MENTOR RESOURCE GUIDE

For Work-Based Learning And On-The-Job Training

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DWD INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF **WORKFORCE** DEVELOPMENT | **Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship**

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Section 1: Introduction

Work-Based Learning & Mentorship

As more focus and attention is given to the development and expansion of on-the-job learning opportunities for youth and adults in the workplace, the mentorship component of work-based learning programs is consistently elevated as the cornerstone of what makes them successful. Trained work-based learning mentors provide their mentees with the personal guidance, industry expertise, and support needed to thrive in their roles, as well as help bridge the gap between classroom learning, and practical application of skills utilized on the job. By fostering meaningful mentoring relationships, employers can ensure the transfer of critical skills, promote professional growth, and build a stronger, more capable workforce.

Understanding the impact of consistent and quality mentorship practices, the Indiana Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship is proud to provide both Hoosier employers and workforce development specialists supporting businesses in their communities, a Mentor Resource Guide. Addressing common challenges and outlining clear expectations for mentors, this guide aims to offer practical strategies, best practices, and actionable tools to help mentors excel in their role. The material included represents a collection of mentorship literature, insights, and best practices from related research, educators, national organizations, as well as public resources developed by state and federal agencies.
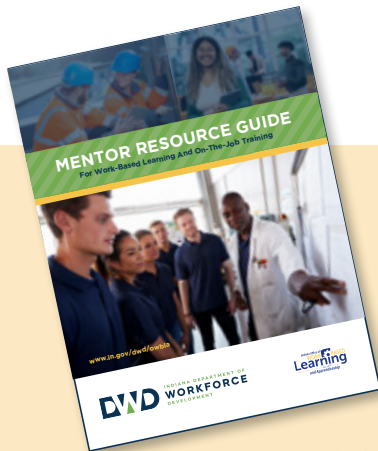
We encourage readers to delve into the guide and personalize its contents to suit their unique mentoring needs. Tailor the resources, exercises, and templates provided to reflect the organizational culture and learning goals supported by the mentoring relationships. Actively engaging in mentor training will not only enhance the skills of mentors, but also contribute to a more enriching experience for both mentors and mentees alike.

A Note to the Mentor

Congratulations on being selected to facilitate on-the-job learning and mentorship to new apprentices or training participants at your organization. Being recognized and chosen to fill this important role is a testament to your professional competence and personal qualities that make you a valuable asset to your organization.

As part of a successful work-based learning program, your role as a mentor is multifaceted and crucial for the occupational development of your mentee(s). Your ability to provide guidance and support through hands-on training, sharing best practices, offering advice, encouragement, and constructive feedback will help those you're training overcome challenges and achieve their learning goals.

You've likely been selected as someone who has demonstrated professionalism, leadership, and integrity in your own work, and thus entrusted to model behavior and decision-making as your mentees learn valuable lessons about what it takes to succeed in your industry.

Aside from the variety of technical skills you'll be transferring to your mentee(s) on the job, you'll also be an important factor in helping them build confidence in their abilities by encouraging them to take on new challenges and stretch beyond their comfort zones. Great mentors not only support their mentees in their professional development, but also in their personal growth and well-being.

This type of mentorship can provide guidance on work-life balance, stress management, and self-care, helping your mentees thrive both professionally and personally.

Your role as a mentor is multifaceted and crucial for the occupational development of your mentee(s).

Learning Objectives for Mentor Training

Becoming a successful workplace mentor involves developing a range of skills and knowledge areas. Here are some essential learning objectives for an employee who will be a mentor:

1. **Understanding Mentorship Roles and Responsibilities:**
   - Define the role of a mentor and understand expectations from both the organization and mentee.
   - Learn about the difference between mentorship, coaching, and training.

2. **Building Effective Communication Skills:**
   - Develop active listening skills to understand the mentee's needs and challenges.
   - Practice asking open-ended questions to facilitate meaningful conversations.
   - Learn how to provide constructive feedback and guidance.

3. **Setting Clear Goals and Expectations:**
   - Establish SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals with the mentee.
   - Create a plan for mentorship sessions and ongoing support.

4. **Developing Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:**
   - Recognize and respond to the emotional needs of the mentee.
   - Foster a supportive and inclusive environment.

5. **Sharing Knowledge and Expertise:**
   - Identify areas where the mentor can provide valuable insights and guidance.
   - Share relevant experiences, lessons learned, and best practices.

6. **Promoting Career Development:**
   - Help the mentee explore career aspirations and development opportunities.
   - Provide guidance on skill-building, networking, and professional growth.

7. **Encouraging Reflection and Learning:**
   - Foster a culture of continuous learning and self-reflection.
   - Encourage the mentee to set personal development goals and track progress.

8. **Navigating Challenges and Conflict Resolution:**
   - Learn strategies for addressing conflicts or challenges that may arise during mentorship.
   - Practice problem-solving techniques and mediation skills if needed.

9. **Maintaining Confidentiality and Trust:**
   - Understand the importance of confidentiality in mentorship relationships.
   - Build trust through honesty, reliability, and respect for boundaries.

10. **Evaluating and Improving Mentorship Effectiveness:**
    - Solicit feedback from the mentee and reflect on areas for improvement.
    - Continuously refine mentorship approaches based on feedback and self-assessment.

By focusing on these learning objectives, an employee can prepare themselves to be an effective workplace mentor, contributing positively to the professional growth and development of their mentees.

Section 2: Mentors as On-the-Job-Trainers

Defining Mentorship

In the workplace, the terms *mentorship* and *mentor* are closely related but have distinct meanings.

Mentorship
noun **[men-tawr-ship]**

1   **Mentorship** refers to the relationship or process where guidance, advice, and support are provided, usually by a more experienced individual (the mentor) to a less experienced one (the mentee). It involves the ongoing interaction, learning, and development that occurs within this relationship. Mentorship is often seen as a broader concept that encompasses various activities, such as career counseling, skills development, and personal growth.

Mentor
noun **[men-tawr]**

1   A **Mentor**, on the other hand, is the skilled worker or journeyperson who provides the guidance, support, and often on-the-job learning within the mentorship relationship. A mentor is typically someone with more experience, knowledge, or expertise in a particular area, and they use their experience to help the mentee navigate challenges, achieve goals, and grow professionally. The role of a mentor can be formal (assigned by the organization) or informal (developed naturally over time).

Registered Apprenticeship mentoring is a structured process. **80% of the apprentice's training – and most of their learning – will be accomplished on the job**. The mentor needs to be well acquainted with the apprentice's training goals and requirements as laid out in the apprenticeship standards so the mentor can guide the apprentice through the progression of skills necessary for successful completion of the program. A good mentor will know what theory the apprentice is learning in the classroom and help the apprentice apply it in practice on the job.

Mentoring is best accomplished as part of a formal work-based learning model where:

• Classroom training provides students with basic theory and general understandings
• Hands-on instruction applies the classroom learning within a controlled work environment.
• Students get to work alongside an experienced professional on the job to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in other aspects of their training to real-life work they will be expected to do every day.

Characterizing Elements of Mentoring

There are few studies that explore the value of mentorship in training, but as more companies identify mentorship as a comprehensive approach to supplement traditional classroom and on the job learning, researchers will continue to reveal evidence of its benefits. One survey featured in *A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, elicited feedback from individuals involved in workplace mentorship along with their perspectives on the value of mentorship as a part of training.

Specifically, researchers sought to gather information about the desired elements of mentoring and qualities of mentors and mentees. Common elements included: exchange of information or knowledge between people, guidance and becoming more effective.

"

Mentee Reflections:

"Someone who has quite a bit of experience and who is willing—this is most important—to share their experience …"

"Someone who can help us, in whom we can ask a question and trust on a specific topic."

"

Mentor Reflections:

"I don't look at myself as the expert, I do know what I'm trying to teach to help people grow, but not showing up as a know-it-all."

"Being able to guide someone along in a process, showing them the ropes essentially so that the … mentee [is] able to do things on their own, to be able to accomplish a goal."

"A mentor is guiding a person to get to an end, showing them by example, maybe formal training, showing them the ropes, the tricks of the trade."

"My role is to help them to grow in the learning process and make them the best they can be … so they can transfer this knowledge to the next group … I'm looking at building future leaders."

" "Someone who can help us, in whom we can ask a question and trust on a specific topic."

Mentor Roles

Mentors in work-based learning assume multiple roles within their mentorship in order to enhance the overall development of new mentees to ensure a more comprehensive learning experience. Determining which roles are best to assume depends on the mentor's abilities along with the needs of the mentee.
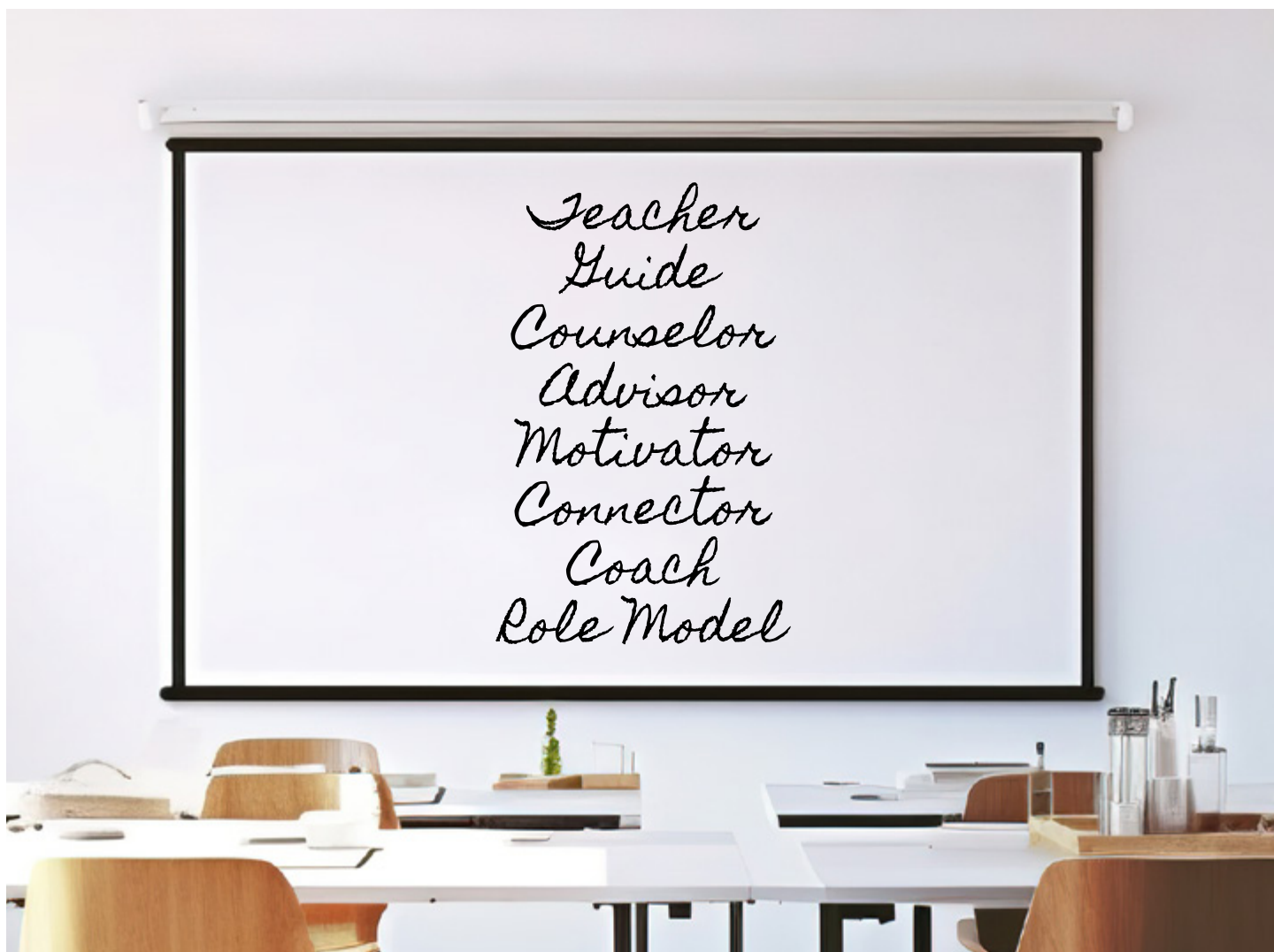
Teacher

This role requires the mentor to share experiences as a seasoned professional. First, however, the mentor needs to be aware of the skills needed to perform job tasks successfully. It is important to share lessons learned from past mistakes to strengthen the relationship. The teaching role also requires mentors to step back and understand that the mentee is just beginning the learning process. Sometimes, veteran professionals know their work so well that they tend to assume that work-based learners already have some basic understanding of the job. Mentors must be able to see the job as the mentee does and remember how difficult it was to learn new skills.

Mentor Roles *(Continued)*

Guide

As a guide, the mentor helps the mentee to navigate through the job and the inner workings of the organization. "Behind the scenes" or workplace politics are not always obvious to an outsider. The mentor should explain "unwritten rules" so that the mentee can become aware of the workplace environment. This includes knowledge of special procedures that are not always documented. It could also include policies under consideration.

Counselor

The mentor acts as a counselor by providing guidance, support, and encouragement to a mentee navigating their professional journey. By actively listening and offering constructive feedback, the mentor creates a safe space for the mentee to share concerns and reflect on their experiences. This supportive relationship fosters growth, builds confidence, and helps the mentee adapt to the workplace culture while enhancing their skills and career development.

Advisor

This role requires the mentor to help the mentee develop professional interests and set realistic career goals. As an advisor, the mentor talks to the mentee about what they want to learn and sets career goals. Keep in mind that the process of setting goals must be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the workplace.

Motivator

Motivating the mentee is a difficult yet essential mentor role. Motivation can be learned but is typically a natural inner drive which compels a person to be positive and succeed.

Connector

In the role of connector, the mentor helps their mentee establish a network of contacts within the workplace. This gives learners on the job a chance to meet other people for professional as well as social development. As a connector, mentors introduce their mentees to their own contacts to help build their own network structure.

Role Model

As a role model, the mentor sets an example of the values, ethics, and professional practices of the workplace. Most mentees, in time, imitate their mentors. Therefore, a mentor must have high standards of professionalism, solid work ethics, and a positive attitude. A mentor must exhibit the positive qualities of an experienced professional.

Mentor Qualities

Good Communicator
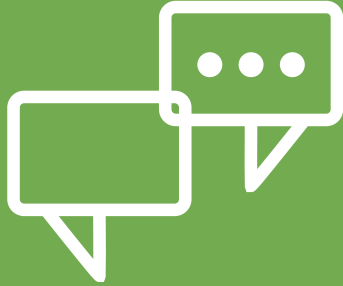
- Presents information clearly and consistently
- Demonstrates good listening skills
- Provides timely and effective feedback

Patience

- Tolerates mistakes
- Repeats information as needed
- Models composure by demonstrating calmness in challenging situations

Sense of Humor

- Reinforces that it's OK when mentees make mistakes
- Remembers that errors in training are part of the learning process
- Understands laughter accelerates feelings of trust, closeness and comfort

Desire to Be a Mentor

- Enjoys learning and being in a learning environment
- Praises mentees for a successful performance
- Makes themselves approachable and accessible, signaling they are open to questions, discussion and guidance

Good Leadership Habits

- Role model for expected behaviors
- Provides assistance to mentees when needed
- Maintains professionalism and is considerate to all employees

Trustworthy and Respectful

- Presents information clearly and consistently
- Demonstrates good listening skills
- Provides timely and effective feedback

Trainers vs. Mentors

In a work-based learning program the roles of a mentor and a trainer serve distinct purposes:

A mentor typically provides guidance, support, and advice to a mentee (often someone less experienced or newer to the organization). The relationship is usually more personal and long-term, aiming to develop the mentee's overall career growth, skills, and professional maturity. Mentors often help mentees navigate career challenges, provide insights into organizational culture, and offer broader career advice.

A trainer's role revolves around teaching specific skills, knowledge, or processes needed for a particular job or task. Trainers provide on-the-job learning to impart specific skills relevant to the job role. The goal of training is usually more immediate and task-oriented, focusing on acquiring competencies needed to perform specific job functions effectively.

When the same person serves as both a mentor and a trainer, it can offer unique advantages to the mentee by providing:

- **Comprehensive Support:** The mentee benefits from a holistic approach where they not only receive guidance on career development and broader professional skills from the mentor but also gain practical, job-specific knowledge and skills through training sessions.

- **Consistency and Trust**: Having one person fulfill both roles can build a stronger relationship based on trust and consistency. The mentee may feel more comfortable seeking advice and asking questions related to both career development and job-specific tasks.

- **Customized Learning:** The mentor-trainer can tailor the training sessions to align closely with the mentee's work-based learning goals and development needs identified during mentoring sessions. This personalized approach can enhance the mentee's learning experience.

- **Efficiency:** Combining roles can streamline communication and coordination between mentoring discussions and training sessions, making the learning process more efficient and integrated.

While mentors and trainers serve distinct roles in the workplace, having one person fulfill both roles can provide mentees with a well-rounded learning experience that integrates personal and professional development with job-specific training.

Section 3: Guiding Adult & Youth Learners

Cross-Generational Mentorship

Developing strong mentorship relationships across generational divides within a work-based learning program requires careful consideration to ensure that the mentorship is inclusive, and beneficial for both the mentors and mentees across various age groups.

A generation typically spans fifteen to twenty years and is shaped by popular culture, major historical events, and prevailing economic trends. Historically, workplaces in the United States have seen no more than three generations working side by side at any given time. However, today, the number of generations in the workforce has grown, with some organizations now employing as many as five or even six distinct generations simultaneously.

Pairing an older workplace mentor with a younger mentee can present unique relationship-building challenges rooted in generational differences, communication styles, and varying approaches to work. The mentor may rely on traditional methods and possess deep industry experience, while the mentee might favor newer, technology-driven approaches and seek immediate feedback. These differences can lead to misunderstandings or a perceived disconnect if not addressed openly. However, fostering mutual respect, focusing on shared goals, and encouraging both parties to learn from each other can transform these challenges into opportunities for growth, bridging generational gaps and enriching the mentoring relationship.

Survey data reveals that different generations tend to display different workplace values:

Gen Z
Born: 1997-2012
Ages: Below 27
Influential Experiences
Ubiquitous Technology |
Gun Violence | COVID-19

5% workforce

35% workforce

Millennials
Born: 1981-1996
Ages: Ages 28-43
Influential Experiences
Great Recession |
September 11 | The Internet

Generation X
Born: 1965-1980
Ages: 44 to 59
Influential Experiences
Television | War on Drugs |
Aids Epidemic

33% workforce

25% workforce

Baby Boomers
Born: 1946-1964
Ages: Ages 60-78
Influential Experiences
The Civil Rights Movement |
Cold War | Moon Landing

The Silent Generation
Born: 1925-1943
Ages: Above 79
Influential Experiences
The Great Depression |
World War II | Radio

2% workforce

While not yet old enough to participate in the workforce, Generation Alpha is quickly making their presence known. Born after 2010, these young people are influenced by climate change, artificial intelligence, and the resurgence of populism.

Cross-Generational Mentorship *(Continued)*

These different values and experiences offer valuable opportunities for both older and younger workers. For younger employees, mentorship from more experienced colleagues provides insights into industry knowledge, professional development, and navigating workplace dynamics. Older workers benefit by gaining fresh perspectives and learning new technologies or approaches, which can enhance their adaptability.

Below are a few factors employers should consider as they develop or refine the mentorship component within their work-based learning program:

Understanding Generational Differences

- **Work Styles and Communication Preferences:** Different generations (e.g., Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z) may have distinct communication styles, work preferences, and attitudes toward technology. Mentors and mentees should be trained to recognize these differences and find common ground.

- **Values and Expectations:** Younger employees might prioritize flexibility, work-life balance, and career development, while older employees may focus more on job stability, work ethic, and traditional career progression.

Matching Mentors and Mentees

- **Skill Set Compatibility:** Consider the strengths and expertise of potential mentors and how they align with the learning needs of mentees. A more experienced mentor may offer industry insights and career advice, while a younger mentor may have technical skills or fresh perspectives on digital tools and social media.

- **Personalities and Learning Styles:** Pair mentors and mentees based on complementary communication styles and personalities. Some individuals may prefer a hands-off approach, while others may thrive with more structured guidance.

Fostering Mutual Learning

- **Encourage Reverse Mentoring**: Allow younger employees to mentor older employees, especially in areas like technology, social media, or newer work practices. This can create a reciprocal learning environment that benefits both generations.

- **Knowledge Exchange:** Highlight opportunities for cross-generational knowledge sharing. Younger workers can learn from the experience of older mentors, while older workers can gain insights from younger employees' fresh perspectives.

The key to successful cross-generational mentorship development, is recognizing and understanding the broad spectrum of life experiences, perspectives, and skills that each individual brings to the table. Workers are influenced by their personal histories, unique challenges, and evolving aspirations, which makes fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment crucial for leveraging the strengths of our diverse workforce.

Learning Differences: Youth vs. Adult

Adult learners in the workplace often have different characteristics and needs compared to youth apprentices mentees. Adult learners tend to require a more flexible, relevant, and self-directed approach to learning compared to their youth colleagues, and effective on-the-job training approaches should leverage their life experience, focus on practical application, and provide opportunities for them to control the pace and direction of their learning.

Below are a few characteristics exhibited by adult learners in the workplace:

Goal-oriented:

Adult learners are typically focused on learning that directly benefits their job or career progression. They tend to be more motivated when they see the practical, real-world applications of what they are learning.

Pragmatic:

Adults usually prefer learning that is immediately applicable and relevant to their work tasks or career development. They are less likely to be interested in abstract concepts without clear applications.

Varied learning styles:

Adults come with diverse learning styles, and they often benefit from a variety of instructional methods, including practical exercises, discussions, and problem-solving activities.

Training youth learners in the workplace requires a tailored approach that considers their developmental stage, learning preferences, and the skills they need to acquire. Below are a few effective approaches for workplace mentors as they engage youth learners:

Clear Communication and Active Listening

Youth learners often have less workplace experience, so it's crucial for mentors to communicate clearly and break down complex concepts. Active listening helps mentors understand their mentee's needs, concerns, and learning styles.

Mentor Beyond Technical Skills

Youth learners often need guidance on soft skills (like communication, teamwork, and time management) to succeed in the workplace. These skills are crucial for long-term career success.

Encourage Independence and Problem-Solving

While guidance is important, developing problem-solving skills is essential for youth learners to build confidence and take ownership of their work. Encouraging them to think critically and make decisions fosters independence.

Learning Differences: Youth vs. Adult *(Continued)*

While both youth and adult learners in the workplace have the same desire to succeed and contribute on the job, adults typically bring more experience, maturity, and established skills to their roles compared to youth workers who are often in the early stages of their professional development

Training adults in the workplace can differ significantly from teaching youth primarily due to differences in experience, motivation, and learning styles.

Some of those difference may include:

1. Experience and Relevance:
- Adults typically bring more life experience and prior knowledge to learning situations.
- Adults prefer learning that is immediately relevant to their job roles or career advancement.

2. Self-Directed Learning:
- Adults tend to be more self-directed in their learning compared to youth who may rely more on structured guidance.
- Adults prefer to understand the "why" behind learning tasks

3. Motivation:
- Adult learners are often motivated by intrinsic factors such as career advancement, personal growth, and skill enhancement.
- External motivators like grades or rewards, which may work for youth, are less effective.

Effective Approaches for Mentors Leading Adult Learners:

1. Understanding Individual Needs:
Mentors should assess the prior knowledge and learning preferences of adult learners to tailor the training program and mentorship approach accordingly.

2. Facilitating Active Learning:
Encouraging discussions, simulations, case studies, and hands-on activities can engage adult learners actively and help them apply learning directly to their work.

3. Providing Context and Relevance:
Linking training objectives to real-world scenarios and job responsibilities helps adult learners see the immediate relevance of what they are learning.

4. Encouraging Self-Reflection:
Adults benefit from opportunities to reflect on their learning progress and how new knowledge, or skills align with their personal and professional goals.

5. Offering Support and Feedback:
Providing constructive feedback and support throughout the learning process helps adult learners stay motivated and confident in their abilities.

By recognizing these differences and employing effective mentoring strategies, workplace mentors can create a conducive learning environment that maximizes the potential of adult learners.
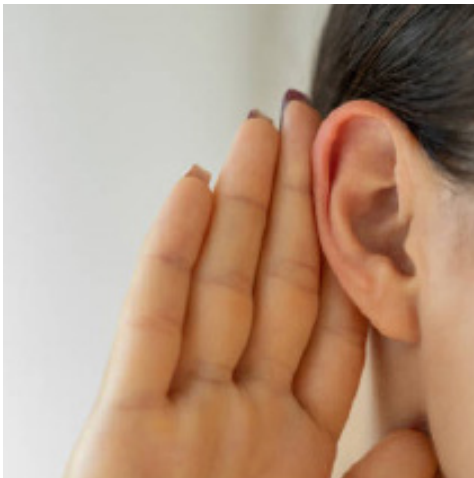
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Learning Styles & Approaches

It's important for workplace mentors to be aware of different learning styles because people absorb and process information in various ways. By recognizing these differences, mentors can tailor their training methods to suit each mentee's strengths, enhancing the effectiveness of the training process. For example:

1. **Visual Learners:** Some mentees may grasp concepts better through diagrams, charts, or written instructions. A mentor who recognizes this can incorporate more visual aids into training.

2. **Auditory Learners:** Others might learn best through listening, benefiting from discussions, verbal explanations, or audio resources.

3. **Hands-On Learners:** Some individuals learn by doing, so hands-on experience is crucial. A mentor can ensure these mentees engage in practical tasks to reinforce learning.

Understanding learning styles helps avoid overwhelming the mentee. For instance, breaking complex tasks into smaller, digestible parts can be especially beneficial for learners who may struggle with too much information at once.

By adapting to each mentee's preferred style, mentors providing OJT can foster greater engagement, retention, and skill development, ultimately helping mentees perform better on the job and feel more confident in their roles.
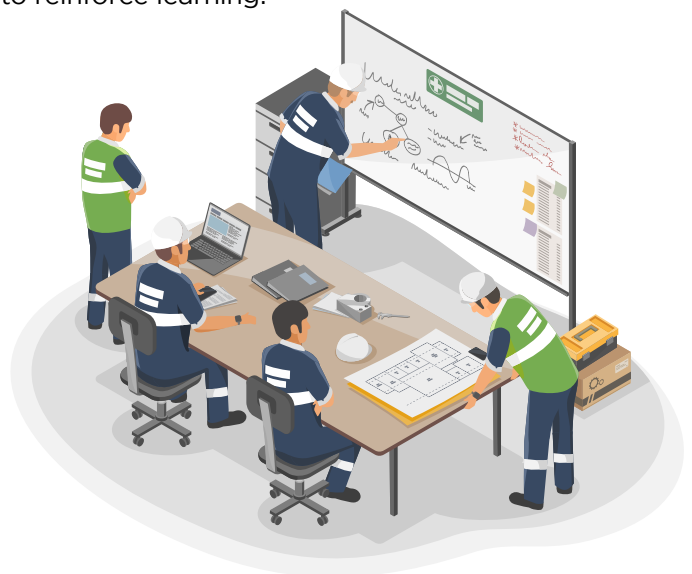
Passive vs. Active Learning

Passive learning and active learning are two distinct approaches to acquiring knowledge and skills:

PASSIVE LEARNING

Definition: Passive learning involves receiving information without actively engaging with it. Learners are typically recipients of information rather than active participants in the learning process.

Listening or watching: Examples include attending lectures, watching demonstrations, or reading textbooks without interacting actively.

Minimal engagement: Learners absorb information passively without contributing significantly to the learning process.

Work-Based Example: Sitting through a presentation where information is delivered without much opportunity for interaction or application. For instance, attending a seminar where a speaker presents new policies without much opportunity for questions or discussions.

ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning requires learners to engage actively with the learning material. It involves critical thinking, problem-solving, and applying knowledge actively.

Higher engagement: Learners actively seek to understand concepts, ask questions, and apply what they learn to real-world situations.

Work-Based Example: Participating in a workshop where participants work in groups to solve a case study related to their work, brainstorming solutions, and actively discussing different approaches.

Doing and discussing: Examples include participating in discussions, solving problems, conducting experiments, or applying knowledge in practical scenarios.

Passive vs. Active Learning *(Continued)*

SCENARIOS TO ILLUSTRATE:

Passive Learning Scenario: An employee attends a mandatory safety training session where an instructor lectures on safety protocols for handling hazardous materials. The session involves listening to the instructor without opportunities for hands-on practice or interactive discussions.

Active Learning Scenario: Employees participate in a role-playing exercise where they simulate a customer service scenario. They actively engage in responding to customer inquiries, handling complaints, and receiving immediate feedback from their peers and supervisors.

While passive learning involves receiving information in a one-way manner, active learning encourages engagement, critical thinking, and practical application of knowledge, making it more effective for skill development and retention in work-based settings.
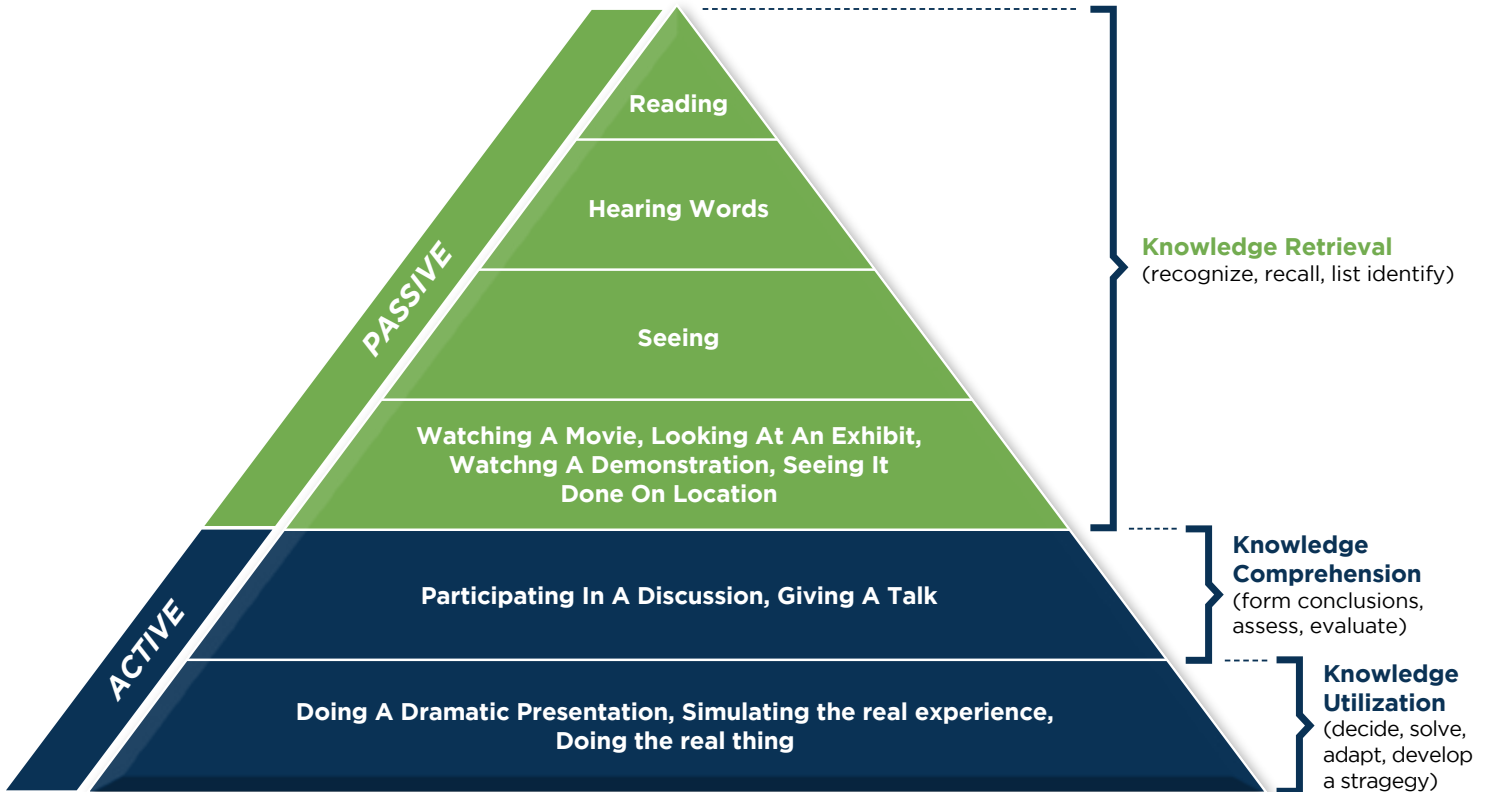
Section 4: Delivering Impactful Instruction

Learning Through Experience

A way to help demonstrate the importance of direct learning experiences is illustrated below through an adaptation of educator and researcher Edgar Dale's 'Cone of Experience'. The cone provides a visual of how students and on-the-job learners engage with information through various learning methods, ranging from passive activities (like reading, listening, and observing) to active ones (such as discussing and practicing). An on-the-job learner will typically retain and successfully apply more by performing a task themselves rather than simply hearing about it.

PASSIVE

Reading

Hearing Words

Seeing

Watching A Movie, Looking At An Exhibit, Watchng A Demonstration, Seeing It Done On Location

ACTIVE

Participating In A Discussion, Giving A Talk

Doing A Dramatic Presentation, Simulating the real experience, Doing the real thing

Knowledge Retrieval
(recognize, recall, list identify)

Knowledge Comprehension
(form conclusions, assess, evaluate)

Knowledge Utilization
(decide, solve, adapt, develop a stragegy)

As the on-the-job training (OJT) experience and instruction and move towards the top of the cone, learners become observers rather than participants whereas the bottom of the cone represents purposeful experience that is "seen, handled, tasted, touched, felt, and smelled," As Dale described it.

Hands-On Training Procedure

As mentioned earlier in this guide, combining the roles of on-the-job mentor and trainer can enhance efficiency within an organization. By having mentors who are also trainers, employees benefit from a seamless integration of practical guidance and formal instruction. This approach fosters a more holistic learning experience, where theoretical knowledge is immediately reinforced with real-world application.

Utilizing an effective hands-on training method enhances understanding by immersing learners in scenarios where they can apply their knowledge directly, problem-solve in real-time, and adapt to challenges they may encounter on the job. This approach fosters confidence, competence, and a deeper comprehension of the tasks and responsibilities associated with their roles, ultimately preparing them better for the demands of their chosen profession. Below is a six-step training procedure that can be adapted to fit any work-based learning model.

Prepare For Training

Once the mentor knows that he or she will be assigned to a mentee, it is time to start preparation. The mentor might review notes and decide how to demonstrate the skills and methods to be learned. The work area, tools, and materials may need to be adjusted to accommodate the mentee. It is always helpful to have manuals, work plans, or other documents handy to show the background for how the job is executed and completed. As the saying goes, "failing to prepare, is preparing to fail." This is a crucial first step where a mentor delivering training begins the process of sharing responsibility for the learning.

Open The Session

Before a training session begins, it is worth taking a few minutes to get to know, or get re-acquainted with each other when the mentor greets their mentee. After that, the mentor can take some time to introduce the subject that they will work on for that day. The mentor explains the importance of doing the job right and tries to find out what the mentee already knows. Getting familiar with each other can set up communication for the time you work together. It also is a way to figure out where to start. No one likes to be taught what they already know. By getting to know each other, the mentor can help put the mentee at ease. When the mentee understands the scope of the job at the beginning, then they can prepare themselves for what they need to learn.

Present The Subject

The mentor carefully shows the mentee the proper way to complete the job. The mentee's job is to pay attention and ask questions when they need an explanation. The mentor must know when to stop and check in with the mentee before covering too much information. If the job is complicated, the mentor should break it down to smaller sections and train on each chunk of the job.

When the mentor thinks the mentee is ready, it is time to ask if the mentee is ready to try out the job. If the mentee does not have the confidence to do the job, the mentor can continue the presentation. However, the mentor should check in with the mentee before moving to the next step. The point of hands-on training is to take complicated jobs and portion them out so that they are easier to understand. The mentor explains the work as it goes along so that the mentee can get the main points.

Good demonstrations hold the mentee's interest. One way to keep the mentee engaged is to keep up a conversation throughout the demonstration. This helps to make sure that your message is received and understood.

Hands-On Training Procedure *(Continued)*

It is important to position the mentee so that they can see what you are showing them. The best demonstrations are where mentees can clearly see how you are completing the job and can understand how to apply what they have learned. Go step by step, and check in with the mentee to make sure they comprehend what you are showing them.

Stress the key points of the job and how important it is to perform the job as safely as possible. One way to emphasize a point is repetition. The mentor goes over the certain steps and might exaggerate them to show how important it is to do that part of the job right. Sometimes, a mentor might demonstrate a task twice to make sure the mentee gets the details or finer points of what to learn.

Be patient and check in with your mentee to make sure he or she is with you. Showing impatience can cause stress for you and the mentee and can slow down the learning process. Some mentees become sensitive when they are trying to learn the subject matter and they think they are inconveniencing their mentor.

Avoid information overload, and remember that what seems obvious to you is new to your mentee learning on the job. Avoid the traps for mentors; do not go too fast, keep it simple and not over complicated, and stick to the subject. A skilled mentor conducting training can tell when they're overloading their mentee.

If they are ready, you can ask your mentee to explain the job during the demonstration. At the end of the demonstration, always ask your mentee if they have any questions. See if they are ready to try the job on their own.

Practice The Skills

The mentor observes while their mentee practices the skills for the job while providing feedback on performance. Keep in mind that the learner develops skills through practice and performance in real conditions. This is the best time to evaluate performance.

During the practice session, the mentor coaches the mentee. Positive reinforcement of good practices is more effective than criticism. Let the mentee try to do the job while you watch and evaluate the first time through. It is not important to have the mentee explain each step while they are doing the job. That should happen in the previous step. Make this practice session as realistic as possible.

Let the mentee try to do the job while you watch and evaluate the first time through.

Hands-On Training Procedure *(Continued)*

Evaluate Performance

Keep in mind that the practice and evaluation steps are intertwined. Observe the mentee to make sure that the job is done properly. During the practice, ask yourself:

Is it being done right?
Is it being done in the right order?
Is it being done safely?

Always offer encouragement and praise when the mentee does the job well. Everyone likes to hear positive feedback such as:

Nice Job! **Good Work!** **Well Done!**

If you summarize the practice session, start with what went right before saying what needs improvement. This is important. It is always good to sandwich criticism with praise. Start with a compliment, then criticize, then close with another comment on the mentee's good work. This is a way to say that they must improve some of their work, not that they are a bad person. This takes the sting out of the criticism and communicates that the mentee is a good person, but that they have more to learn.

Always provide coaching. Being helpful during the practice session lends support to the mentee to help them succeed. It shows that the mentor and the mentee are a team that is working together to pass the performance test. Ask questions to see where you can be helpful and to start the review step.

Review The Subject

This is where the trainer summarizes what was done. After the review, the mentee takes the next step; completing the normal, everyday work on their own. There may be a tapering off from coaching to independent work for the mentee. It is a good practice to have a formal ending to the coaching and hand off to a work assignment or task. It is also a good practice for a mentor to let the mentee know there is always support for them. Each phase or work location may have a different procedure for ending the OJT. Sometimes, the training may end with a performance test. Remember, the relationship between the mentor and the mentee should not end with OJT sessions!

Effective Communication

It's crucial for workplace mentors to learn constructive dialogue and effective communication strategies while training a mentee because clear and effective communication is the foundation for successful learning. Here are some reasons why:

1   **Clarity of Instructions:** A mentor needs to convey complex information in a way that is easily understandable to a newcomer. Effective communication ensures that instructions are clear, reducing the risk of errors and misunderstandings.

2.   **Building Trust:** Open and honest communication helps build a trusting relationship between the mentor and the mentee. This trust encourages the learner to ask questions and seek guidance when needed, creating a more supportive learning environment.

3.   **Providing Feedback:** Constructive feedback is essential for growth. A mentor who communicates well can provide feedback that is specific, actionable, and delivered in a way that motivates the learner rather than discourages them.

4.   **Tailoring to the Learner's Needs:** Every learner has a different communication style and pace of learning. Effective communication strategies enable the mentor to adapt their teaching methods to meet the individual needs of the mentee, enhancing the learning process.

A workplace mentor can enhance communication with their mentee by first understanding the mentee's preferred learning and communication styles, such as whether they respond better to hands-on demonstrations, verbal explanations, or written instructions. Regularly seeking feedback about the clarity and helpfulness of guidance can also ensure alignment. Mentors should practice active listening, encouraging the mentee to share questions and challenges openly. Adapting their approach—using simple language for complex topics, breaking down tasks into manageable steps, and leveraging technology tools familiar to the mentee—can further bridge communication gaps and foster a more effective and supportive mentoring relationship.

Modeling Problem-Solving as a Mentor

Being a problem-solver in the workplace is essential, especially for mentors guiding on-the-job learners, as it ensures challenges are addressed efficiently while fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

For mentors, demonstrating strong problem-solving abilities provides a model for learners to emulate, teaching them how to approach obstacles with logic, creativity, and confidence. This not only enhances the mentee's ability to adapt and thrive in their role but also strengthens the team's overall effectiveness and innovation. Ultimately, a mentor who is an effective problem-solver equips their mentee with critical skills that contribute to long-term success, both individually and within the organization.

Here are five key problem-solving skills a mentor should exhibit when guiding a mentee learning on the job:

1. **Critical Thinking:** Demonstrating the ability to analyze situations logically, identify root causes of issues, and evaluate potential solutions objectively. By modeling this skill, mentors can show mentees how to approach challenges methodically and avoid jumping to conclusions.

2. **Effective Communication:** Clearly articulating problems, explaining decision-making processes, and encouraging open dialogue. This helps the mentee feel included in the problem-solving process and equips them with the vocabulary and techniques needed to express their own ideas.

3. **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Engaging the mentee as an active partner in brainstorming and decision-making. This fosters a sense of ownership in the process and teaches the value of seeking diverse perspectives to arrive at better solutions.

4. **Adaptability:** Demonstrating the ability to pivot and adjust strategies when initial solutions don't work. This teaches the mentee the importance of resilience and flexibility when faced with unexpected challenges or outcomes.

5. **Decision-Making and Follow-Through:** Modeling how to weigh pros and cons, prioritize solutions, and confidently choose a course of action. Following up by implementing the solution and evaluating its effectiveness ensures the mentee learns the complete problem-solving cycle.

By modeling how to approach challenges methodically, evaluate options, and implement effective solutions, the mentor empowers them to navigate complex situations with confidence and autonomy. This not only accelerates the mentee's professional growth and adaptability but also ensures they can contribute meaningfully to the organization, even in the absence of direct supervision. Ultimately, developing this skill fosters a proactive and resilient mindset in the mentee, preparing them to thrive in dynamic work environments.

When a workplace mentor fails to effectively model problem-solving skills, it can lead to several shortfalls that hinder the mentee's development.

First, the mentee may struggle to learn how to approach and resolve challenges independently, leaving them reliant on others for guidance. This can reduce their confidence and ability to think critically in high-pressure situations. Additionally, the mentee may adopt poor problem-solving habits, such as jumping to conclusions or avoiding collaboration, if the mentor exhibits these behaviors. The lack of structured guidance can also result in missed opportunities for the mentee to develop creative and innovative solutions, stifling their growth and contribution to the organization.

This gap in mentorship may create frustration or disengagement in the mentee, as they may feel unsupported or ill-prepared to succeed in their role. Ultimately, the mentor's inability to model effective problem-solving can negatively impact both the mentee's performance and the overall success of the work-based learning program.

In short, the most important reason a workplace mentor should focus on modeling problem-solving skills is that it equips the mentee with the ability to think critically and independently, a cornerstone for long-term success in any role.

Teaching Problem-Solving Skills

As mentors model and instruct using problem-solving skills in the workplace, it is crucial for the development of a mentee's ability to handle challenges independently. Here are some scenarios and methods that a mentor can use to effectively teach these skills:

SCENARIOS:

1. Project-Based Challenges:

Scenario: The mentee is working on a project with complex tasks that require innovative solutions.

Method: Break the project into smaller, manageable problems. Encourage the mentee to identify possible challenges and brainstorm solutions before beginning the task. Guide them through the process of prioritizing tasks and making decisions based on available data.

2. Real-Time Problem Solving:

Scenario: An unexpected issue arises during the execution of a project, such as a technical failure or a sudden change in client requirements.

Method: Involve the mentee in troubleshooting the issue. Use the situation to teach critical thinking by asking them to suggest potential causes and solutions. Discuss the pros and cons of each solution and allow them to implement their chosen approach, providing feedback afterward.

3. Case Studies and Simulations:

Scenario: The mentee needs to develop strategic thinking skills for hypothetical or past scenarios relevant to the workplace.

Method: Present the mentee with case studies or simulations that mimic real-world problems. Discuss how these problems were or could be solved, focusing on the reasoning behind each decision. Encourage the mentee to propose their solutions and discuss the outcomes.

4. Cross-Functional Collaboration:

Scenario: The mentee is involved in a project that requires input from different departments or teams.

Method: Assign the mentee to lead or participate in meetings with other departments to solve cross-functional issues. Guide them on how to gather diverse perspectives, identify common goals, and reach consensus on solutions.

5. Regular Problem-Solving Sessions:

Scenario: The mentee regularly faces routine challenges that require ongoing problem-solving skills.

Method: Schedule regular sessions where the mentee brings a list of current challenges. Discuss each one, guiding them through a structured problem-solving process: defining the problem, analyzing the root cause, brainstorming solutions, implementing a solution, and reviewing the results.

Section 5: Summary & Resources

Mentorship Misconceptions

Workplace mentoring is often seen as a straightforward process where a seasoned professional simply shares their knowledge with a less experienced colleague. However, there are several misconceptions about how mentoring works:

1. **Mentoring is a One-Way Street:** A common misconception is that mentoring is purely one-sided, with the mentor giving and the mentee receiving. In reality, effective mentoring is a two-way relationship where both parties learn from each other. The mentor can gain fresh perspectives, stay updated on new trends, and develop leadership skills.

2. **Mentors Must Be Older:** Many believe that a mentor must be significantly older and more experienced than the mentee. However, peer mentoring or reverse mentoring (where a younger employee mentors an older one) can be equally beneficial. The key is expertise and insight, not age.

3. **Mentoring Equals Formal Training:** Some people think mentoring is synonymous with formal training or coaching. Aside from structured apprenticeships or work-based learning programs, mentoring can assist with guidance, support, and development over time rather than specific skill acquisition.

4. **Mentoring is Time-Consuming:** There's a misconception that mentoring requires a large time commitment. While it does require some time, it can often be integrated into regular work interactions and doesn't always need to be a formal or scheduled activity.

5. **One Mentor Fits All:** Another myth is that one mentor can provide everything a mentee needs. In practice, mentees often benefit from having multiple mentors who can provide diverse perspectives and expertise in different areas.

6. **Mentoring Guarantees Success:** There's a belief that having a mentor will automatically lead to success. While mentoring can significantly enhance personal and professional development, success still depends on the mentee's effort, commitment, and ability to apply the guidance they receive.

7. **Mentors Need to Have All the Answers:** People often think that a mentor must be a resource of all knowledge on the job. In reality, a mentor's role is to train, guide, challenge, and support, not necessarily to have all the answers. It's okay for mentors to admit when they don't know something and to learn alongside their mentees.

These misconceptions can limit the effectiveness of mentoring programs if not addressed and can create challenges for mentees. These issues can hinder the mentee's ability to build confidence, develop skills, and fully engage in the learning process. Employers can avoid such misconceptions by implementing structured mentorship training, ensuring mentors understand their role as both coaches and role models while equipping them with the tools to provide consistent, constructive, and empathetic guidance.

The Benefits of Mentorship in Work-Based Learning

Mentorship in work-based learning not only fosters personal and professional growth by creating a dynamic exchange of knowledge and experience, but individuals and organizations alike benefit from increased engagement, innovation, and a stronger, more adaptable workforce. When considering the direct advantages to the mentor and mentee, here's how each party can benefit:

BENEFITS FOR THE MENTOR:

1. **Leadership and Communication Skills:** Mentors enhance their leadership abilities by guiding and advising others. They develop stronger communication skills by explaining complex ideas in an understandable way.

2. **Personal Fulfillment:** Helping a mentee succeed can be highly rewarding. Contributing to someone's grow and achievement of their goals provides a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

3. **Reflection and Learning:** Mentors often reflect on their own experiences, which can lead to new insights and learning. The process may also highlight areas where they can improve their own skills.

4. **Networking:** Engaging with a mentee broadens the mentor's network. Mentors may gain access to new ideas and perspectives from younger or less experienced professionals.

5. **Contribution to Organizational Culture**: Mentors help shape the organizational culture by promoting learning and growth, which can lead to a more knowledgeable and cohesive team.
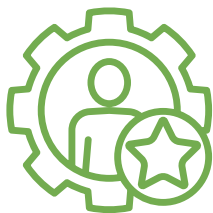
BENEFITS FOR THE MENTEE:

1. **Skill Development:** Mentees gain valuable skills and knowledge from someone more experienced. This can accelerate their learning curve and help them develop competencies that are critical for their career.

2. **Career Guidance:** Mentees receive advice on career paths, opportunities, and challenges, helping them make informed decisions and avoid common pitfalls.

3. **Increased Confidence:** With guidance and support from a mentor, mentees often feel more confident in their abilities, which can lead to better performance and a greater willingness to take on new challenges.

4. **Networking Opportunities:** Mentees can expand their professional network through their mentor, gaining access to contacts and opportunities that may not have been available otherwise.

5. **Feedback and Support:** Mentees receive constructive feedback, which helps them improve their performance. They also have a supportive figure to turn to when facing challenges, reducing the sense of isolation.

SHARED BENEFITS:

1. **Enhanced Team Collaboration:** The mentoring relationship fosters a collaborative environment where both parties can work together toward shared goals, benefiting the broader organization.

2. **Knowledge Transfer:** Mentorship facilitates the transfer of knowledge and expertise within an organization, ensuring that valuable skills and insights are passed down to the next generation of workers.

3. **Mutual Learning:** While the mentor provides guidance, the mentee's fresh perspectives can also lead to new ideas and innovations, creating a dynamic exchange of knowledge.

4. **Increased Engagement:** Both mentors and mentees often feel more engaged and connected to their work and the organization, leading to higher job satisfaction and productivity.

Mentorship in work-based learning creates a symbiotic relationship where both the mentor and mentee grow and develop, as well as contribute to personal, professional, and organizational success.

Additional Resources:

Below are recommended high-quality mentorship development and learning opportunities for employers and on-the-job mentors. Access each resource by clicking on the link embedded in the title:

Apprenticeship Building America Mentoring Guide

- This guide condenses academic literature, public resources, and conventional and unconventional wisdom into a digestible set of best practices, dos and don'ts, hints and tips, and resources to address common issues.

Mentoring for Craft Professionals: NCCER

- This online course provides formal guidance to the craft professional entering a mentorship role, including training in communication techniques and conflict resolution and the essential elements of a formal mentoring program.

Mentoring New and Aspiring Teachers: Ball State University

- This online course provides support for mentors working with aspiring, pre-service, and novice teachers by offering strategies and tools to guide the development and implementation of a successful mentor-mentee relationship.

Mentorship Lesson Training Resources: South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation

- Resources, guides and interactive lessons to help you start a mentorship program in your business or foster a successful mentor/mentee relationship, provided by Start Today SD and the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation.

Online Mentor Training: Apprenticeship Carolina

- Modules designed to help develop mentors as they realize their role within a registered apprenticeship program. Upon completion of this training, it is our hope that mentors feel empowered and prepared to help guide apprentices in their career journey.

The Role of Mentorship in Registered Apprenticeship Programs: RA Academy

- A learning module that introduces how mentorship is essential to registered apprenticeship programs. Best practices for selecting, training, and supporting mentors are included to support registered apprenticeship program sponsors and participating employers.

Workplace Mentoring Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring

- Workplace mentoring programs are increasingly using mentors to support both job-specific and soft-skill development. MENTOR's workplace mentoring resource is a how-to guide of best practices for workplace mentoring programs.

Registered Apprenticeship: Mentorship 101: The Supply Chain Automation Workforce Hub

- In this first session of a multi-part webinar series, mentorship is explored and examined as a critical component in Registered Apprenticeship programs, highlighting its significance and how it differs from other mentorships.

Mentorship in Work-Based Learning: Indiana Office of work-based Learning and Apprenticeship

- A resource hub for Indiana apprenticeship intermediaries and employers equipped with tools, videos, testimonials and reflections including how-to guidance from work-based learning mentors and practitioners.

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