The Development and Maintenance of Exemplary Formal Mentoring Programs in Fortune 500 Companies

Christine D. Hegstad, Rose Mary Wentling

This study sought to advance current mentoring research by examining the development and maintenance of exemplary formal mentoring programs in the nation’s top performing companies. The ADDIE model of instructional systems design, which incorporates five steps from needs analysis to evaluation, formed the conceptual framework guiding the study. The methodology involved interviewing twenty-nine participants within a sample of seventeen companies, selected from the Fortune 500 listing, housing exemplary formal mentoring programs. Results indicated that the steps of the ADDIE design system provide a useful framework in the development and maintenance of exemplary formal mentoring programs. A discussion of the results and recommendations for further research are presented.

Business organizations today are faced with numerous challenges: increased globalization, rapid technological advancements, and the need to retain a high-quality—and thus highly employable—workforce, to name a few. In an effort to increase employee retention and satisfaction, among other reasons, many organizations have implemented formal mentoring programs as a human resource development (HRD) strategy. A formal mentoring program is an organized mentoring program managed by the organization that typically uses a systematic selection and matching process (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). Such programs can take on a variety of forms, from a traditional one-to-one pairing of a senior level employee mentoring a new or less experienced employee to a group mentoring process in which a number of employees essentially mentor each other in a group setting (Dansky, 1996). The relationship often results in benefits on many levels: the mentor and protégé develop
both personally and professionally, and the organization as a whole experiences increased retention, commitment, and employee motivation (Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997). As a result, organizations in public, private, and not-for-profit sectors are developing formal mentoring programs in ever-increasing numbers.

A variety of operational definitions pervade the mentoring literature; however, for the purposes of this research the term mentor was defined as a member of an organization who is experienced, knowledgeable, and committed to providing personal or professional developmental support to the protégé (Carruthers, 1993; Kram, 1985; Ragins & Scandura, 1994). The mentor is often thought of as an advisor, counselor, or role model (Geiger-DuMond & Boyle, 1995; Klauss, 1981; Phillips-Jones, 1983).

The 1970s brought the concept of formal mentoring programs into the public eye. Kanter's (1977) groundbreaking work shed light on the role that mentoring played in the large organization, as well as the difficulty some groups (specifically women and minorities) had in obtaining and reaping the benefits from a mentor. Levinson and his colleagues (1978) also claimed during this time that mentors serve as useful transitional role models for young adults entering the workforce. Also, a study in which 1,250 top executives in U.S. organizations were surveyed concluded that two-thirds of them had mentors early in their careers (Roche, 1979), thus confirming that mentoring was beginning to be considered a useful tool in the socialization and development of new hires and young employees.

In 1985, Kram's seminal work devoted to the functions and aspects of mentoring relationships in the workplace opened the floodgates for mentoring research and articles, both empirical and practitioner-oriented. As a result of her study, Kram (1985) determined two main mentor functions. First, mentors provided career development functions such as increased exposure and challenging assignments. In addition, psychosocial functions were discovered, such as increased confidence and self-image. Noe published studies regarding the effects of gender in the mentoring relationship and the state of formal mentoring programs in organizations (1988a, 1988b, respectively). Mentoring was also gaining popularity in the literature as a career training and development tool (Hunt & Michael, 1983). The comparison between mentored and non-mentored workers became an increasingly popular topic of research led by Fagenson (1988, 1989, 1992). Other areas of focus during this generation of research included peer mentoring (Kram & Isabella, 1985), mentoring as an antidote to organizational stress (Kram & Hall, 1989), and the development of formal mentoring programs in organizations (Burke & McKeen, 1989; Phillips-Jones, 1983).

The study of mentoring flourished in the 1990s and is still of great interest across many disciplines today. Publications continued focusing on the differences between mentored and nonmentored employees, further delineating the categories to those formally mentored, those informally mentored, and
those not mentored at all (Chao et al., 1992). The outcomes of mentorships compared to traditional supervisory relationships generated interest (Burke, McKenna, & McKeen, 1991; Fagenson, 1994), as did the role of mentoring in the early socialization of new employees (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993).

Though an age-old phenomenon, mentoring in the workplace has only relatively recently claimed recognition as a powerful HRD intervention that assists employees in career advancement, serves as a form of on-the-job training, and helps create learning organizations (Cummings & Worley, 1997; Kram & Hall, 1989). Although varying types of mentorships have proven successful, formalized mentoring programs provide structure and help maximize opportunities for all employees—including minorities, women, or those who may otherwise have trouble obtaining a mentor—to experience the benefits of mentoring relationships (Ensher & Murphy, 1997).

Research to date has not determined just how many organizations use formal mentoring programs, but the proliferation of literature in recent years shows a widespread and growing interest. Several areas of the United States government have used formal mentoring, including the Department of Agriculture, the Presidential Management Intern Program, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Fourth Federal Executive Development Program (Klauss, 1981; Phillips-Jones, 1983). Educational institutions such as Empire State College and Brown University have reaped the benefits from their formal mentoring programs (Phillips-Jones, 1999). Even not-for-profit and professional associations report using formal mentoring, including the National Association of Black Accountants, California Women in Government, and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (Phillips-Jones, 1983).

It is interesting that a large portion of the organizations recognized in the literature as utilizing formal mentoring as an HRD strategy are also found in Fortune magazine’s list of the top 500 companies in America. Examples include IBM, Johnson & Johnson, AT&T, Honeywell, Apple Computers, and Allstate Insurance, to name a few (Cummings & Worley, 1997; Phillips-Jones, 1983, 1999). Companies included in the Fortune 500 listing are the nation’s top performers based on revenues, profits, market value, and other indicators of worth (Fortune, 2001). As such, these business organizations are probably ahead of the competition in various aspects, including the development of their human resources. The role formal mentoring plays is thus of particular interest, since these corporations are industry leaders, yet currently mentoring research has not focused on this population.

The strategy of developing and maintaining a formal mentoring program—specifically an exemplary one—is of interest in practice as well as scholarly research, yet this aspect has been underdeveloped in empirical literature. Numerous articles offer guidelines, matching strategies, and suggestions in program development (see for example Burke & McKeen, 1989; Coley, 1996; Phillips-Jones, 1998); however, these are often based on one or a few organizations, are generally not empirical reviews, do not necessarily focus on
high-quality programs, and typically do not delve into details on how to conduct effective needs analyses, training, and evaluations. The people responsible for these programs, as well as where they are housed, is also unclear. Research has not yet informed us whether a systematic design process, such as the ADDIE model (needs analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation), is commonly utilized.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that provided the foundation for this study was the instructional systems design (ISD) process commonly used in developing HRD interventions. Several variations of ISD models exist; however, there are commonalities among all of them: ISD models are process-oriented rather than product-oriented, systematic, typically flow with output from one phase serving as input for the next, and include built-in systems for evaluation and revision (Hannum & Hansen, 1989). Molenda, Pershing, and Reigeluth (1996) offer general qualities that ISD models possess that enhance their appeal for use in HRD initiatives; for example, ISD models are systemic in nature, with steps highlighting all processes necessary for success. In addition, models are reliable, iterative, and empirical.

The theoretical foundations of ISD lie in the integration of knowledge stemming from several disciplines, including social science, systems analysis, organizational development, and management theory (Johnson & Foa, 1989). The systematic nature of ISD follows five general stages: needs analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation; that is, the ADDIE model, as previously noted (Seels & Glasgow, 1998). The ADDIE model of ISD was used in this study as a process that is in development (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994), thus the model is not being tested in the study, but rather is used as a tentative conceptual framework for studying the development and maintenance of mentoring programs. This conceptual framework provided a lens and/or map to guide the researchers as to what issues related to mentoring programs were important to examine (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Schwandt (2000), no qualitative study begins from pure observation and that prior conceptual structure composed of theory and method should provide the starting point for all qualitative observations.

The ISD process is commonly used in developing HRD interventions (Murray, 1995; Noe, 1991), and mentoring is an intervention that can be linked to the three primary functions of HRD: organization development (OD), training and development (T&D), and career development (CD). Mentoring can serve as a component of strategic planned change in OD (Cummings & Worley, 1997; Swanson, 1999), can function as a form of on-the-job training (Lawrie, 1987; Robinson, 2001), and can support the professional and career development of employees in a cost-effective manner (Arthur, 1997; Herr, 2001). Overall, the conceptual framework assisted the researchers in identifying and shaping the interview guide questions, which included
questions such as, *What steps were taken to identify the needs for the mentoring program? What procedures were taken in designing the mentoring program? How is the mentoring program evaluated?* Each of these ADDIE stages and their applications is described in further detail below and summarized in Figure 1.

**Needs Analysis.** Needs analysis, or front-end analysis, is the first stage in the ADDIE model. Hannum and Hansen (1989) define this stage as the systematic identification, evaluation, and prioritization of the needs identified within a project, process, or system. The principle goal of the needs analysis is to identify gaps between current and desired outcomes. A needs analyst should use a combination of data sources, collect data consistently, and allow for both a broad and in-depth look at the situation (Hannum & Hansen, 1989).

**Design.** The second major phase in the ADDIE model is the design phase. Here, goals and objectives are developed and strategies for fulfilling them are determined (Hannum & Hansen, 1989). After goals and objectives have been developed, the designer must organize the instructional content and decide on appropriate methods and media. Designers must ask themselves what strategies will achieve the objectives and how they will know when objectives are met.

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**Figure 1. The ADDIE Model of Instructional Systems Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Analysis</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Determine problem</td>
<td>• Determine objectives, strategy to meet them, and way to determine when they have been met</td>
<td>• Draft materials</td>
<td>• Install the program in its actual context</td>
<td>• Decide whether problem has been solved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify way to solve</td>
<td>• Identify supporting media and methods</td>
<td>• Conduct formative evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Determine program’s impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify necessary changes</td>
</tr>
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*Source: Adapted from Seels & Glasgow (1998).*
Development. Materials needed for the program are created, reviewed, and validated in the development phase of the ADDIE model. Such materials may include training content, handouts, manuals, and policies (Hannum & Hansen, 1989; Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). According to Seels and Glasgow (1998), those developing such materials must ensure that learning principles determined in the design phase are addressed. A formative evaluation of the materials is also conducted during this phase.

Implementation. The fourth stage of ISD, implementation, involves putting the program in place. Pilot-testing is an effective first step in this phase, which may involve implementing the program in one department of a company or to a select group. There are several reasons for pilot-testing a program prior to full implementation: first, it allows for a formative evaluation, which enables planners to work through problems before implementing the program companywide. Seeing the results from a partial implementation can also decrease risk for decision makers. Pilot-testing can promote a readiness for change by demonstrating results and gradually encouraging people to become involved (Hannum & Hansen, 1989).

Evaluation. Two principle types of evaluation exist for HRD interventions: formative and summative. Formative evaluation is conducted at various stages throughout a program's operation to provide information that can be used to improve the program (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Summative evaluations are typically conducted in later stages and provide information regarding the program's worth or merit. The audiences for the two evaluation types differ as well: the formative evaluation audience is program personnel (that is, developers or designers) whereas the summative evaluation audience includes program personnel as well as supervisors, potential consumers, and decision makers (Worthen et al., 1997).

Statement of the Problem
Although formal mentoring programs exist in an ever-increasing number of businesses, empirical and practical deficiencies also exist that inhibit the full potential of mentoring. HRD interventions run the risk of being viewed as unnecessary expenses, rather than investments, and thus may be subject to limitations or complete elimination in times of budget strain. It is important, therefore, that mentoring be offered in strategic alignment with other development initiatives and programs created to reach the corporate mission, vision, and philosophy. In addition, a structured process for mentoring and a means to evaluate its impact allows HRD professionals and mentoring coordinators the necessary ingredients to make business justification for formal mentoring.

The benefits resulting from mentoring have received much attention in the literature; however, little empirical evidence exists describing the steps necessary to attain those benefits and the frequency by which they are used. As Allen and Poteet (1999) expressed, “Research is desperately needed to assess the
specific design features of formal programs that result in effective mentorships” (p. 70). By exploring the necessary components of exemplary formal mentoring programs, organizations can improve the quality of mentoring and at the same time enhance the development of human resources and build a competitive advantage. This will in turn help procure leadership interest and support in the mentoring effort, thus reducing the likelihood of program termination in times of organizational turbulence.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to enhance understanding of exemplary formal mentoring programs in Fortune 500 companies. Specifically, the major research questions guiding this study were

- How are exemplary formal mentoring programs in Fortune 500 companies developed?
- How are exemplary formal mentoring programs in Fortune 500 companies maintained?

**Methodology**

This was a descriptive exploratory qualitative study that was designed to advance understanding of the development and maintenance of exemplary formal mentoring programs. Specifically, two major data collection strategies were employed: first, a review of related documents was conducted, which provided insight on the corporations and mentoring programs, as well as assisted in confirming and verifying the information obtained in other collection strategies. The second collection method involved conducting in-depth, semistructured telephone interviews to provide detailed information regarding the exemplary formal mentoring programs. This strategy was used to allow for rich data, thorough responses, probing, and clarification of meanings (Merriam, 1988).

**Population and Sample.** The population of interest for this study involved Fortune 500 companies. These companies were focused on for several reasons: first, they are the nation’s leaders in terms of revenues, thus more likely to have the funding to support a corporate-sponsored mentoring program (Douglas & McCauley, 1999; Vande Merkt, 1997). For example, Hagevik (1998) states that over 96 percent of Fortune 500 executives report having been mentored, and Menttium (2001) cites an ASTD study in which 71 percent of Fortune 500 companies said they use mentoring to increase learning, thus providing further confirmation of this assumption. Second, several of the companies within this population have been cited in the mentoring literature, have won awards for their formal mentoring programs, or have been asked to present their mentoring program strategies at professional conferences, thus indicating an element of quality within these programs. Finally, previous studies in this area
have generally neglected to use Fortune 500 companies as primary populations of interest. Business organizations strive to be included in this list, however, and this group is often the population of choice for business-related research. This study aimed to incorporate this important population into the mentoring and HRD realms.

A sample of twenty-six companies was purposively selected from the greater population of five hundred. The purposive sampling technique allowed the researchers to select high-quality, exemplary formal mentoring programs. In order to be included in this study, three key criteria were established that each selected company was required to meet. The company needed to

- Be included in Fortune magazine’s list of the top 500 companies in the United States
- Have a formal mentoring program recognized for excellence or innovation by a reputable, nationally recognized professional organization
- Operate a formal mentoring program that has been cited in the mentoring literature

Identification of these companies, as well as contact information, was obtained in cooperation with several professional organizations with extensive research or practical experience focusing on mentoring. Of the sample twenty-six companies selected from the greater population of five hundred, nine declined or were rejected from the study for reasons such as the mentoring program no longer existed or upon further discussion did not meet the study’s established definition of mentoring. Thus, the final sample for this study comprised seventeen companies.

**Instrumentation.** Two instruments were created for the data collection strategies employed in this study. First, for the document reviews, a document review summary form was developed. Second, a semistructured interview guide was developed for the verbal interviews. These instruments are discussed briefly below.

**Document Reviews.** The document summary form was developed to enhance the systematic processing of data obtained through the documents reviewed. This form was created to promote a structured and objective system for minimizing data, as well as to provide a method for evaluating and classifying the information (Creswell, 2003; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). The document summary form was created based on the study’s key research questions. Upon receipt of each document, general information was recorded, such as a description of the document, its type (for example, company website, brochure, PowerPoint slide presentation), and the source from which it was obtained. The document’s significance to the mentoring program was identified, and a detailed summary of its contents was recorded. A separate form was completed for each document or item obtained.

**Interviews.** A semistructured interview guide was developed for the in-depth telephone interviews. This guide included two major headings guided
by the study’s major research questions:

- Development of the mentoring program (sample questions: Please tell me about the early stages of your mentoring program? Why was your mentoring program developed? What needs was it originally designed to meet?)
- Maintenance of the mentoring program (sample questions: Who is involved in the day-to-day operations of the mentoring program? How is the mentoring program operated at the various locations? How are participants trained?)

The purpose of the study and terms of voluntary participation and confidentiality were reiterated both on the interview guide and at the start of each interview. The interview guide consisted primarily of open-ended questions, allowing the interviewer to probe throughout the course of the interview (Merriam, 1988).

A study advisory committee, made up of four human resource development educators, reviewed the interview guide and study procedures. The interview guide was also pilot-tested with three companies similar to those in the sample in order to determine content validity and appropriateness of the interview guide. There was agreement by the study’s advisory committee and the pilot-test participants that the interview guide and the data being collected were appropriate for meeting the objectives of the study. The pilot-test results indicated the questions were appropriately focused and could be completed in the time frame estimated. Suggestions were taken into account and necessary revisions made.

**Data Collection.** Triangulation of data is an important measure in ensuring the validity of findings in a qualitative study. Therefore, different data sources and collection methods were used in this study. Two major data collection strategies were employed: document reviews and interviews. Data collection methods for this study were approved by the Human Subjects Review Board prior to being conducted.

**Document Reviews.** A review of related documents was conducted in order to obtain data about the company and mentoring program, verify data gathered through interviews, and provide triangulation. By searching articles, books, and Internet sources on the exemplary formal mentoring programs selected for the study, the researchers were able to determine details such as how long a specific program had been in place, how it was developed, the focus of the program, and other information specifically relating to the study’s major research questions.

Documents were also requested directly from the study participants during the initial contact. By reviewing documents prior to the in-depth interviews, the researchers were able to tailor each interview more effectively. Documents were again requested following the in-depth interview. Since various documents were discussed throughout the course of the interview, the researchers were at this time able to be more specific in their requests.
The average number of documents reviewed per company was six and included articles (internal and external), Internet documents, mentoring enrollment materials, brochures, award citations, training presentations, and evaluation data. These documents were used primarily to confirm data obtained in the other collection strategy, interviews.

**Interviews.** The primary contact person within each company was the mentoring coordinator, or the person responsible for overseeing the operation of the program. These individuals were identified through document and literature reviews, as well as from the sources judging the formal mentoring program as exemplary. In cases where a specific name was not provided or the contact had since left the company, the appropriate person was located through the corporate human resource office, the training and development department, or the corporate diversity office. In companies where numerous mentoring programs existed, the overall coordinator was contacted first. The key reason for beginning the interview process with the mentoring coordinator was based on the assumption that she or he had first-hand knowledge of how the formal mentoring program was developed, as well as the factors affecting its continuing operation.

Initial contacts with the mentoring coordinator were made over the telephone, at which time, dates, interview appointments, and arrangements were made. Immediately following this initial contact, the interview guide was e-mailed to the study participant as had been promised in the telephone conversation. In addition, a confirmation letter was included in the e-mail, which reiterated the purpose of the study, provided contact information, and confirmed the scheduled interview time.

Upon completion of the formal interview, the study participant was asked to provide contact information for other professionals heavily involved in the development or maintenance of the exemplary formal mentoring program. In some cases, the names of such individuals arose during the course of the interview. Contact information for people who may have worked with the mentoring program from a different perspective was also specifically requested; for example, from the diversity or training department if the program was owned by the human resources department.

The in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with twenty-nine individuals who were knowledgeable about their mentoring programs. The number of people interviewed from each company ranged from one to three; one person was interviewed in seven of the companies, two were interviewed in eight of the companies, and three were interviewed in the remaining two companies. For those companies in which one person was interviewed, additional sources were either unavailable or were no longer with the company, and forwarding information could not be given. Before starting the interviews, each interviewee was asked for his or her approval for taping the interview. All participants, with the exception of two, gave their approval. The interviews were tape recorded and extensive notes were also taken during each interview. The
interviews ranged in length from thirty to a hundred minutes (averaging one hour). Each interview was transcribed verbatim. After the interview each participant was e-mailed a letter thanking them for their participation and contribution to the study.

**Data Analysis.** A multistep, systematic content-analysis procedure as well as basic descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyze the data obtained in this study. Analysis procedures are described below, followed by a brief summary on the issues of validity and reliability.

**Analysis Procedures.** Upon completion of each in-depth interview, the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim into the computer. Interview summaries were prepared and sent to a sample of five participants, who confirmed that the transcription and interpretation of the data were accurate. This member-checking strategy was used as an additional step to ensure the validity of the data collected.

The transcribed account of each interview was reviewed several times; themes and patterns emerged after the first few interviews. Based on these themes and the key research questions and subquestions, a start list of codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was developed. Phrases on each of the transcripts were then identified, coded, and categorized. Phrases were deemed more appropriate than sentences for coding, as sentences often contained more than one conceptual idea.

To increase the validity of findings, the researchers used the peer examination strategy suggested by Merriam (1988) by which a panel of three colleagues was asked for comments as items were coded, categories were delineated, and findings were developed. This panel consisted of three individuals with different perspectives: one was a professor in a related field experienced in research methodology, one was a business associate with extensive human resource experience, and the third was a business manager with a doctoral degree and extensive research experience. This panel independently reviewed the overarching content themes in addition to the statements taken from the individual interview transcripts to determine the appropriate categorical placement for each. In the instances in which items were questionable, the researchers pulled larger sections of the transcript and reviewed them with the panel to reach consensus.

Once a transcript was coded, a conceptually clustered case matrix was developed for each corporation to organize the significant amount of raw data obtained. Within this matrix, key elements were displayed according to category and code, a strategy recommended by Rubin and Rubin (1995). Main points were identified, and transcript location information was included to allow for quick retrieval of the information listed (Seidman, 1998). Related documents were used to verify and confirm the interview data. This matrix served two main functions: to reduce the data to a manageable form and to display findings visually in order to draw valid conclusions.
Once the individual matrix for each company in the sample was designed, a case-ordered meta-matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was developed. This matrix was developed with the case (company) names across the X-axis and the categories of data on the Y-axis. This minimized the data even further to assist in the analysis by summarizing all of the key items from each individual case. Finally, a higher-order analysis was conducted by creating a content-analytic summary table based on the major research questions and subquestions. The strategy of developing matrices prevented the data from becoming overwhelming (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Validity and Reliability.** Multiple steps were taken to ensure the validity of this study. To summarize, multiple data sources and collection methods were used. In addition to this triangulation of data, the researchers conducted member checks (asking informants to review summaries of data and interpretations for plausibility) and peer examinations (seeking comments from colleagues as findings develop) (Merriam, 1988).

To ensure reliability of this study's results, three major steps were taken. First, the data were triangulated by using multiple sources. Second, an audit trail was developed, detailing the data collection methods, how analysis categories were developed, and how decisions throughout the study were made. Finally, the basis for the informant selection process, the social context from which the data were collected, and a description of the informants were all recorded (Merriam, 1988).

**Profiles**

The exemplary formal mentoring programs of seventeen corporations were included in the study. In-depth telephone interviews were conducted with twenty-nine individuals from the seventeen corporations. Following are brief profiles of the corporations, mentoring programs, and the study participants.

**Corporations.** The industry type or purpose of each company varied widely. Four (24 percent) were providers of financial services (commercial banking, securities, and diversified financials), and two (12 percent) were chemical companies. The remaining eleven (65 percent) companies each occupied a separate category of the Fortune industry listing, including insurance, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, paper products, soaps and cosmetics, beverages, consumer food products, computers, publishing and printing, aerospace and defense, and network and other communications equipment. The annual revenues for the companies ranged from approximately $3.2 billion to nearly $200 billion.

The number of individuals employed by each company ranged from 4,150 to 360,000, with an average of 94,519. Locations of corporate headquarters spanned the United States, with nearly half (48 percent) of them located in California, Illinois, and Michigan. Most (88 percent) of
the companies were global in scope; the remaining 12 percent functioned
nationally.

Mentoring Programs. The exemplary formal mentoring programs under
review were in existence anywhere from less than one year to fifteen years, with
the average program running for 5.8 years. All of those reviewed were consid-
ered “traditional”; that is, a more experienced employee mentoring a new or
somehow less experienced employee in a one-to-one relationship. All programs
(100 percent) included in the sample met the definition of a formal mentor-
ing program established in the study’s design phase.

Fifteen of the mentoring programs (88 percent) were companywide; in the
remaining two companies (12 percent), the programs identified as exemplary
were divisional. In discussing their programs, all respondents termed the
more experienced or knowledgeable person in the relationship as “mentor”;
the less experienced member of the relationship was identified as either the
“mentee” (71 percent) or “protégé” (29 percent).

A number of company employees have participated in the exemplary men-
toring programs sponsored by the companies included in this study. The num-
ber of mentoring participants since the programs’ inception dates for those that
tracked these data ranged from seventy-two to ten thousand per company, with
an average of 2,169 per company. The number of participants each year has
typically grown for programs that have existed for more than one year.

Study Participants. A total of twenty-nine formal interviews were
conducted for this study with participants from seventeen companies. Seven
(24 percent) participants held the job title of manager, with another
seven (24 percent) titled project or program manager. Four (14 percent) were
senior vice presidents or vice presidents, four (14 percent) were directors,
and two (7 percent) were senior consultants. Other titles, held by one (4 per-
cent) study participant each, included department head, supervisor, human
resource staff assistant, regional coordinator, and training coordinator.

The study participants’ roles in the exemplary mentoring programs were as
broad as overall coordinator, which sixteen (55 percent) respondents indicated,
to being as specific as matching chairperson, which one (4 percent) respondent
identified. Several respondents held multiple roles, which included research and
development, six (21 percent); site coordinator, five (17 percent); corporate
resource, two (7 percent); and training coordinator, one (4 percent).

The study participants were employed by their respective companies
anywhere from less than one year to thirty-three years, with an average of
13.7 years. Job tenure within their current positions ranged from less than one
year to fourteen years, with an average of 4.4 years.

All of the respondents had some college education, with twenty-five
(86 percent) holding at least a bachelor’s degree. Twelve (41 percent) partici-
pants had earned master’s degrees, and one (4 percent) respondent had earned
a juris doctor (JD) degree.
Results

The results of this study are summarized in two major sections that parallel the research questions: (1) Development of Formal Mentoring Programs, and (2) Maintenance of Formal Mentoring Programs.

Development of Formal Mentoring Programs. The first major research question in the study attempted to identify how exemplary formal mentoring programs are developed. To analyze the data three major categories in alignment with the conceptual framework were developed: (1) needs assessment, (2) design, and (3) program development. Results are discussed for each of these categories in the following sections.

Needs Analysis. This section of data collection focused on the various concepts involved in conducting a needs analysis. Results are offered regarding the purpose for initiating the mentoring program, the target audience for which the program was designed, and the steps used to guide the needs analysis.

When asked why their mentoring programs had first been initiated, study participants identified various reasons. The three most frequently mentioned reasons were (1) retention, nine (53 percent); (2) diversity initiative, nine (53 percent); and (3) career management or development, eight (47 percent). One of the major reasons identified most frequently involved mentoring as an effort to retain quality employees. “We really wanted to be number one, we were attracting the best talent, but more importantly, keeping the best talent,” claimed one study participant. Second, mentoring was developed as a diversity initiative. “Historically,” explained a corporate diversity director responsible for the mentoring program, “people who are not of the majority culture can have a more difficult time getting off to a good start here just because it’s harder, maybe harder to form relationships.” Enhancing diversity meant increasing not only the numbers of women and minorities in leadership positions, but also enhancing diversity of thought, especially in global organizations. In eight (47 percent) programs, career management and development were primary motivators. A study participant indicated that the results of an employee survey conducted in her company showed that employees “didn’t feel they were being developed and allowed to grow,” thus prompting the mentoring program.

The exemplary formal mentoring programs were developed with a specific target audience in mind. Multiple targets were identified, which were categorized into four main groups: all employees, high-potential employees, new hires, and women. Nine programs (53 percent) were designed for all employees, with a goal of being all-inclusive and reaching out to all individuals. One coordinator stated, “It’s open to everybody. That’s the whole point . . . diversity is not supposed to be separate.” She later claimed that the diversity initiatives in her company, of which mentoring was one dimension, are “. . . open to everyone, and it’s really more of a way to help people see that you can have differences, [yet] everybody can be working towards the same goal.” Four programs (24 percent) were
targeted to high-potential employees. Three programs (18 percent) focused their mentoring efforts on new hires, of which one was targeted to all new hires and transfers, one was focused on “relatively” new hires (organizational tenure of six to nine months), and the rest focused specifically on new hires of color. The final target audience, identified by one (6 percent) company, was women.

The steps identified most frequently by the participants that assisted in analyzing the existing need for a mentoring program were (1) surveys, nine (53 percent); (2) individual interviews, six (35 percent); and (3) focus groups, four (24 percent). The step identified most often was collecting data through employee surveys. “Every year . . . we conduct an employee survey. And year after year . . . career development is something that employees are looking for more of,” stated a corporate university program manager. Individual interviews, conducted by six (35 percent) companies, incorporated the opinions of employees currently involved in informal mentoring, potential employees considering employment with the company, and exit interviews when employees left their respective companies. Conducting focus groups was another strategy identified by four (24 percent) programs, which involved general employee groups as well as specific network groups (for example, the African American network group within a particular company).

**Design.** The second point of focus within the first major research question involved the design of the exemplary mentoring program. This section focuses on how the program was designed, who was involved, and the guidelines established for its operation.

The three major components most frequently identified by the participants when asked how programs were designed included (1) external consultant, fifteen (88 percent); (2) external benchmarking, ten (59 percent); and (3) literature review, six (35 percent). Most companies hired an external consultant to assist in this process. Consultants provided expertise in how to design the program, who should be involved, and in some cases provided already-developed programs to implement “off the shelf.” All of the companies provided some input into the design of their programs; however, the degree to which the external consultant was used varied widely. Another frequently employed strategy incorporated by ten (59 percent) of the companies was external benchmarking. Representatives would look to other companies with already existing programs to seek details on how they were designed, implemented, and evaluated. Books, articles, and other related literature materials were sources of information for six (35 percent) of the programs.

Various individuals were involved in the design of the exemplary mentoring programs. As mentioned earlier, external consultants played an integral role in fifteen (88 percent) programs. “We felt that in order to implement the program and the design that we had . . . we needed to do that hand-in-hand with the consultant, someone who had more expertise,” claimed one participant involved in the design phase of the program. She continued, “[T]hat was a quicker way to launch the program. Because I mean from a development
standpoint, you either make it or you buy it. And we decided we're gonna buy it.” Ten (59 percent) companies also indicated use of a cross-functional mentoring design team to develop the details of the program. Such teams consisted of representatives from departments such as human resources, management, diversity, the office of the chief executive officer (CEO), education and development, legal, and leadership development. Three (18 percent) companies used design teams that were inclusive of one department rather than cross-functional. Those departments included diversity, management and development, and the corporate university.

Guidelines for the mentoring relationships were commonly developed. Fourteen (82 percent) formal relationships lasted one year, one (6 percent) program encouraged a nine-month relationship, and the remaining two (12 percent) companies left relationship lengths up to the participants. A director of a mentoring program in the study indicated that a length guideline of one year, for example, would be too stifling for the purposes of her program: “This requires a great deal of trust-building and, you know, because both parties are very much vulnerable in this. . . . So, you know, if you cut it off at a year you’d be cutting people off at the knees because they would’ve probably just started getting to that point of peeling back the layers to, you know, get to know each other and really be able to be helpful.”

Regardless of the recommended length of the formal program, participants could continue informally beyond that point if they desired. During the course of the relationship, nine (53 percent) programs suggested that partners meet a minimum of two hours each month. Four (24 percent) others recommended one or two meetings per month (times not specified), and one (6 percent) program encouraged partnerships to meet at least six times per year. The remaining three (18 percent) companies left this detail up to the participants to decide.

Program Development. The third category within the first research question focused on the actual development of the program components. Here, data regarding the materials, rewards, and financial support for the program are presented.

Numerous documents and materials have been developed to promote and support the mentoring programs. These were separated into four major categories: (1) promotional and marketing items, (2) pre-enrollment and enrollment materials, (3) training materials, and (4) relationship support. First, in terms of promotional or marketing items, companies developed informational brochures, kick-off packages, and promotional items such as t-shirts, notepads, and pens. One program team developed a testimonial video “. . . where we actually, you know, interviewed some of the participants both together and singly. It’s really gone over well. And we did it just as part of the celebration, but what it’s turned out to be is a really strong marketing tool within our own organization.” Second, pre-enrollment and enrollment materials included interest cards, applications, nomination packets, career assessments, qualification
profiles, readiness assessments, and interview protocols. Third, training materials such as videos, program leader guides, PowerPoint presentations, and online courses were created. Participant guides were also commonly developed, about which one study participant said, “We tell people this resource guide should look pretty dog-eared and battered at the end . . . it can literally walk you through a full year’s relationship.” The fourth category covered relationship support, including discussion guides, partnership agreement forms, mentor essentials lists, journals, and relationship-building tools. Growth plans, also referred to as learning or development plans, were often used to help direct the focus of the relationship.

When asked about corporate rewards for mentoring participants such as increased pay or promotion opportunities, fourteen (82 percent) companies did not offer such rewards. Involvement in mentoring may be mentioned in performance reviews but was not heavily weighted in terms of promotion or advancement opportunities. In fact, some companies purposely did not tie any direct monetary rewards to mentoring involvement. “We’re very specific that it is very focused on developing what we call competencies,” stated a program manager. “It’s all about developing the employee and, if in the course of development the employee is promoted, that’s wonderful. But it’s not a sponsorship program or a guaranteed-anything program.” Three (18 percent) companies did intentionally link mentoring involvement to corporate rewards in three distinct ways. One company looked favorably upon involvement in terms of promotions. Another company added points to a mentor’s Management by Objectives program for their participation. The third company linked bonus or incentive pay for its executive and managerial levels to their active involvement in, support of, and encouragement for the formal mentoring program.

Financial support for the exemplary mentoring programs typically originated within three areas: four (24 percent) programs were financially supported by human resources, four (24 percent) were supported by the diversity office, and four (24 percent) were supported within the unit or department in which they operated, with those units being independently responsible for finding money to support their programs. Two (12 percent) programs were supported by the training and development offices, one (6 percent) was supported by the executive development office, and one (6 percent) was supported by the office of the CEO. A study participant for one (6 percent) program stated that for the company’s program, “There is no budget. I mean, it’s minimal. The kick-off meeting we provide breakfast, and the materials are basically Word documents.”

**Maintenance of Formal Mentoring Programs.** The two primary steps in the maintenance aspect of formal mentoring programs, in accordance with the ADDIE conceptual framework, included implementation and evaluation. Both steps required various areas of consideration when used in terms of mentoring programs, which are detailed below to answer the second major research
question: How are exemplary formal mentoring programs maintained in Fortune 500 companies?

Implementation. Five subcategories were created within the issue of implementation. These include: (1) how the program was implemented, (2) selection processes, (3) matching strategies, (4) training, and (5) daily administration of the program. Each of these subcategories is expanded below.

Thirteen (77 percent) of the seventeen companies piloted their formal mentoring program on a smaller scale prior to rolling it out to the larger employee base. The sizes of the pilot populations of those tracking ranged from twenty-eight to 120 participants (fourteen to sixty pairs). One participant effectively summed up how her particular site was chosen for the pilot: “[W]e were chosen . . . because we had a lot of young, bright, highly competent college graduates . . . who took their first job with [this company] with the absolute intent of being developed and growing and moving on, upward in the organization. . . . We also tended to be an area that tended to be a little more progressive according to the rest of the division. We were always doing kind of cutting edge things for the division.”

The companies who did not pilot their program either rolled it out companywide from the start or rolled it out in successive waves.

Sixteen (94 percent) of the companies offered their programs on a voluntary basis. Mentors and protégés were typically required to meet some criteria in order to participate in the mentoring program. Seven (41 percent) of the programs specifically required protégés to have a commendable or satisfactory performance rating. “[I]t’s sort of a reward for good performance,” described one program manager. Six (35 percent) companies required participants to have a minimum organizational tenure, ranging from six to eighteen months. The protégé’s manager needed to approve or support the protégé’s participation in five (29 percent) of the companies, and three (18 percent) companies required the protégé to be a certain job level. Mentors were also frequently required to apply for program participation. One coordinator described the importance of using “some sort of evaluative process—not just assuming anyone can become a mentor,” thus the impetus for setting selection guidelines such as these in place. Mentors were required to complete an enrollment form in eleven (65 percent) of the companies. Three (18 percent) companies used personal interviews as their enrollment strategy, and two (12 percent) companies relied on a nomination procedure. Two (12 percent) companies required simply a willingness to mentor.

All of the mentoring programs studied had a structured matching process in place, which was sometimes identified as a critical—if not the most important—factor in successful relationships and programs. “I just think it’s a very hands-on, time-intensive process,” explained a corporate director about the matching process. “I wouldn’t delegate it out . . . I think it’s the most important thing.” Later in the interview she expanded on its importance: “. . . my point is, the
better the match, the better the chemistry, the deeper the discussion, the better the learning.” The criteria used to match participants, and the order in which those criteria are emphasized, varied by company. The three most frequently mentioned matching criteria were: (1) common background/interests, ten (59 percent); (2) developmental needs and expertise, eight (47 percent); and (3) job level, six (35 percent). Ten (59 percent) companies emphasized common background and interests between the mentor and protégé in their matching decisions. Eight (47 percent) companies placed emphasis on the developmental needs of the protégé matched with the experience and expertise of the mentor. Job level was of key importance in six (35 percent) programs. A majority of those programs emphasizing job level (five of the six) tried to match individuals who were roughly two job levels apart.

Training was conducted in all but one of the participating companies. (The program without training was being restructured at the time of the interview; the details of training execution had not yet been confirmed.) In ten (63 percent) of the sixteen companies offering training, two phases were completed. First, an orientation (sometimes termed “kick-off” or “informational session”) was offered in which participants, or potential participants, learned logistics of the program such as background, the mentoring process, and interview skills in cases where the protégés interviewed their potential mentors. Mentors and protégés attended these sessions together. Second, the formal training portion (which occurred after the initial orientation for the previously referenced ten companies) ranged from one to eight hours in length, with an average of four hours. Ten (63 percent) of the sixteen training programs included mentors and protégés together, whereas five (31 percent) programs provided separate training for the two sets of participants. “And one of the best benefits of that,” cited a study participant offering separated training, “is that they can ask those questions that they’re really dying to ask, like ‘What if I just don’t like this person?’ They would never do that if they knew the mentor was in the room.” The remaining company offered training for mentors only; protégé training was not required. Fifteen (94 percent) companies used internal trainers for their training sessions; only one (6 percent) company indicated the use of an external consultant to conduct its training. Topics covered in the training programs focused on the mentoring process (such as guidelines, definitions, the importance of mentoring, and the tools and materials available) and individual participant issues (such as relationship building, roles, potential challenges, misconceptions, and communication). The director of a corporate program explained that communication was an integral part of the company’s training so that once the pairs were matched together, they could “go off and have a meaningful dialogue, and don’t just talk about sports or something.” In addition to traditional classroom training, other training methods identified by the participants included training videos, breakout sessions, testimonials, practice interviews, teleconferencing, personality-typing exercises, role plays, simulations, and self-assessments.
The ongoing administration of the exemplary formal mentoring programs was managed primarily by three groups of people: coordinators of the overall mentoring effort, fifteen (88 percent); mentoring teams, fifteen (88 percent); and site coordinators, fourteen (82 percent). One participant said, “I manage it, but we as a team, we meet every week, and that has worked well.” Others identified as aiding in the day-to-day administration of the mentoring programs included an administrative assistant, three (18 percent); and senior vice presidents, two (12 percent). One company each identified Web designers, diversity representatives, recruiting officers, taskforce team members, and management and development representatives.

*Evaluation.* To incorporate the many facets involved in program evaluation, this final phase of the ADDIE model has been delineated into four subcategories: (1) how the programs are evaluated, (2) frequency of evaluation, (3) how results are used, and (4) the impact of the mentoring program.

All of the respondents in this study recognized the need for evaluating their exemplary mentoring programs and identified several ways in which they attempted to accomplish this. Fifteen (88 percent) of the seventeen companies had participants complete written or online surveys regarding the program. Ten companies (59 percent) conducted periodic telephone check-ins to assess the program's effectiveness as well as to prompt partners to continue meeting on a regular basis. Focus groups were another popular way of evaluating formal mentoring programs; eight (47 percent) companies in the study employed that strategy. Other evaluation methods included brief, informal conversations, two (12 percent); and testimonials, two (12 percent). Evaluations were generally brief and focused on participants' opinions about the program. Common evaluation questions covered topics such as: Are you meeting regularly? Are you satisfied? What is working? What is not working? Evaluations also asked for suggested changes, plans for re-enrollment, and the overall value of the program.

Like evaluation methodology, the frequency in which evaluations were conducted varied. Thirteen (77 percent) of the programs were evaluated a minimum of twice a year, with one of those evaluations occurring at the end of the program year. Four (24 percent) companies conducted quarterly evaluations, two (12 percent) companies evaluated their mentoring programs three times per year, and two (12 percent) other companies conducted evaluations at five points throughout the year. The remaining three (18 percent) companies either evaluated at various (though not always consistent) intervals or had not yet determined an evaluation strategy.

Once the evaluation results had been collected, participants from fourteen (82 percent) of the companies stated that the results were used to adjust and enhance the mentoring program. Often they were shared with others in the organization: with leadership in six (35 percent) companies, with participants in three (18 percent) companies, with the general organizational population in two (12 percent) companies, and with human resource and organizational
development representatives in one (6 percent) company. Three (18 percent) companies reviewed results carefully to make determinations about whether or not the formal mentoring program should continue. The comments and anecdotal material obtained in evaluations in two (12 percent) companies were used in training classes or marketing strategies.

Formal mentoring had a variety of impacts on companies. The five most frequently cited impacts of the formal mentoring programs included: (1) retention, ten (59 percent); (2) promotion and advancement, six (35 percent); (3) satisfaction, six (35 percent); (4) morale, five (29 percent); and (5) productivity and performance, five (29 percent). Ten (59 percent) of the companies saw a positive relationship between mentoring and retention. “We’ve seen an increase in retention,” claimed one participant whose program was developed in part to improve retention rates. Others commented on this benefit, too: “[W]e do have testimonials . . . of people who say they would probably have left the company if they didn’t have so-and-so for a mentor,” stated one director. Another confirmed that participants in the program “feel special, therefore they will stay; it’s a retention tool.”

Promotion and advancement rates were positively affected in six (35 percent) companies. “We have seen a difference,” stated the program manager for a mentoring program that is now in its ninth year. “[Protégés] are promoted at a much higher rate than others who are at the same job level and performance level.” Another frequent impact (35 percent) was employee satisfaction, both toward the program and the organization as a whole. Mentoring has also positively affected morale, according to participants in five (29 percent) of the companies. Gains in self-confidence, self-assurance, and improved self-esteem all contributed to this impact. Improvements in productivity and performance were identified in five (29 percent) of the companies.

Taking into account the findings of this study, a formal mentoring program development process was devised. Details of the development process are displayed in Table 1.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that a systematic design process, such as the steps of the ADDIE model, is used in the development of exemplary mentoring programs in business organizations. Regarding the needs analysis, exemplary mentoring programs in this study were implemented to address a specific business need as recommended by the literature (Lindenberger & Zachary, 2001). The needs in this study were most commonly issues of retention, diversity, and career management and development.

A thorough needs analysis, perhaps with the assistance of a third party, should be conducted to determine current organizational needs and to brainstorm possible remedies. If a structured mentoring process is determined to be the most effective way to address an organizational need, then a structured
design process should be utilized. A thorough needs analysis will improve the design of the program as well as allow for more accurate evaluation.

Mentoring program designers should clearly identify the purpose of the program, then ensure that goals, objectives, and design steps all align with this purpose. For example, if retention is a primary reason for initiating mentoring, turnover statistics should be reviewed in the design phase and specific objectives related to retention (in terms of numbers, targeted departments, and so forth) developed.

Most programs in this study targeted an audience of “all employees” rather than focusing on a more specific group. The majority of programs were rolled out individually but supported other initiatives such as career development or management training efforts. Mentoring literature supports this process by stating that the program should be carefully aligned with the company’s long-term strategy and mission (Phillips-Jones, 1983, 1998). In addition, rather than functioning as stand-alone programs, formal mentoring supports larger HRD initiatives. Mentoring, therefore, could be considered a process (versus a program) and built into the organizational culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Analysis</td>
<td>Clearly identified purpose&lt;br&gt; Identified target audience&lt;br&gt; Aligned with organizational mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Researched through expert, benchmarking, and literature&lt;br&gt; Designed by external consultant or cross-functional team&lt;br&gt; Clearly developed guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Supporting materials developed (i.e., applications, guides, growth plans, Web sites)&lt;br&gt; Participation not linked to corporate rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Piloted prior to widespread implementation&lt;br&gt; Voluntary participation&lt;br&gt; Selection criteria developed&lt;br&gt; Systematic selection process involving formal applications&lt;br&gt; Systematic matching process&lt;br&gt; Manually done by mentoring team or coordinator&lt;br&gt; Top criteria: common background and interests, developmental needs and expertise, job level&lt;br&gt; Orientation offered&lt;br&gt; Training conducted covering process and participant issues&lt;br&gt; Coordinator and mentor team identified to oversee process&lt;br&gt; Multisite programs with corporatwwide guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Methodology: written surveys and phone check-ins&lt;br&gt; Minimum twice a year evaluation&lt;br&gt; Results used to alter program</td>
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All of the companies in this study used a formal matching procedure, one of the key components of a formal mentoring program (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Typically a manual matching process was used, often requiring mentoring team members and coordinators to spend several hours or days immersed in potential participant background and developmental data. The process was considered important, though time-intensive and exhausting. Allowing protégés to select their mentors from a limited pool of qualified candidates is a recommended strategy to allow for autonomy and empowerment (Klauss, 1981; Noe, 1991); however, only two companies in this study utilized this option. A lack of available mentors could play a role in more companies not employing this strategy.

The companies in this study offered training, often in two phases: orientation and “official” training. Although these companies offered training, few offered actual skill-building opportunities. In addition, ongoing training and opportunities for learning were not commonplace, though such support is considered an important element to successful mentoring (Lindenberger & Zachary, 2001). Training generally focused on process issues (logistics) specific to the mentoring program and on participant and relationship issues.

Taking a more in-depth look at training within the mentoring process allows for another link between HRD and mentoring. In the companies in this study apparently HRD specialists are not frequently enlisted to train mentors and protégés for their respective roles. Although internal trainers were used, some of whom were “certified” by an external consultant, their job functions did not always relate to those of an HRD professional.

Orientations, though categorized under the training header, would not necessarily meet the definitions of training offered by McLagan (1983) and Nadler (1979). In these sessions, potential participants were typically welcomed to the process and given information about guidelines and logistical details. Skill building was not a frequent priority in these sessions. Mentoring program leaders, in conjunction with training and development specialists, should design comprehensive training packages to support their mentoring efforts. These should include an orientation session prior to participant commitment, a thorough initial training process to develop key mentoring competencies among participants, and ongoing training throughout the course of the program cycle to maintain a level of quality and effectiveness among mentoring pairs.

Support from the top is certainly the most critical ingredient to the success of formal mentoring programs and many other HRD initiatives (Burke & McKeen, 1989; Lindenberger & Zachary, 2001). Organizational leaders should be actively supportive and involved in the various phases of mentoring, from needs analysis to evaluation, in order to increase the program’s likelihood for success. Means to demonstrate support include serving as a member of the design team, providing input on organizational expectations of the program, publicizing the program in various corporate speaking engagements, serving as a mentor (or protégé, depending upon the program goals and purpose), and encouraging other organizational leaders to participate in the program.
Senior level executives should also take measures to ensure that the organizational climate is healthy and supports the mentoring effort. Encouraging open communication, promoting the use of cross-functional project teams, and demonstrating the importance of developing employees will build loyalty and commitment while helping to reach organizational goals.

The literature supports developing long-term program goals in the design phase of the mentoring process, as well as determining how such goals will be measured and used (Lindenberger & Zachary, 2001; Patton, 1997; Seels & Glasgow, 1998). It is interesting that although all of the study participants identified specific purposes for their programs, few could identify a systematic way in which these were being measured or reported. Measures such as pretest and posttest knowledge assessments were rarely conducted. The need to do this was apparent, however, in that many of the companies in the study hoped to improve their evaluation procedures as a prime goal for the future of their program.

Study participants expressed difficulty in the evaluation of mentoring programs. They stressed the challenge of (1) isolating the effects of the program on long-term changes, and (2) defining what exactly they would track without compromising the purpose and goals of the program. The literature confirms that measuring the impact of such programs, which focus on qualitative items such as the transfer of corporate culture and emotional intelligence, is increasingly difficult (Rogers & Pasceri, 1998). Few companies obtained baseline data relating to the mentoring program prior to implementation, such as protégé competencies, knowledge, and organizational satisfaction—an important element in evaluation quality (Phillips-Jones, 1998). Most programs evaluated in some fashion at least twice each program cycle, then used the results primarily to make formative changes or enhancements to the existing program. In less than half of the companies in the study were results explicitly shared with leadership, another important step in program justification and determining worth (Patton, 1997).

Evaluation strategies also did not necessarily align with the purpose of the mentoring programs in this study. For example, the most frequently cited purpose—retention—could be tracked in one way by reviewing turnover statistics, yet this was not done. Another evaluation strategy that could have been implemented would be to include items about the program in the exit interview, yet only one company in the study did this. Systematic evaluation procedures could help provide business justification for the formal mentoring program.

Typical of HRD functions, formal mentoring may be one of the first programs eliminated during organizational budget cuts. The mission of the formal mentoring program should clearly be aligned with the mission and strategy of the corporation as a whole. This not only defines the purpose and intent of the program, it also alerts top management to the benefits of investing in formal mentoring programs. With increased globalization, technological advancements,
and a more highly educated workforce continuing to permeate businesses today, formal mentoring programs will help corporations maintain a competitive edge while providing individuals with continued opportunities for personal and professional growth as they face worldwide competition.

Four important limitations must be considered when reviewing the results of this study. First, as with all research, the potential for generalizing the results to a specific organization needs to be interpreted by the reader. Due to the limited sample size of this study, this is especially important to note. Second, since this was not an experimental study with the manipulation of an independent variable, causation cannot be inferred. Third, the findings of the study were based primarily on the perception of the study participants. Finally, although qualitative research designs provide a richness of data unattainable with other methods, coding and data may be misinterpreted. To decrease this possibility, the researchers employed various procedures as recommended by experts in the literature. Such procedures included triangulation of data, member checks, and peer examination (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Several results from this study point to the need for more empirical research in the field of mentoring. First, the current study provides the necessary background and framework for exemplary, or successful, formal mentoring. The field would benefit from an equally structured look comparing such programs to those that failed or did not survive times of organizational turbulence (budget cuts, downsizing, and so forth). This would help determine the components setting highly successful, exemplary programs apart from those less successful.

Future studies should also take a deeper look at the evaluation component of mentoring. Evaluation issues in need of further inquiry include how to reach beyond the first level or two of Kirkpatrick’s (1994) model, how to better link mentoring to organizational issues (performance, retention, and so forth), and how to isolate mentoring’s impact on these issues. Several companies in this study used development or growth plans as one of the materials supporting their mentoring efforts. An interesting avenue to pursue in research would be to determine whether a difference exists, on a variable such as promotion, between companies housing formal mentoring programs and those simply requiring documented growth and development plans. This would help determine whether promotion occurs more as a result of the one-on-one interactions that mentoring provides, or simply as a result of more focused goal setting.

With ever-increasing global expansion of corporations, a global look at mentoring is needed. The importance of mentoring in other cultures, differences and similarities in execution, and more on cross-organizational mentoring would add depth to current mentoring research.
In addition, HRD researchers should examine the link among mentoring, HRD function, and organizational strategy. Utilizing internal HRD experts more heavily to assess needs, develop training, and consult on other aspects of program development and maintenance may serve to improve both the state of mentoring and the roles of the HRD professional.

References


Christine D. Hegstad is owner-manager of MAP Professional Development, Inc., in Ankeny, Iowa.

Rose Mary Wentling is professor of human behavior in the Department of General Engineering, University of Illinois, Champaign.

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