



Building networks from Boomers to Gen Z with reverse mentorship

Purpose: This case study highlights reverse mentorship programs that connect employees across generations and improve workplace communication.



Background

Employers are looking for new initiatives to build skills and networks on their teams. Many companies have launched reverse mentorship programs that are mutually beneficial for colleagues of different generations.ⁱ



Challenge Area

Employers want to improve technical skills and collaboration across company levels and departments.



Ideas and Solutions

Mastercard launched a reverse mentorship program with a goal of creating connection and deepening tech skills in its workforce.ⁱⁱ Reverse

mentorship connects younger workers with older workers for personal conversation, knowledge transfer and skills sharing. In Mastercard's program, Ron, a C-suite staff member at Mastercard was paired with Rebekka. Through the experience, Ron learnt how to use Twitter and how to get more out of professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn.ⁱⁱⁱ



Impact

Mastercard's program has grown to hundreds of employers, in five offices.^{iv} Reverse mentoring can support retention, diversity and collaboration for employers, key priority areas in workplaces.^v



Key Learnings

Match for a good fit – match participants on shared interest, expertise, and motivation.^{vi}

Employee Buy-in – senior level participation is key. Make sure senior levels are on board with the program roll-out.

Make time – a big reason reverse mentoring fails is that the senior workers are short on time. Provide suggestions on meeting structure but allow participants to find their cadence.

Promote Communication – guide participants through trainings on active listening and giving feedback, which can enrich the experience. Support younger staff to take charge in communication, which may feel foreign in the workplace.

Have fun – encourage participants to be open and flexible. Let each pair enjoy their journey.

Measure success – get feedback from mentors and mentees to know what worked on the program.^{vii}



References

- ⁱ “2017 Thought Leaders Solutions Form: Harnessing the Power of a Multigenerational Workforce” *SHRM*, 3 Oct. 2017, <https://www.shrm.org/foundation/ourwork/initiatives/the-aging-workforce/Lists/Curated%20source%20for%20page%20The%20Aging%20Workforce/Attachments/17/2017%20TL%20Executive%20Summary-FINAL.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ Shellenbarger, Sue. “Pairing up with a younger technology mentor” *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 May 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pairing-up-with-a-younger-technology-mentor-1401231988>
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- ^v “Top 5 benefits of reverse mentoring” *Mentoring Complete*, 2022, <https://www.get.mentoringcomplete.com/blog/5-benefits-of-reverse-mentoring>
- ^{vi} “How to Build a Mentorship Program Employees Will Love” *Ten Thousand Coffees*, 13 Aug. 2022, <https://www.tenthousandcoffees.com/blog/how-to-build-a-mentorship-program-employees-will-love>
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