

The Impact of Mentoring on Employee Attitudes, Competencies and Performance

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Abstract

Mentoring programs have long promised benefits to employees and organizations. Approximately one third of major corporations in the United States offer formal mentoring programs. This proportion increases with the reputation of those organizations for favorable human resources practices. Mentored individuals tend to receive higher levels of compensation and promotions, have greater job and career satisfaction, and maintain higher expectations for career advancement and stronger career commitment than those not mentored. Research results, however, have been mixed; with some reviewers suggesting spurious relationships between mentoring functions and various types of attitudes and outcomes. A recent review of mentoring research suggested that although mentoring was positively correlated with attitudinal variables, individual factors such as ability and personality had a stronger relationship with objective outcomes. A fundamental question concerning the benefits of mentoring exists. Do mentoring programs improve attitudes, competencies, and performance of protégés; or do positive, competent and highly motivated individuals simply attract mentors? There continues to be a need for research that quantifies the impacts of mentoring on individual and organizational outcomes, while accounting for the influence of individual attributes.

The current study addressed this need by developing and testing a model that demonstrated the relationships of individual personality characteristics, mentoring barriers and functions, and job and organization attitudes; with supervisor reports of employee performance and competence. Data from 21 supervisors and 133 employees in a Fortune 500 insurance firm were subjected to LISREL analysis. Results demonstrated that mentoring is indeed a strategic human resource development activity with measurable benefits to employees and the firm. Efforts to reduce barriers and encourage mentoring can, in fact, lead to individual and organizational benefits like greater job, career and coworker satisfaction, more organizational commitment, and higher performance and competency. Further, these effects were independent of and similar in magnitude to core self evaluations. Results of the current study suggest that an increase in mentoring support has a unique and direct influence on job and organization attitudes and a unique and indirect influence on supervisors' perceptions of performance and competence. The findings suggest that organizations can influence these important attributes through a well-run mentoring program.

KEYWORDS: mentoring, mentoring barriers, core self-evaluation, attitudes