

EMCC Research Review

Issue 1: Outcomes for mentors



Introduction

Dear Reader,

This is the first issue of the EMCC Quarterly Research Review series. Each issue will address a specific topic and selectively introduce three scientific articles on the topic in question. The goal is not to offer a complete review of the academic literature. Rather, the aim is to offer the reader a nuanced perspective on the topic by including both qualitative, quantitative, conceptual and/or meta-analytical studies. The series is intended as a supplement to the EMCC Journal "International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching".

The topic of this first issue is what mentors gain from doing mentoring. Interestingly, this is somewhat under-researched question as the majority of studies look at the outcomes for mentees. Nevertheless, numerous claims have been made as to the benefits, so let us see what the evidence tells us.

The first study by Lillian Eby and colleagues investigates both the short- and long-term effects of mentoring for mentors. The study highlights the different effects of short-term instrumental and relational benefits, and indicates that both are important in the long run but for different reasons.

The next study by Manda Rosser is qualitative in nature and sets out to shed some light on the mentoring experiences of CEOs. The study is of an older date, but it is rare and difficult to gain insights into the uppermost echelons of organisations. The findings inform us about the essential role of mentoring for career advancement.

The third and final study is, to the best of my knowledge, the most recent meta-analysis of outcomes for mentors. It is conducted by Ghosh and Reio Jr. and it accumulates all the prior research and thus gives us the state-of-the-art.

Finally, a point on terminology. Since the vast majority of mentoring studies are carried out in the USA and/or published in American journals, you will see that most researchers use the term "protégé" rather than mentee. While this to a certain extent reflects what we might call an "American" perspective on mentoring, it is not a central concern in this particular issue. It will however be addressed in a later issue in the series.

Sincerely

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Short-term and long-term benefits of mentoring for mentors

Study: "The relationship between short-term mentoring benefits and long-term mentor outcomes"

By: Lillian Eby, Jaime Durley, Sarah Evans and Belle Ragins

Published in: Journal of Vocational Behaviour, Vol. 69, 2006, pp. 424-444

Introduction

Most mentoring research has focussed on mentee outcomes and benefits. While it has been suggested that mentors benefit from mentoring relationships as well, this study offers evidence of which benefits are related to the specific outcomes a mentor may gain in both the short and the long run.

What did the researchers do?

They researchers conducted a survey of 218 employees with mentor experience at two American universities. They distinguish between two categories of short-term benefits:

- Instrumental benefits: Improved job performance, recognition by others
- Relational benefits: Rewarding experience, loyal base of support

The researchers were interested in testing how these short-term benefits related to long-term outcomes for mentors. They used the following long-term outcomes:

- Salary
- Promotion
- Job Satisfaction
- Organisational Commitment
- Intentions to mentor again



Main Findings

- Short term benefits had no effect on mentor's promotion and salary
- Mentoring benefits had a positive effect on job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and mentors' intention to mentor again in the future
- Instrumental mentoring benefits had the largest effect on job satisfaction and commitment
- Relational mentoring benefits had the largest effect on intention to mentor again
- The mentors in the study generally perceived mentoring as a positive experience

Why is this interesting?

The study tells us that mentors generally like to mentor and feel that they benefit from it, especially in the short-term. The results indicate that instrumental benefits are important determinants for long-term organisational commitment and job satisfaction, but relational benefits are what motivate the mentor to keep mentoring in the future.

It also offers evidence that mentoring is not a direct means to higher salary and promotion.

How can you put this into practice?

We know that mentors benefit from mentoring as well as mentees, and that mentors generally find the task worthwhile. Yet to ensure desired long-term outcomes such as commitment and job satisfaction, a mentoring programme should seek to design a programme that favours instrumental benefits. This could involve a host a different initiatives. It may be as simple as telling the mentor that his/her participation in the programme is valued, or rewarding the mentor with some kind of mentor seminars or ongoing training. Mentoring a new employee could also be used as a specific part of the employee's development plan. However, to ensure that mentors will mentor more than once, a programme should emphasise relational benefits as well.



Drawbacks

As it is often the case in mentoring studies, the researchers rely on self-reports on whether the respondents have mentored others. Thus, there is no guarantee that they have actually done so nor that their imagined mentees felt mentored at all.

In addition, the sample for the study comprises only university employees, and thus the findings may reflect cultural values held by this particular group.

CEO mentoring experiences

Study: "Mentoring from the top: CEO perspectives"

By: Manda Rosser

Published in: Advances in Developing Human Resources, Vol. 7, 2005, pp. 527-539

Introduction

The study investigates what CEOs have gained from participating in mentoring programmes, both as mentor and as protégé.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher interviewed 15 CEOs from American corporations. After the interviews the respondents were sent a copy of the researchers notes to validate the information.

Main findings:

On being mentored:

- All CEOs reported mentoring as an important element to their success
- The mentorships described by the CEOs started informally
- Duration of mentorships ranged from a couple of months to 3 decades
- Not all relationships were "positive" but they were all instructive and valuable
- They also reported that the lessons learned through mentoring still has a profound impact on their daily practice as leaders



On mentoring others:

- The CEOs were all very conscious about who they were looking for as mentees. They see mentoring as a means to develop talents
- Some mentors made the point that mentorships can cause jealousy among employees, and thus need to be kept "secret"
- The respondents recognised that they were seen as role models
- They also used challenges as a means to develop mentees, combined with acceptance and confirmation tactics
- All the CEOs did not necessarily see themselves as "mentors" per se

Why is this interesting?

The study demonstrates the important long-term effects of mentoring. It is also interesting to note that all the CEOs in the study acknowledge this effect. They all agree that mentoring in some form has played a vital role in their success.

How can you put this into practice?

Perhaps the most important and useful aspect of this study is the way that mentoring can be used in talent management. Although the CEOs highlighted the importance of mentor relationships developing naturally, it certainly begs the question, how mentoring can be used strategically as a tool for talent management.

The answer to that question has not been identified yet.

Drawbacks

The main drawback of the study lies in the method. While interviews often lead to interesting insights, the results ultimately rely on people's subjective, retrospective accounts. Also, interview-based studies typically rely on small sample sizes, which means that they can be somewhat hard to generalise from.

Outcomes for mentors: a Meta-analysis

Study: "Career benefits associated with mentoring for mentors: A meta-analysis"

By: Rajashi Ghosh & Thomas G. Reio Jr.

Published in: Journal of Vocational Behaviour, Vol. 83, 2013, pp. 106-116

Introduction

This study is a meta-analysis of the effects of mentoring for mentors. A meta-analysis is an analysis that compiles and models all the prior research in a single study. The advantage of meta-analyses is therefore the extraordinary amount of data they include. On the other hand, the validity of a meta-analysis rests on the quality of the included studies.

What did the researcher do and what did they discover?

The researchers included 8 studies in their meta-analysis. They then computed a number of different correlations based on total sample sizes ranging from 192 to 30,737 observations. The enormous sample in one of the models results from one specific study (Gentry et al. 2008) with a sample of 30,365 respondents. This could potentially undermine the validity of the meta-analysis. However, having read the study, there is nothing to worry about on that account.

The researchers distinguish between three mentoring functions:

Psychosocial function: Sponsoring, exposure-and-visibility, protection, challenging assignments

Career functions: Counselling, friendship, acceptance-and-confirmation

Role modelling: Being someone the mentee wishes to like



Main findings:

- Mentors were more satisfied with their job and more committed than non-mentors
- Mentoring had no effect on turn-over intent
- Mentors who provide career mentoring performed better at work and experienced more career success
- Mentors who provide psychosocial mentoring are more satisfied with their job, more committed to the organisation, and experienced more career success
- Mentors who provide role modeling are more satisfied with their job and perform better at work

Does it matter which type of mentoring, the mentor offers?

- For Job Satisfaction, offering Career mentoring had the largest positive effect
- For Organisational Commitment, providing Psychosocial mentoring had the largest positive effect
- For Job Performance, providing Career mentoring had the largest effect
- For Career Success, providing Career mentoring had the largest effect
- Finally, the higher perceived quality of the mentoring relationship resulted in increased job satisfaction and career success

Why is this interesting?

The study reports a number of positive effects of mentoring for mentors in particular related job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This is obviously of interest for managers who want more committed and satisfied employees. On the other hand, mentoring did not have any effect on turnover intention meaning that if an employee had plans about leaving, mentoring does not have any effect on this.

The analysis also showed that career mentoring had the largest effect on job satisfaction, job performance, and perceived success, whereas psychosocial mentoring had the largest effect on commitment. This indicates that unless the goal is commitment, it would be wiser to frame the mentorships as career oriented.



Finally, the analysis showed that the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship had a positive effect on mentor's career outcomes. This indicates that companies should invest resources in proper training if they want the maximal benefit from a mentoring programme

How can you put this into practice?

The study showed that mentoring has a number of positive effects on the career outcomes of mentors. Interestingly, all of these effects are also in the interest of the company. Thus, the study shows that introducing a mentoring programme in the organisation is likely to result in a range of benefits.

Drawbacks

There are two major drawbacks to keep in mind when reading the result of this study. First, we cannot verify the direction of causality between the variables in the study. Thus, it may be that employees who are already committed, satisfied, and high performing are more likely to sign up as mentors. This would mean a reverse direction of causality than the one implied above.

Second, the study shows that mentoring has a number of positive effect *on average*. It does not tell anything about what effects can be expected by a specific company, nor does it tell anything about how to implement a mentoring programme in practice.

Conclusion

The research seems pretty clear – mentors have a lot to gain from mentoring others. Although mentors should not expect a rise in pay as a result of their mentoring endeavours, they are quite likely to be more satisfied with their job, experience more success in general, and feel more committed to the organisation. These findings are certainly also interesting for company managers as more satisfied, successful and committed employees are likely on their want-list. It is also quite telling that all the CEOs in Rosser's study reported that their mentors had a profound effect on their career advancement.

A word of caution, however, before everyone initiates mentor programmes in their organisations. Even though the studies are well-conducted, their methodological nature makes it impossible to determine the direction of causality. This means that we cannot know whether mentoring made employees more satisfied, committed and successful, or if more satisfied, committed, and successful employees are more likely to self-select as mentors. While, it is possible to make a quasi-experimental research design that accommodates this weakness, I am not aware of any studies that have done so.