



Mentoring in Businesses & Organisations

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Mentoring in organisations and businesses has become more popular in the last decade. Several studies indicate the efficacy of this and New Zealand businesses have begun to report a range of issues that can be readily addressed through mentoring or coaching. While the practice varies widely there appears to be agreement that offering some form of mentoring or coaching to staff is a cost effective answer to a wide range of issues encountered by people within organisations. Dr Janett Levien of progressions offers one-to-one mentoring and in-house training for mentoring programmes in organisations.

MENTORING IN BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS

We are all aware that human resources in businesses and organisations are the most costly and most crucial to success and profitability. The importance of managing and developing workers is illustrated in an article by Butch Mawdsley (partner of RES Business Development, Auck.) in NZ Business magazine (Aug. 2009). Butch points out that while many businesses cut staff to survive in a recession, studies by the Certified Practising Accountants of Australia (CPA) show that half of all businesses that cut down on staff do not reduce their operating costs, two-thirds do not increase profit and over three-quarters do not increase productivity. "...managers often don't realise the impact such a practice [cutting staff] may have on workplace spirit and staff morale." Instead, Butch suggests, "Business owners must lead with vision, connect with employees, implement high performance management practices and have a positive attitude."

Coaching or mentoring is able to make an important contribution in these respects. There has been a worldwide trend over the last decade for organisations to recognise the desirability and value of instituting mentoring for staff although the form of mentoring varies greatly from informal to formal, and from one-to-one mentoring to group mentoring. Often, a variety of mentoring is present within an organisation.

The New Zealand Mentoring Centre (NZMC) conducted a survey over the June 06 – April 07 period involving over 130 respondents. The organisations seeking to implement mentoring programmes and training within their organisations ranged across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, and from small to large national, and even international, organisations. The majority of respondents were from the profit sector - 46% from the private sector and 37% from the public sector, with only 17% from the not-for-profit sector. With respect to formal/informal, the majority of respondents (60%) reported that the mentoring was informal.

Mentoring equips people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities to fully develop, personally and professionally. We often instinctively turn to an experienced person when needing guidance or a sounding board. *Formal* mentoring takes this natural process and gives it a structure that provides support and growth through a clear framework and guidelines. It is not just done in times of crisis or when you 'need it', but on a regular basis which creates opportunities for ongoing learning.

Formal vs. Informal Mentoring

The NZMC reported that the 40% of formal mentoring which was identified covered a range of processes. What was identified as common to all formal mentoring was that it involved dedicated time and "arranged" personnel. Employment Today Magazine (March/April 2007) reported research by David Lane, a British mentoring and coaching expert as indicating that problems arise with informal mentoring relationships when the relationship becomes more important than the learning. It was also suggested that such relationships can become too comfortable, too familiar and less challenging. Informal mentoring can also perpetuate social exclusion because often only those who are confident and ambitious find a mentor. Survey respondents who were in a *formal* mentoring programmes felt that they had better access and higher quality mentoring opportunities.

Informal mentoring has value, but by strategically adding *formal* mentoring into the learning and development mix organisations gain greater benefit from their greatest resource; their own people.

Benefits of Mentoring

According to the NZMC survey, organisations found mentoring or coaching was valuable in addressing:

Individual performance issues (80%) - This may range from "enhancement of skills through experience of others" to fixing "perceived performance problems rather than the development of staff and the transfer of knowledge". It also covers assertiveness coaching for immigrant and other potentially discriminated staff.

Change: (70%) - Transition is an integral part of work in modern organisations. It covers new and inexperienced staff, changes in role and changes in organisational structure, markets and strategy.



Career Progressions: (57%) - Enhancing career progress has some overlap with change in that support for transition to new roles will also aid in career progress.

Professional/personal development: (57%) – Support of work/values driven management.

Leadership: (53%) - This was seen as important both for the individual and the organisation, and mentoring was identified as a very positive way of providing leadership development.

To address personal non-work issues (43%) - This included personal development, family issues and issues with friends.

Attraction & retention (40%) - Mentoring is seen in a very positive light in terms of retaining staff. Mentoring is also perceived to have "increased staff satisfaction, motivation and increased profit".

To address diversity/equality issues (17%) - Mentoring is perceived as providing a forum for addressing cultural and equality issues.

The most important factors for success in organisational mentoring programmes were support from the top and from HR as well as a culture within the organisation that valued mentoring and personal development. In addition individuals signing on for mentoring must be willing participants. Some of the hindrances included: "Untrained people jumping on a bandwagon and assuming they can mentor and coach with no formal training or supervision" and "Shortage of good mentors with the time and inclination to accept the role and/ or to continue in and develop the role or mentor". Lack of funding for a mentoring programme or external mentor was also an issue in many organisations.

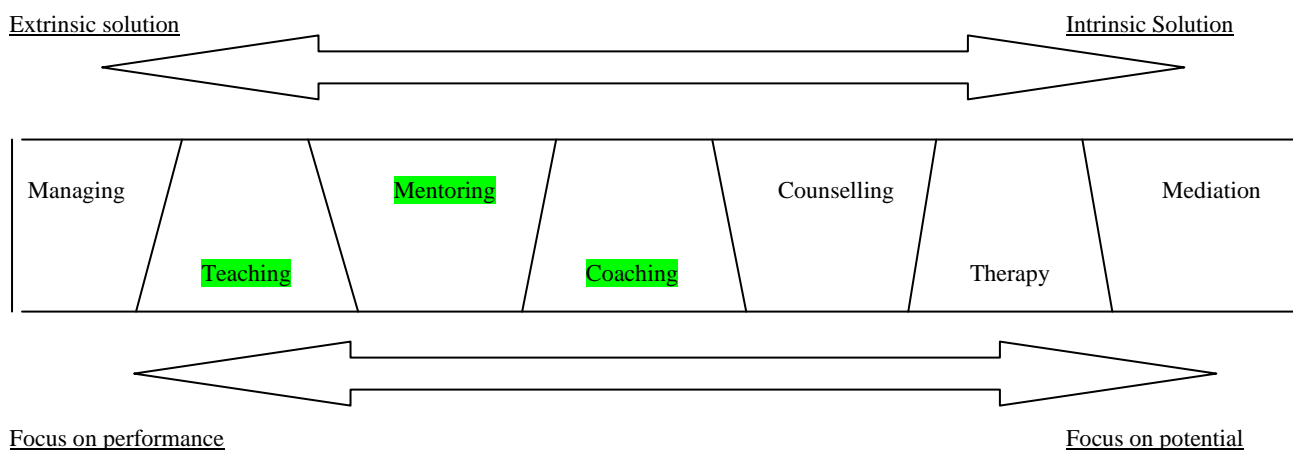
The NZCM survey reported that most of the respondents found mentoring to be beneficial to both the individual and the organisation although it was too soon to be able to quantify the benefits.

Formal mentoring or coaching can be via an external service or a formal internal process. What the NZMA survey has shown is that where mentoring is via an internal process there must be a pool of suitable, well trained and supported mentors. While mentoring/coaching on an individual basis can prove to be a cost effective solution to staff support, training and performance issues there does need to be a commitment to resource this and to support those involved.

Dr Janett Levien through **progressions** offers a skilled mentoring and coaching service that includes establishing, training and supporting in-house mentors for organisations as well as providing one-to-one and group mentoring as an external and impartial expert.

Mentoring or Coaching?

These terms are often used interchangeably and there is much debate (even among mentors and coaches) as to the distinctions. Similarly there is often confusion between the practice of counselling and that of coaching. The following diagram may provide some clarity. Dr Janett Levien is trained and experienced in working within the highlighted band.



Call Dr Janett Levien or visit the **progressions** website for further information (see contact details below.)

