

Selecting and Training: Trainers vs. Mentors



PURPOSE: Help companies identify and train quality trainers and mentors for the apprenticeship program. Selecting the right incumbent workers to conduct training and mentoring is crucial to the success of the apprenticeship program. Trainers will need to invest time and talent in training the apprentices on specific tasks, enhancing what is done in the classroom. Mentors will be a guide for apprentices as they pursue their apprenticeship goals. Below is a list of characteristics to keep in mind when selecting potential mentors and trainers.

Characteristics of the Ideal Trainer:

Training is a structured process aimed at imparting specific knowledge and skills to individuals and groups. Characteristics of a good trainer include:

- Subject matter expert on specific areas of the apprenticeship on-the-job training competencies.
- Understands the apprenticeship standards and the need for the apprenticeship program.
- Interested in making sure that skills are taught correctly.
- Understands the need to provide skills training to the next generation of employees in an objective manner.
- Shows an aptitude for teaching and leading others.
- Ability to communicate effectively.
- Ability to relate the conceptual and theoretical concepts of related instruction to the hands-on component of OJT.
- Willing to take ownership of apprentice success.
- Able to make a time commitment to training apprentices.
- Exhibits patience and understanding of the learning process.

Characteristics of the Ideal Mentor:

Mentoring is a relationship-based approach in which an experienced individual provides guidance, advice, and support to someone less experienced. Characteristics of a good mentor include:

- Substantial amount of experience in the occupation.
- Able to help apprentices to navigate their career path.
- Willing to be a life-long learner in their own career.
- Willing and able to commit time to the mentoring role.

Developing On-Site Trainers:

A company should consider requiring trainers to attend a structured Train-the-Trainer course. This can be developed internally or can be a course from an external education provider. Having trainers attend a standardized course will assure that all trainers are aware of the issues and unique requirements of teaching or training working adults. Prior to starting the apprenticeship, it is crucial that the trainers are in place and prepared to train. If a company does not have trainers, sending seasoned, interested employees through a training bootcamp will be a great addition to the company's career pathway.

Developing On-Site Mentors:

Mentors, too, are extremely important in the workplace, especially with registered apprenticeship. Mentoring is not for just anyone. Mentoring can be time-consuming, and if not done properly, can be overwhelming. Plus, mentoring means different things in different employee populations. Mentoring an adult with previous work experience is much different than mentoring a recent high school graduate with little or no experience. When considering societal issues and pressures, mentoring in the workplace becomes extremely important.