

Cultivating an Inclusive Culture Through Mentoring

Mentoring is an effective tool for increasing and shaping an inclusive culture by relationship building. Employers today are utilizing mentoring strategies as a best practice to grow and retain talent. The following best practices equip your organization to begin implementing this valuable tactic of disability inclusion.

BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Organizations are positively impacted by creating a culture that supports mentoring. The benefits are numerous, and include:

1. Development of Emerging Leaders
2. Additional Avenue for Recruitment
3. Enhanced Talent Development
4. Increased Employee Retention
5. Increased Diversity
6. Strategic Direction for Disability Inclusion, Resulting in Innovation

MENTORING MODELS

Today's mentoring models offer options and flexibility to provide role models and sounding boards to support personal reflection, planning, and professional development. The models listed below provide examples:

1. One-to-One: This model is most frequently known and adopted within organizations. A relationship develops between a more senior employee who is paired with a more junior employee to provide the younger/less experienced person with guidance, support, and encouragement.
2. Group: Consists of a mentor and at least four mentees at a time, who regularly meet.
3. Peer: A peer mentor is typically close in age to the mentee and is a sounding board, providing informal guidance on ideas and plans.
4. E-Mentoring: E-Mentoring has emerged as a very viable way to build a mentoring relationship. With this model, mentoring happens via a virtual platform or email.
5. Flash: Flash mentoring is effective when a long-term relationship isn't sustainable, or immediate insight is needed. A single meeting takes place between the mentor and mentee to gain knowledge, insights, or perspectives.
6. Reverse and Reciprocal: This form of mentoring occurs when an employer needs a refreshed perspective on the changing workforce and needs of society, works with an employee that could be younger to expand the company's reach through more modern platforms and stay current.

GETTING STARTED

Mentoring is successful when organizations take the first steps to get started. The following outline provides a framework to begin:

1. **Assess the Organization**
 - Evaluate Needs: Conduct a needs assessment to determine success and opportunities; how mentoring will add value.
 - Base the Objectives on Goals and Mission: The results of the assessment provide a roadmap for integrating mentoring into the organization. Ensure the objectives of the mentoring program align with the organization's goals and mission.
2. **Ensure Leadership Support:** Obtain Executive and Senior level support, and have leaders discuss the value of mentoring for the organization as a whole.
3. **Develop Essential Components for the Program:** Formulate a plan and design the program, relying on evidence-based research.
 - Application: Determine the application components and questions that effectively assess candidates.
 - Training: Identify training needed to foster quality engagement and outcomes.
 - Procedures: Outline the program with steps from recruitment to evaluation.
4. **Look to the Company's Employee Resource Group (ERG) for Guidance:** Members of your ERG serve as a valuable resource ensuring appropriate steps are taken to develop an effective and engaging program.
5. **Identify the Program Manager:** Determine who will oversee the initiative.
6. **Determine Program Outline/Roadmap:** Decide the format, steps, and details of the program.
7. **Recruit Mentors and Mentees:** Begin formulating a marketing and outreach plan for recruiting mentors and mentees.
8. **Evaluate:** Determine the metrics used to evaluate program success.

For more information about the National Business & Disability Council (NBDC) at The Viscardi Center, and the benefits of membership, email NBDCinfo@viscardicenter.org or visit NBDC.com