeling
- Friendship

**Special Attribute**
- Complementarity

**Career-related Functions**
- Information sharing
- Career strategizing
- Job-related feedback

**Psychosocial Functions**
- Confirmation
- Emotional support
- Personal feedback
- Friendship

**Special Attribute**
- Mutuality

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Possible attributes of peer mentoring relationships

McManus & Russell, 2007

• Complementarity
  • Different styles or skills the other lacks of could improve
  • Empathy or mirroring of one’s experiences in the other

• Mutuality
  • Mutual assistance
  • Trade off of learner and teacher roles

• Reciprocity
  • Equal give and take of similar content
Types of peer mentoring relationships

Kram & Isabella, 1985; McDougall & Beattie, 1997
A peer mentoring agreement: 
Covering the basics 

• Establish the **scope** of the relationship and outline what you both want out of it 

• Determine **frequency of meetings** and **duration** of relationship 

• Clearly articulate **content** and **feedback boundaries**
Building the peer mentoring relationship: Building trust

• Be honest
• Demonstrate integrity *
• Develop credibility
• Trust others
* How consistently do you… ?

adapted from Gebelein et al., 2004

• Keep promises and agreements
• Give honest and complete answers to questions and challenges
• Protect confidential or sensitive information
• Admit you’ve made a mistake
• Consider the trust and confidence of your co-workers to be important
• Make an effort to foster open, honest, and sincere communication
• Make use of the discipline/academic written code of ethics to guide me making ethical decisions
• Demonstrate consistency between your words and actions
Building effective peer mentoring relationships
adapted from Bacon, 1994

- Develop your **people skills**
- Learn to **tolerate differences** between yourself and others
- Identify other’s **operating styles** and how they interact with yours, then compensate
- Focus on **strengths** not weaknesses
- Discover **common** areas of **interest** and create **common goals**
- Resolve conflict quickly
Supportive Relationships

• Result in better physical and emotional well-being

• Help people perform better at work and concentrate more on the task at hand

• The nature of effective developmental relationships
Communication and Conflict Management Skills
Supportive Communication

Accurate and honest communication that does not jeopardize interpersonal relationships
Attributes of supportive communication
Whetten & Cameron, 2011

• Congruent
  “Your behavior really upset me.” NOT
  “Do I seem upset? No, everything is fine.”

• Descriptive
  “Here is what happened. Here is my reaction. Here is a
  suggestion that would be more acceptable.” NOT
  “You are wrong for doing what you did.”

• Problem-Oriented
  “How can we solve this problem?” NOT
  “Because of you, .....”

• Validating
  “I have some ideas, but do you have any suggestions?” NOT
  “You wouldn’t understand so let’s do this my way.”
Attributes of supportive communication
Whetten & Cameron, 2011

• **Specific**
  “You interrupted me three times during the presentation.” NOT
  “You are always trying to get attention.”

• **Conjunctive**
  “Relating to what you just said, I’d like to raise a counter-point.”
  NOT
  “I want to say something (regardless of what you just said)”

• **Owned**
  “I have decided to turn down your request because…” NOT
  “You have a pretty good idea, but it wouldn’t get funded.”

• **Supportive listening (responding)**
  “What do you think are the obstacles to completing the experiment?”
  NOT
  “As I said before, you make too many mistakes. You are just not performing.”
Response types

Advising
Provides direction, evaluation, personal opinion or instructions

Deflecting
Switches the focus from the communicator’s problem to one selected by the listener

Probing
Asks a question about what the communicator said or about a topic selected by the listener

Reflecting
Mirrors back to the communicator the message that was heard to communicate understanding or acceptance
What is conflict?

Process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something the first party cares about.
Is conflict necessarily bad?

Two forms of conflict with different consequences for individuals, groups and organizations

• Functional
• Dysfunctional

Three types of conflict

• Relationship
• Task
• Process
Warning signs of peer conflict

• Feelings of resentment, fear, disappointment, frustration, or anger toward a colleague

• Repeated complains about a colleague

• Effort to maintain the appearance of agreement
Conflict resolution strategies

Thomas, 1992

Cooperativeness

(Assertiveness)

(Importance of the relationship)

Assertive

Competing

Collaborating

Unassertive

Avoiding

Compromising

Accommodating

Uncooperative

Cooperative

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Managing conflict: Behavioral guidelines

• Collect information about the type of conflict
• Examine relevant situational considerations
• Take into account your personal preferences for the conflict management approaches
• Utilize the collaborative approach unless specific conditions dictate the use of an alternative approach
Managing conflict: Behavioral guidelines (cont’d)

• Use **problem-oriented** statements rather than person-oriented statements

• **Communicate congruently** by acknowledging your true feelings without acting them out in destructive ways

• Use **descriptive**, not evaluative, statements

• Use **validating** statements that acknowledge the other person’s importance and uniqueness
Managing conflict: Behavioral guidelines (cont’d)

• Use **specific** rather than global statements when correcting behavior

• Use statements that flow smoothly from what was said previously

• **Own your statements**, and encourage the other person to do likewise

• Demonstrate **supportive listening**
Three ideas from our time together

1. **Peer mentors can help you build a robust developmental network** to support your career and personal growth

2. You need to **actively manage peer mentoring relationships**

3. **Supportive communication and conflict management skills help** you maintain effective peer mentoring relationships
Resources

- **The success delusion and Try feedforward instead of feedback** Marshall Goldsmith Library
Questions?

Jailza Pauly, PhD

jailza@developingcapabilities.com

www.developingcapabilities.com
References


