

Anthony

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Welcome to the Contributor Wednesday series on the Bridge the Gap Network. This series is sponsored by Peak Senior Living by Functional Pathways. Each week you'll hear from a thought leader discussing topics that are relevant and impactful to the senior living industry.

Anthony 00:28

Hello and welcome back to Contributor Wednesday on the Bridge the Gap podcast for senior living. I'm your host, Anthony Ormsbee-Hale, Senior Vice President of Strategic Operations at Civitas Senior Living, and I'm thrilled to be a guest contributor with you all talking about the benefits of mentorship.

Throughout this series, I've talked a lot about measuring success for either the mentee or for the organization, and I've been flooded with emails and LinkedIn messages and wanting me to expand on that topic, and so I'm excited to dive in today to talk about measuring what matters when it comes to mentorship programs. While many executives acknowledge the significant impact that mentoring has had on their careers, these same executives often view structured mentorship programs as expensive and inefficient. Senior leaders who have experienced the individual benefit of mentoring relationships often hesitate to formalize mentorship programs within their organizations.

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Why? Well, let's face it, budgets are tight and it can be difficult for organizations to invest in a program that doesn't often come with clearly defined goals or measurable results. Mentorship program organizers only need a handful of tools to get metrics in place that measure success. The secret is to develop the story you want to tell at the highest strategic level, which demonstrates a return on the investment, and then work through the Kirkpatrick's four levels all the way down to the tactical level. Just a quick aside for my friends who are listening that are not talent development professionals and may not be familiar with the Kirkpatrick model, this is a globally recognized method of evaluating the results of training and learning programs. It assesses both formal and informal training methods and rates them against four levels of criteria: reaction, learning, behavior and results.

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Return on Investment: this is the comparison of talent development solutions to the investment in the solution itself. You can compare this by determining the cost of the mentorship program in terms of mentor and participant salaries, opportunity costs of work completed versus time spent in the program, and most importantly, employee satisfaction and retention. For those of you that have listened to the Bridge the Gap podcast for some time, you have probably heard Cara Stilletto at Magnet Culture talk a lot about the value of employee retention and on her website, which is linked in the show notes for this episode, you can find some great resources for employee retention as well as a cost of employee turnover calculator. I encourage you to check it out so you can really get a good sense of what your employee turnover is costing your organization. Let's dive into the four levels of the Kirkpatrick model, and I'll give some suggestions and some examples along the way.

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Level one, this is the reaction level. This is most frequently measured when it comes to mentorship programs. Participants often measure the number of participants in the entire program, hours invested in the mentoring relationship and satisfaction with the experience. One important level one metric is a net promoter score. This is a simple but accurate view into the participant's experience. A net promoter score is gathered by asking participants, would you recommend that your colleagues participate in the mentoring program? Most organizations never get past a level one evaluation, and oftentimes a poor participant experience for either the mentee or the mentor can take a program backwards because people will not want to participate in a program that has a poor reputation. As you receive your net promoter score, I suggest that you share the information internally. If the score is high, that's fantastic. Celebrate your win and share the information with anyone in the organization that will listen to you. If the net promoter score is low, communicate that with shareholders within the program, get more details, advertise your plans to address the issues. In this case, transparency speaks volumes.

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Level two is the learning level. In this level, data are gathered to demonstrate how progress on goals set within the mentorship program leads to improved performance and increased networks. Setting and tracking learning goals is the most important indicator of learning success for participants. Even mentoring programs with minimal structure should stress the importance of goal setting. It's important that your organization have clear key performance indicators for each role so that performance progress can be measured. For example, many sales people have an inquiry to tour metric that they monitor. For sales mentorship programs, you would want to demonstrate an improvement in the inquiry to tour metric as a level two goal. You can utilize the objective and key result method that I have shared in previous episodes to objectively outline these objectives.

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Moving on to level three, this level identifies the impact on talent performance, which usually accumulates to have an effect on level four. Basically, this level is designed to determine if the newly acquired skills, knowledge, or attitude are being used in the everyday environment of the learner. By working down from a level four retention data towards more tactical measurements, some organizations use performance review data that show job performance improvement and increased networks, which leads to higher retention. Most importantly, any data used to tell the story of success should be consistently and reliably available for reporting.

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Level four is the results level. These are usually tied into those results that you report on a monthly basis as part of your talent management program, and in this case, in the mentorship program, they're typically aligned with engagement, retention, or internal mobility. Metrics-based results are used because they're the clearest dataset already gathered in HR applications.

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One mistake that many organizations make is to focus on measurement at a single level, but each level of measurement can be impactful to prove the value of the mentoring program, so you'll want to have a healthy balance for each level. You can learn more about this model of evaluation by visiting the [kirkpatrickpartners.com](http://kirkpatrickpartners.com), which is linked in the show notes for you. Ultimately, proving the value of mentorship programs means communicating metrics to leaders in a way that resonates with them.

Senior executives often look at sales numbers, expense management, profit or margins to make important decisions and to understand how they should best allocate the organization's resources. Not to pick on my HR and talent development friends here, but historically, HR and talent development professionals have not done a great job of connecting their work with members that are meaningful to leadership and showcase the value that these critical departments bring to the organization.

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It's important that HR and talent development professionals avoid focusing on talent development language such as training hours, number of participants, and learning satisfaction when measuring the impact of a mentorship program. Those numbers don't draw a clear connection to strategic goals and will make individuals look less credible. Many practitioners lean on talent development metrics such as program completion rates because it's usually the easiest information to find. Unfortunately, only focusing on the talent development perspective gives the appearance of being siloed and unprepared to prove mentoring's true business value. Instead, we should talk about proving mentoring value through the use of ROI, and one of the most effective ways to do that is by looking at retention numbers and the cost of employee turnover. Retention is usually one of the most accurate data points in the HR system, and it can be viewed and analyzed from multiple perspectives.

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As we look to build consensus within the organization on the mentoring program and define shared goals, it's not uncommon for individuals to come up with objections to having a mentoring program, and those objections typically go down to the root cause of not understanding how we measure success in a mentoring program. As I've shared, mentorship programs have great value for organizations of all sizes, so they're very much worth the effort of going through and building consensus in support for this program. Sometimes people may be weary of another quote unquote "HR program" or unstructured mandate that managers feel that they're forced to participate in. And you may often hear the phrase, "We know that mentoring works, but mentorship programs don't." Mentorship programs deliver unparalleled talent results by determining which metrics matter, identifying frequent low effort, leading indicators of success, and using business language that resonates with the leaders within the organization.

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So when we're talking about building consensus for a mentorship program, a big part of the conversation has to be, how do we define a shared sense of success for the organization? And it goes down to the metrics that are involved, and those metrics may look different for each organization. And as I've shared, you'll want to make sure that you have metrics that fit the evaluation process for each of the Kirkpatrick four levels. Mentorship programs have an incredible effect for the leadership development, diversity and inclusion efforts, onboarding and developing technical talent within your organization. They are the best tools to establish community, create relationships, and increase visibility of underrepresented talent. It's important for senior living organizations to measure what matters when it comes to mentorship programs, and even more critical for business leaders to invest in long term workforce initiatives like mentorship.

11:00

Thanks so much for taking the time to join in today as we've discussed what you can measure and how we determine effectiveness for mentorship programs. As always, I love hearing your feedback and encourage you to connect with me on LinkedIn to continue the discussion.

11:15

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