

Research Article

Talent Management to Improve Employee Competence: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: The research investigates two basic techniques in Talent Management, coaching and mentoring, in training marketing employees and how these techniques contribute to the best use of their talents. The research investigates how these skills can be utilized to developing the needed skills in the marketing employees. The study has worked to outline the extent to which talent Management improves competitiveness and how easily it can be taken up as a practice by the employees themselves. Qualitative method was employed to examine the mentors across three European companies using depth interviews. The research indicated that the training is a more integral entity and should be part of the training plan devised based on individual training needs assessment. Furthermore, new employees can be introduced with greater ease into the workplace when a coach or a mentor is in place. Finally, individuals who have themselves chosen their coach or mentor have a better professional outlook.

Keywords: *Talent Management; Mentoring; Coaching; Employee Competence; Qualitative Study*

1. Introduction

Talent management is a process that attempts to select the right individuals, to match them with the right position, and subsequently develop them to ensure they work their full potential for the organization. The purpose of Talent Management is recruitment of “right” individuals (particularly upper-tier executives); to attract and select the most ingenious, educated, and capable individuals whose work can lead the company to success (Miner, 1973). The definition of what is talent varies from one organization to another. The administration of talent management (TM) must examine each of the following factors in detail: talent definition, talent strategy, talent framework, employee value position, and talent management skills (Ingham, 2006).

Increased market demands have doubled requirements both by businesses and employees themselves. Herein, the need to find high-performing individuals and the need of staff to adapt to organizational requirements has led to the development of techniques for attracting and training personnel (Mihardjo et al., 2020). TM is responsible for finding these employees and for maintaining an equilibrium between employees and companies. According to Goffee and Jones (2007), one of the most important HR department activities is to cultivate upper management and create future leaders. Businesses should emphasize attracting talented individuals to their training as well as rewarding them. Companies can gain a competitive advantage when they carefully study the requirements of each work position they offer and understand what talents they require for each position. The study investigates the extent to which coaches

and mentors contribute to developing skills among marketing employees. Talent Management is examined as a widespread technique utilized by businesses to improve their competitiveness.

2. Literature Review

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development “talent rises from a person’s individuality and positive diversity, which is displayed in their work”. According to the Human Capital Institute and The Global Association for Strategic Talent Management, talent is an individual who brings intelligence, knowledge, and creativity, enabling them to work confidently both individually as well as in a group while adapting to evolving conditions. Generally, everyone defines talent as the individual meeting their requirements (Ingham, 2006).

Importantly, how to attract personnel must be planned carefully and special importance must be placed on financial (salaries, compensations); psychological (culture of collaboration, contribution to work, good relations between co-workers, balance of work and personal life); operational (training, prospects for personal development), and organizational factors (administration by leading managers, corporate history).

Management should also find ways to develop employees' skills who are observed to have greater prospects and avoid distinctions between individuals offered greater support in the training process while always extending respect to all employees (Ingham, 2006; Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2011). Alongside, increased technology offers individuals the capacity to seek work throughout the world, and at the same time, businesses can seek appropriate talents. According to Jackson and Sculer (2006), a robust business plan helps to analyze business requirements to highlight the required talent needed for the job.

According to the Asian Development Bank, emphasis on personnel demographics, organizational framework, and talent requirement is necessary regardless of whether the talent is treated as a resource, producing extra value for the company (Employee Value Proposition - EVP) or just to perform daily activities. Accordingly, three stages that must draw the attention of organizations and particularly their human resource management departments are:

- a. The stage preceding recruitment: Seeking out talents can take place from within or outside the business environment, and in many instances.
- b. The stage of work action: A talent is an individual whose requirements go hand-in-hand with the requirements of the business (Ingham, 2006; Cheesman, 2009). The organization should find a way for these needs to be matched through training programmes (Cheesman, 2009).
- c. The Departure Stage: During this stage, the organisation continues to contact the talent after their departure. Talents must be developed even if that means that they must depart from the business. The organization will do well to stay in contact with them and accept them back when they decide to return (Ingham, 2006).

2.1. Training methods that support Talent Management

2.1.1. Job Rotation

Using this process, individuals broaden and develop their skills, and managers also can learn a lot about their employees (Ortega, 2001). Job rotation offers the best possible understanding of the business. Additionally, if an employee departs suddenly the business is immediately in a position to fill that position (Jorgensen, 2005).

2.1.2. Simulation

Simulation is a reflection of a real-life process, usually using a computer or another technological device to provide a realistic experience.

2.1.3. Participation in committees

The employee learns the procedure, gains experience, and becomes capable of solving problems by participating in committees looking after different matters daily (Jorgensen, 2005). At the same time, they can assist in designing and revising company policies to meet market needs.

2.1.4. Seminar Attendance

A necessary prerequisite for the specific method's success is that the seminar matches the trainee's requirements. These seminars can either be distance-learning seminars using a digital platform or ones requiring physical attendance (Jorgensen, 2005).

2.1.5. Case study

Case study is an in-depth study of a phenomenon in its natural environment with subsequent submission of findings to deductive reasoning. This reinforces employees' critical and analytical abilities, who, at the same time, gain practice in evaluating the business's real problems and finding means to improve working conditions (Stokoe, 2014).

2.1.6. Role Play

Encourages thought and creativity, allows employees to develop and practice new behavioural skills. This method creates incentives so that it can be understood. participation is necessary for learning to take place via discussion and analysis of the problems that exist in real life (Stokoe, 2014).

2.1.7. Management games

Every team selects and analyses data and comes to decisions, considering a variety of variables, including expenses, sales, reserves, and production levels (Stokoe, 2014).

2.1.8. Active learning

Active learning aims to upgrade initial professional training and education of an intern by gaining knowledge, skills, and abilities, which increase their active participation in work. The role of the trainer is to co-ordinate and direct the trainee in order to develop their creativity so they can solve their problems by themselves (Stone, 2002; Jones & Lockwood, 1998).

2.1.9. E-learning

The learning process takes place through cutting-edge technologies, including computer programs and advanced telecommunications systems (Rosenberg, 2001).

2.1.10. Sensitivity Training

Participants discuss how they see the other trainees, how they evaluate their behaviour, and the feelings engendered by co-existing with the others as well as by the workplace itself (Rosenberg 2001).

2.1.11. Survival Training

An adventurous and risky excursion will increase an individual's self-confidence but will also push them to re-examine their priorities and re-evaluate their personal goals. It is important element to co-exist with other individuals in order to appreciate the concept of mutual assistance and teamwork, as well as to de-stress using the outdoors through personal risk as well as the common risk encountered and how that is experienced (Wagner et al., 1991).

2.2. Coaching

According to Renton (2009) "coaching is a tool which can help a person improve their skills and manage their interpersonal and professional relationships". Cox et al. (2014) claim that coaching "is a process that develops a person's skills through the interaction of specific and appropriate strategies and tools to achieve the business' development". Coaching focuses on the coachee's individual needs, the needs

of the coach, the relationship between them and the framework within which these are formulated. In this manner, the business collaborates with the coachee and helps them achieve a better result (Cox et al., 2014).

2.2.1. Process of Coaching

The process of coaching includes three phases:

- a. The Contract: An informal contract between the two parties i.e. coach and coachee, setting goals, timeline, confidentiality, and financial obligation.
- b. Data Collection: Data is collected through a procedure known as 360 feedback. In certain instances, people from outside the immediate environment collect the data (Waldman *et al.*, 1998; Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000).
- c. Data Analysis: The coach can help the coachee develop as a professional (Thach, 2002). A good coach can also recognize the needs of the coachee (Dalton & Hollenbed, 2001).

2.3. Types of Coaching

2.3.1. Executive coaching

The aim is to improve performance at an executive level. Focus on learning self-awareness for the success of the individual and the organization (Joo, 2005).

2.3.2. Team Coaching

An effort made to comprehend how the behavior of the individual affects their work. Then individuals attempt to comprehend how they impede or promote their team's smooth collaboration (Schein, 1988).

2.3.3. Life Coaching

After learning to prioritize their goals, individuals are motivated to succeed (Williams & Thomas, 2004). This form of coaching is utilized by individuals who seek to achieve personal and professional goals (Grant & Greene, 2001). According to Kyriazopoulos and Samanta (2011), the difficulties associated with coaching in general fall into four categories: a) Existing company culture; b) The nature of an individual's work; c) Business priorities (coaching does not fall under these); d) Problem behaviour by the coach or the coachee.

2.4. Mentoring

Mentoring is a learning process through which an individual with professional experience "teaches" a person who is at an earlier stage of their career. The mentor's role is only supportive, as individuals are responsible for their own actions (Bjorklund & Bee, 2015). Kram (1985) views mentoring as being divisible into career functions and psycho-social functions. In the first category, the mentor trains the protégé using various techniques to improve their professional skills, while the second category includes acceptance, affirmation, counseling, and friendship.

2.5. Phases of Mentoring

According to Kram (1985), there are four phases to mentoring, which include initiation, cultivation, and structural and psychological separation. Initiation Forming establishes the mentoring relationship that may even take up six to ten months, even in some cases. The cultivation phase is where the mentor attempts to develop the skills of their protégés, which concerns to work, decision-making, and general development of an individual, and this may take two to five years. Accordingly, structural and psychological separation is where the protégé gains greater independence, roughly taking six to twelve months, and lastly, redefinition caters to establishing new foundations to set for the relationship and can further develop into friendship (Kram, 1985).

There are several benefits, both for the business and for the employee when it comes to mentoring. The business commits to only a minimum expenditure for training the employee, while the employee avoids major pitfalls. Individuals who select a mentor usually seek to rise professionally (Bozionelos, 2006; Swap et al., 2001). However, in many instances, the mentoring relationship may be viewed with suspicion, particularly where individuals are of different gender (Clark, 1995; McDonald, 2003). Furthermore, even if the manager pressures for faster results, the mentor must remain focused on the goals set. Finally, the mentor must not view the professional rise of the protégé as a threat as this may create a significant issue in the relationship between them (Murray 2001; McDonald, 2003). Individuals who support a coach or mentor can deal with greater ease with work demands, while the individuals who have a coach or mentor, who has been designated by the business and have a better development. Newly hired individuals acclimate with greater ease in a business when there is a coach or mentor's support.

2.6. Managing talents` Marketing Competencies

Employees' Marketing competencies contribute to organization's marketing goals and objectives (Jackson et al., 1995). Creating flexible teams is vital for building up new competencies in marketing staff (Probst et al., 2000). Mentoring and coaching build knowledge and skills of marketing employees so that they are well prepared to take on new responsibilities and challenges. This includes making people acquire new capabilities and increase creative problem-solving abilities. Thus competence development will produce people who have adequate knowledge, skills, and behaviour required for superior performance in marketing jobs and contribute effectively to marketing goals.

Talent Management needs to focus on the needs of each individual. The process described in the research carried out by Rakesh Sharma & Jyotsna Bhatnagar (2009), concerning the individual development from the TM standpoint is as follows:

- a) Detailed analysis of the position.
- b) Use of psychometric tools (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009; Cheesman, 2009).
- c) Face-to-face interview with a senior executive and comparing the views with candidate's skills (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009; Cheesman, 2009).
- d) Checking all the individual qualifications and previous work experience.
- e) Plan for checking the progress of the work (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009; Cheesman, 2009).

Jantan (2009) studied the classification method of data collection as regards TM. This particular method creates motives to which a talent can be matched. This makes it more achievable to provide suitable marketing training for each individual. Furthermore, companies may train an individual by creating applications and websites that allow for training and simultaneously comprehend their workers' needs (Cheesman, 2009).

3. Methodology

For this study, a qualitative investigation was carried out through doing in-depth interviews of three mentors. Each interview roughly went for one and a half hour. The mentors were selected from different countries. The first mentor interviewed for the present study was 28-year-old Greek employed in the marketing department by a telecommunications company in Greece. The second was a 32 year old Swedish serving business in Sweden, whose goal was to integrate the children of immigrants into Swedish culture (RAPATAC). The third mentor interviewed was the 33 years old from New Zealand working in a catering company's marketing department in England. It is interesting that, despite the fact they came from different employment countries, they had common approaches regarding training and the significance of mentoring for the workforce. The semi-structured questions pose to them were open in format and concerned the mentoring relationship and its significance on the development of the marketing employees and, consequently, the company itself. There was a need to comprehend from both sides regarding the extent to

which mentoring can contribute to making the best possible use of abilities and through the study of both sides can provide an integrated understanding of whether companies should adopt TM techniques. The questions posed were the following:

1. How did you start working as a mentor?
2. How can a mentoring relationship help an employee improve their work?
3. Do you consider the existence of a mentor to be necessary for new recruits?
4. Is a mentor equally necessary also for individuals who have the potential to rise in the company even if they are not new hires for the business?
5. Should a company that seeks to be competitive provide resources for training its employees according to their individual requirements, or is that excessive?
6. How do you deal with any difficulties that arise in your relationship with a trainee? What techniques do you use?
7. Can you tell us three features a good mentor requires?
8. If an individual needs your help after the mentoring relationship has drawn to a close, are you willing to help them?
9. Do you believe that it is better for the employee to choose their mentor, or should the mentor be chosen by the business?
10. Do you believe that technology helps communication with the trainee and also their training?

4. Results

4.1. Interview One

The interviewee was chosen as a mentor because his ability was recognized in the nature of his work and his ability to transfer his knowledge to new recruits. According to the interview, the mentor's existence helps an individual feel secure and develop faster in the workplace, whether they are a new recruit or not. The company set aside funds to train employees as that is an investment in its own future. Technology is a medium that can assist training to a certain extent, as the protégé can contact the mentor at any time. The basic traits of a mentor are patience, offering assistance and politeness. The technique a mentor utilizes are feedback, so an individual can know what they have done and reward, when they have achieved a positive result. The relationship may potentially have better results when the protégé has already chosen their mentor, as the relationship will be more natural and will bring about the desired results. A good mentor displays patience, helps where needed, and civility.

4.2. Interview Two

During the second interview, the interviewee expressed that mentoring can help an individual considerably to develop but, in their experience, it is equally essential that the individual be able to help themselves through that relationship in order to develop; despite this, the existence of a mentor for an employee whether or not they are new recruits can be a significant help. Companies should set aside resources for training their personnel, but this is not always easy to do. Collaboration is the best solution, even in those instances where the company does not have resources to set aside. The technique mentioned in this particular interview was communication, listening, understanding the problem and finding a correct solution. Furthermore, seeking a second opinion from the mentor, supervisor, or colleague is a method that can be helpful as this particular interviewee admitted. The final interview also supports the view that the trainee should choose their mentor, leading with greater ease to the desired results.

A mentor is also important even if an employee is not a new recruit, however, only after examining the requirements of their position. The technique a mentor will use will be communication. Specifically, the mentor ensures that both mentor and protégé grasp the problem and that the mentor provides the

requisite tools and techniques in order for the protégé to overcome the said problem. A troubled relationship between a mentor and a protégé is overcome through communication and advice from a third party, who may perhaps be able to spot a point of view that the mentor has not managed to perceive. Mentoring is one of the techniques utilized by TM. As we can observe from our study employees, believe that TM can help them develop in their work, and this also is in line with the mentors' view. Choosing a mentor is often a delicate issue as in certain instances, the business may select a suitable individual to mentor the employee, but in other instances, the employee may choose the suitable individual. As far as the techniques utilized by mentors, these are rewards and listening to employees attentively. A good mentor can propel an individual to work hard and try hard, and both are very well aware that this will be achieved through their advice and by rewarding the end of each attempt. Finally, mentors consider technology to be important and they utilize it to stay in contact with their protégés.

4.3. Interview Three

The interviewee was chosen as a mentor because his ability was recognized in the nature of his work as well as his ability to transfer his marketing knowledge to new recruits. According to this particular interview, a recruit feels secure in their work when they can collaborate with a mentor, improving their day-to-day life. At the same time, a mentor's existence, even for individuals who are already in the business, can be a significant help in the development of employees.

The company should set aside resources for training its employees to invest in its progress. The basic features that a mentor should have are diplomacy, the ability to transmit knowledge, and patience. The relationship built should be professional yet also human, and that can be understood by the fact that whatever problem might arise either at work or in the relationship between the mentor and protégé should be examined in-depth, and the best solution should be found without creating any further issues. It is important that a mentor be there to listen to employees' problems and also to reward whatever their protégé has achieved, however minor. The company must examine the needs of each individual and then offer the necessary training programme. Additionally, the company should let the trainee be free to choose their own mentor, making the trainee feel more comfortable with their mentor. The technique that the specific mentor utilizes is communication with the trainee. As mentioned in the interview, the mentor talks with them and attempts to comprehend their needs, while rewards to the trainee are also considered an effective technique. The relationship between mentor and protégé is particularly complex, as is every human relationship. Through the interview, the mentor claimed that what plays a significant role in that relationship's success is patience, diplomacy, and the ability to transmit knowledge. Naturally, the mentor attempts to build a relationship of trust and communication, which can help the protégé at any time needed, even after training is complete.

5. Conclusion

The current research focused explicitly on coaching and mentoring. These two methods have shown that they do not play a definitive role by themselves, but that, in general, a training plan for the marketing workforce, which is designed to meet each individual's requirements and potentially includes mentoring or coaching, is effective. Furthermore, it has shown that individuals who have had a coach or mentor had the right training to deal with what their job dealt them. Employees consider that what TM provides can help them gain further knowledge of technical and theoretical content. The better they know the nature of their work, the easier they find it to respond to the demands made upon them and to bring about the best possible result.

At the same time, it is observed that TM's training does not play a significant role in employees' performance. This can be since businesses do not place particular importance on training or select incorrect ways to provide it. Businesses must grasp that they must focus specifically on each individual's needs and

properly select the means and individuals to achieve this end. Furthermore, the research ascertained that individuals who have chosen their own mentors could reach their potential better. This may occur because from the start, these individuals feel a sense of trust towards their mentors, which results in a smoother collaboration. It is important to underline that new recruits can adapt far more easily when there is a training plan for each employee, as it allows them to adapt to their new environment, as the mentors who were interviewed all agreed. Finally, where technology is concerned, it appears to play a major role, both for trainees and for mentors. We live in an age where technology evolves daily around us, and as a result, it becomes increasingly necessary to use, either on the communication front between mentors and employees, or in how the latter can be trained.

As far as the mentors' interviews are concerned, they consider that mentoring can help employees significantly. The mentors themselves were ready to assist a protégé even when the time of their collaboration had passed. They were chosen as mentors because the business considered that their knowledge enabled them to transmit their existing knowledge to other personnel. The employee can feel secure with the help of a mentor, particularly when they are new recruits. Furthermore, they claim that a mentor's existence, even for individuals who are not new to the company, is very significant. A mentor can help an individual see incentives that they may have overlooked, to see ways to work they may potentially not believe would help or which they may not have known.

Businesses should dedicate a portion of the resources at their disposal to train personnel and choose suitable individuals as mentors if a choice is not offered or if it is not possible for the employee to choose a mentor. Any friction and problems are something that the mentors themselves but also the employees will have to avoid to improve their collaboration and have the best results. As far as mentors' techniques, the reward is the main one, as it makes the individual feel that they managed to achieve the goal they were set and create a feeling of wanting to continue their efforts. Furthermore, it is important to listen to employees attentively, in order to comprehend their needs but also for personnel to feel that their mentors appreciate them and do not underestimate them.

5.1 Managerial Implications

Talent Management is quite complex to implement, but despite this, when companies contrive to attract talents, they need and develop them to meet their potential, they can benefit a lot. Companies need to make funds available to attract talents and develop them. Training should be individualized for each employee, just as every personality is unique, as companies can focus on each employee's weaknesses to provide them with the right training adapted to their needs. It would be good if a mentor could be selected by the employee themselves. However, if the company selects a mentor for an employee, there should be a capacity for the employee to be able to choose after a certain amount of time whether they should continue their training with this specific mentor or whether they require somebody who is better suited to their personality and more able to assist them. Accordingly, communication is one of the most significant factors affecting the outcome, so trainees should choose to help themselves through a mentor they can understand.

It is crucial to note that the mentor has experience and knowledge in the subject so as to guide and trains the employees but should also be able to transmit that knowledge so that the trainee can understand their training and display ingenuity in order to attempt to find various methods for the needs of every trainee. In conclusion, it is important that the mentor comprehend how significant their position is and to be certain to have the time required to train a protégé available, as in many instances, mentors do not have the time to train an individual, which results in that individual not receiving proper or even any training.

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