

BOOK REVIEW

Meyer, M., & Fourie, L. (2004). *Mentoring and coaching: Tools and techniques for implementation*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing.

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This book is aimed at providing practical guidelines for people involved in mentoring and coaching. Given the need for skills development, employee involvement and change management in South Africa, mentoring and coaching offer a method of transforming the way in which organisations train their employees, manage performance and accelerate employee career development. Further, it can be used to transfer knowledge from people with the most experience to those with less knowledge. As a result it can be a useful tool in achieving employment equity. Written by South African authors, the book is tailored to organisations in this environment where issues such as diversity place additional challenges for mentoring and coaching processes. The book is easy to read and includes a number of issues to consider as well as check lists in each of its ten chapters.

During the first chapter, the concepts of mentoring and coaching are introduced. These processes are defined, the relationship between them explored, myths regarding them debunked, and their purpose and benefits covered. A balanced view is promoted whereby mentoring and coaching are not seen as quick fixes or as panaceas, but as processes that need to be introduced with due consideration to the readiness of organisations for them. Further, the positioning of these processes within organisations is discussed and it is noted that they should not be owned by human resources departments. Thus the need for a systemic approach is indicated in the first chapter. This is an aspect that is also touched upon in later chapters, without losing the focus on mentoring and coaching.

The role of managers as coaches forms the theme of the second chapter. The management and coaching processes are compared, with the crux of the difference being the emphasis of development in order to achieve goals. The discussion of management styles in relation to control versus coaching is very useful and likely to provoke much thought for managers considering taking on the role of coach. The coaching process is divided into stages and the various roles that coaches play are discussed. It is stressed that coaches require dynamism, energy and enthusiasm. While this is not disputed, the organisational constraints that coaches themselves face and that may diminish these qualities need to be given more attention. The self-assessment checklist for evaluating coaching skills could be useful in providing coaches with an indication of their level of skills and areas where they could improve their coaching.

Relationships, which form the essence of mentoring, are the theme of chapter three. The relationship usually begins with matching, in the case of mentoring, or through appointment, in the case of coaching. The process of matching mentors and mentees could have been explored in more depth. Once the relationship is established, goals are formulated and an action plan developed. The various roles of mentors and mentees are discussed, with a useful classification of mentees according to their level of dependence on the mentor and their focus on goal achievement, dividing them into passengers, pedestrians, patients and pilots. While this has the danger of labeling mentees, it could be useful as a discussion point between mentors and mentees and for mentors in deciding on an appropriate style and role. Mentor and mentee self-assessment checklists are provided and could be useful in discussions between the two. The section on phases of mentoring relationships is important in that it allows for growth and

change in the relationship. The impact of organisational culture is discussed and an organisational readiness for mentoring inventory included.

Chapter four focuses on mentoring and coaching skills. It begins with the characteristics of coaches based on the International Coach Federation's competency list, thus providing a useful international context. Thereafter the knowledge, skills and values required of mentors and coaches are discussed in detail. The section on confrontation skills is particularly useful and gives sound advice for dealing with potentially sensitive issues. The competencies covered could form the basis for the selection, training and evaluation of mentors and coaches.

Mentoring and coaching can take on various forms, varying in aspects such as the degree of formality, types of goals and the number of parties involved. The options available are covered in chapter five and include informal mentoring, formal mentoring, coaching, executive coaching, co-active coaching, team coaching, professional coaching, reverse mentoring, multiple mentoring and electronic-supported mentoring. Techniques used in these and the benefits are covered. Case studies, based on South African and international organizations, illustrate the various forms of coaching and mentoring.

The chapter on troubleshooting covers the potential pitfalls that both mentors and mentees typically make, as well as broader issues related to the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Some of the most common mistakes made by mentors are over-protecting the mentee, placing more importance on their own needs than the relationship, the expectation that the mentee become very similar to the mentor, allowing the mentor's culture to dominate, having insufficient time to devote to the mentee or overloading the mentee with work, insufficient flexibility, being reluctant to confront issues, and focusing too much on mistakes rather than obtaining an overview of the mentee. Pitfalls common to mentees include being manipulative, expecting hand-outs, being the targets of jealousy from other employees, being dependent on the mentor and under-performing. In order to preserve a healthy and productive relationship, the mentor and mentee need to guard against becoming intimate friends, try to develop an equal relationship, and ensure that they do not undermine the mentee's line manager. Some relationships run the risk of being either too formal or too informal. Conflict between the mentor and mentee is fairly common as are issues regarding diversity and confidentiality. Although the book states that mentors and mentees need to be appropriately matched, this process is not explored in depth. The importance of training of both parties is stressed. Suggestions are made regarding possible solutions to the problems. This is a useful chapter that serves to alert all parties involved of the potential pitfalls that can generally be avoided given appropriate selection of mentors and mentees and training.

Chapter seven explains the process of managing the overall mentoring process. It sets the scene with a discussion of typical obstacles encountered and then contrasts these with the characteristics of successful mentoring programmes. The implementation process is then described and illustrated with a case study. Aspects that organizations may not initially consider are included, such as the creation of mentoring support structures. Certain aspects could have been explored in more depth, such as the selection of mentors and the matching of mentors and mentees. However, this is a useful chapter that culminates in an example of a mentoring agreement and various self-assessment forms.

Facilitation is a core competency for mentors and a chapter is devoted to it. Useful guidelines are provided regarding the

decision regarding outsourcing facilitation or keeping it within the organisation, training facilitation skills, adult learning, facilitation characteristics and skills, phases in facilitation and the different forms that facilitation can take. As with the other chapters, useful self-assessment forms are included.

Chapter nine examines mentoring and coaching as training tools and relates these roles to the South African National Qualifications Framework's (NQF) unit standards for coaching in education, training and development. Four types of qualifications are described: coach learners (NQF3); guide and support learners (NQF5); guide and counsel learners (NQF6); and on-the-job coaches (NQF5). The process of using mentoring or coaching as training tools is briefly set out, starting with an analysis of the skills gap and ending with evaluation.

The concluding chapter examines the future of mentoring and coaching. It covers the impact of globalization, the need to develop the mentors and coaches themselves, cross-functional mentoring, life coaching, the role of electronic communication, the professionalisation of mentoring and coaching, multiple mentoring, measurement issues, and the integration of mentoring and coaching.

This easy to read book provides practical guidelines for managers, which, if followed, are likely to contribute to the success of mentoring and coaching in organisations. It is based in sound theory and covers wide range of issues. Although the scope of the book does not allow all issues to be explored in depth, it can be used to check that key aspects have been considered and are implemented. Most chapters contain case studies and self-assessment check lists that can be used to encourage reflection on mentoring and coaching processes.