



Understanding Mentoring Needs of Millennials in IT Sector

Mrs. Sharadha.S

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Jain University, Bengaluru.

Dr. M.M Bagali

Director-Research Projects and International Relations, Reva University, Bengaluru.
Research Guide, Jain University.

ABSTRACT

Indian organizations are witnessing an era where the workforce is getting younger by the day. In a technologically fast paced business world, youth are taking over the reins of power with their ability to learn and adaptability to change. Employee mentoring is being used as the most important development tool for youth. As organizations are ready to leverage the experience and talent of senior employees to develop and retain Gen Y employees; Gen Y acceptance of formal mentoring plays a major role in effective implementation of the program. This paper aims to: examine the formal mentoring acceptance among Gen Y employees; and explore what this generation expects from Mentoring. In this study, opinions of IT sector employees who are protégés are considered. The research highlights a positive attitude of Gen Y towards formal mentoring program.

KEYWORDS : Generation Y, Formal Mentoring, Mentoring Benefits

Introduction:

The rise IT sector in 1990's opened up a plethora of opportunities for employees in India. Since then, the industry is on a growth trajectory contributing more than 35% of country's GDP through its products and services across the globe. As a major employer of skilled workforce, next only to public sector, IT industry has been providing employment to about 4 million people directly. As organizations plan to revamp their strategy to sustain in the rapidly changing economic scenario in India, the one area to be focussed on is the youth.

Gen Y in India makes up to 50% of India's population, making it the largest young workforce worldwide. (Johnson Controls Annual report, 2010). The study of Indian Gen Y is gaining popularity, as India is said to have a demographic dividend globally. With India currently making up for about 17.6% of world population, next only to China, and at the existing population growth rate of 1% per year, which is significantly higher than that of China, India is set to become the most populated country in the world by 2030. Global population trend shows that by 2025, Gen Y will constitute 70% of worlds' workforce (Rao, Urs, 2015). India's demographic dividend of youth in workforce in coming years needs to be skilled to be employable.

Who are Gen Y?

The youth population, also commonly called as Gen Y refers to those born during 1980-1995. (Gartner Research in Lynch, 2008). They are said to be highly tech savvy, believe in communication of ideas, collaborative and team players. They like to be informed of their roles, look up to their seniors more for career guidance rather than job expertise, are unconventional in their approach towards work and believe in having a balanced work and personal life (Jessica Brack, 2012). Gen Y comes with a unique set of competencies in work and has a very different perspective and expectations on professional success. In this scenario, a formal mentoring approach is expected to enhance their skills and involvement in job.

Mentoring has been recognised as one of the oldest forms of human development. Formal mentoring is a dynamic process wherein a senior employee guides his junior personally and professionally to achieve a successful career as well as meet organizational objectives. Hence, employing mentoring as a tool for developing Gen Y will definitely help organizations in meeting future challenges. Understanding of Gen Y mentoring expectations and preferences will provide a basis for developing effective strategies in attracting, motivating and retaining the millennials.

Literature review:

Half of India's population of one billion is under the age of 25 and is

highly ambitious to participate in growth of the country as seen in recent elections. They are learners with a high level of competitiveness (Johnson Controls Annual report, 2010). These youngsters also called Gen Y or millennials are those born during 1980-1995 are characterized by technological expertise along with being confident, independent and goal oriented. They want work life balance, and like to define who they are in their jobs. They pose a challenge to their managers who have to train and motivate so that their strengths can be utilized for benefit of company. (Justin Meirer et al, 2010). For this, mentoring becomes very necessary as it helps Gen Y to seamlessly move into job roles within a very short span of time. To do this, a clear understanding of want Gen Y needs from mentoring will help in tailoring it accordingly. (Munro, 2009)

A mentoring relationship in this context can be defined as a developmental relationship in which a more advanced or experienced person (a mentor) provides career and/or personal support to another individual (a protégé) Mentoring has career as well as psychosocial functions to enhance performance of protégés. (Kram, 1983). Mentoring accelerates career progression, acclimatizes new recruits to organizational culture and values; and is recognized as an unrivalled approach for transferring organizational wisdom, skills, and abilities from seasoned practitioners to new recruits (Rosser, 2005; Linehan & Walsh, 1999). Resultant is more effective learning that lessens the agony of trial and error (Munro, 2009), reduces job ambiguity, enhances job performance, and decreases absenteeism and employee turnover (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Munro, 2009).

Research Objective:

The two main objectives of this paper are:

- 1) To study the mentoring experience of Gen Y in a formal mentoring program.
- 2) To understand Gen Y views on benefits of mentoring.
- 3) To study Gen Y expectations from mentoring program.

Research Methodology

The research adopts an exploratory study to understand the formal mentoring program in organizations. A discussion with HR managers of various companies regarding important factors of employee mentoring program, types of mentoring and the success rate of mentoring in organizations formed the basis for a structured questionnaire to understand the opinion of protégés on mentoring. The questionnaire consisted of both structured questions using 5-point Likert rating scale and also qualitative questions to know the protégés perception towards the program.

Since the study involved understanding the views of protégés on mentoring, only employees of IT companies, who are currently part

of mentoring program in their companies, were considered for the study. A total of 312 respondents were part of the study.

Study on mentoring in organizations revealed that many companies like HCL, Oracle, IBM and so on have adopted employee formal mentoring programs that mainly provide guidance on employee career and gender diversity management at work. This study focussed on considering the protégé views. Responses for the study were collected by personal contacts and through emails.

Secondary data for the study was collected by company websites, research papers on IT industry employees, websites related to IT industry and published interviews and blogs of industry leaders.

A mixed type of questionnaire, consisting of both open ended questions and scaled questions was used in the study. The questionnaire focussed on the effect of mentoring on Gen Y, which constitutes majority of workforce in IT industry in India. The components were developed on the basis of literature as well as views expressed by HR managers on mentoring. Open ended questions were included to understand the protégé views with respect to all the above components as well as to understand their expectations from the program.

Respondent details:

Out of 312 respondents, 87% were employees of core IT companies, while 13% of the respondents were employees of ITeS companies including BPOs. 75% of respondents were male and 25% respondents were female. Also, 20% of respondents were aged less than 25 yrs, 69% respondents belonged to age group between 26 to 35, 10% were aged between 36 to 45 yrs and only 1% respondents were aged more than 46 years. It can be inferred here that around 89% of the respondents belonged to Gen Y. Majority of respondents, i.e, 73% had less than 5yrs of work experience. A total of 92% of respondents had a minimum qualification of a degree which shows that the respondents were well educated which is a norm in knowledge based industry like IT.

Major Findings:

Gen Y experience of Formal Mentoring program:

- 91% of respondents liked to be part of formal mentoring program.
- 66% of Gen Y respondents liked to discuss professional and work related issues with the mentors and only 34% of employees expected support from mentors in dealing with personal issues.
- 26% of respondents preferred weekly meetings, while 21% wanted to meet once in a month. 18% of respondents suggested everyday interaction with mentor, showing their preference for having immediate superior as mentor.
- 56% of respondents preferred workplace for mentor interactions, and a considerable 33% respondents opted to meet mentors outside the workplace in cafes etc. Shockingly, only 7% respondents wanted interaction on social network and 4% wanted video/ teleconferencing to interact with mentors.

Perceived benefits of mentoring:

Employee needs from mentoring differ from person to person. Few benefits of mentoring carefully chosen from available literature were listed and the respondents were asked, according to their experience of formal mentoring program, to specify whether they found the factors to be important benefit of mentoring. The Table 1 shows the opinions of respondents.

Table 1: Protégé Views on Mentoring Benefits

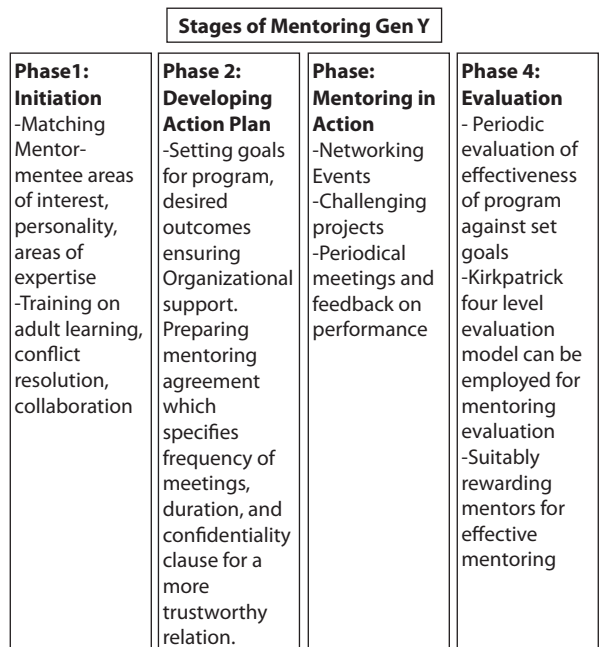
Sl no	Mentoring benefits	Percentage
1	Solving work issues	81%
2	Adjustment in company	76%
3	Decision making	72%
4	Knowing organizational climate	69%

5	Career progression	69%
6	Conflict resolution	65%
7	Getting recognition	58%
8	Knowing organizational grapevine	58%
9	Getting approvals for proposals	53%
10	Getting suitable job roles	53%
11	Getting into higher circles	51%
12	Dealing with personal issues	36%
13	Getting foreign assignments	27%

Conclusion:

It is evident from the above study that Gen Y is enthusiastic about formal mentoring program. They are ready to be mentored at the workplace either in personal meetings. They expect the mentors to assist them mainly in their personality development especially in enhancing leadership qualities, moulding attitudes to suit workplace environment and also look forward to guidance in long term vision setting and career planning. Good salary along with workplace environment that allows them to grow professionally is expected to help in their retention in organizations. They are ready to take on leadership roles if provided an opportunity and can be mentored to be developed as per organizational requirement. Gen Y employees, with an effective formal mentoring program can result in development of future managers who lead from front. Mentoring is effective when mentor likes to see his protégés grow as individuals who perform successfully professionally.

Fig 1: Suggested conceptual model for Mentoring Gen Y:



References:

1. Allen,TD, Eby,LT, Evans,SC, Thomas Ng, DuBois,D, (2008), "Does Mentoring Work?", Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 72(2), pp.254–267
2. Horwath, J, Leadership and Mentoring of Young Employees <http://www.sans.edu/research/management-laboratory/article/horwath-421-leader> retrieved on 18.3.2015
3. Johnson controls, Generation Y and the Workplace Annual Report 2010 <http://www.johnsoncontrols.oxygenzreport> retrieved on 18.3.2015
4. Meier,J, Crocker,SFM, Stephen F(2010), Generation Y in the Workforce: Managerial Challenges. The Journal of Human Resource and Adult Learning, Vol. 6, Num. 1, pp.68-78
5. Kathy. E. Kram,(1983), Phases of Mentor relationship, Academy of Management Journal, Vol.26, pp. 608-625
6. Linehan, M, Walsh, J. (1999). Mentoring relationships and the female managerial career. Career Development International. Vol.4(7), pp.348-352
7. Munro.CR (2009). "Mentoring Needs and Expectations of Generation-Y Human Resources practitioners: Preparing the next wave of Strategic Business Partners". Journal of Management Research, Vol.1(2), pp.1-25
8. Rosser, N. (2005). Mentoring from the top: CEO perspectives. Advances in Developing Human Resources. Vol.7(4), pp.527-539.
9. Dougherty, T. W., & Dreher, G. F. (2007). Mentoring and career outcomes: Conceptual and methodological issues in an emerging literature. In B. R. Ragins, & K. E. Kram (Eds.), The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research and practice (pp.51–93). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage