

Mastering Mentoring 20 Shortage

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



I make the observation that there are not enough great leaders in the world, not due to a shortage of good candidates, but because of a shortage of great mentors. Leading organizations is a daunting task for most leaders primarily because they fail to build a culture of trust.

The Relationship Between Trust and the Shortage of Mentors

Most leaders I know are consumed trying to optimize the organization's performance in a very complex time. Challenges come in a steady stream, and leaders are faced with solving problems continuously. They have no discretionary time to devote to mentoring the next class of leaders. The situation seems to get worse with time.

Since the leaders have a difficult time letting go of their main responsibilities, they do not delegate as much as they might, so the problems and issues all fall into their lap. By trusting the workforce more, they have the opportunity to delegate more tasks to others and thus free up some time to help mentor great leaders for the next generation.

The Solution is Obvious

If leaders would carve out about 15% of their time to work with people in their organization to build a culture of higher trust, the whole dynamic would shift from one of extreme pressure to a more reasonable work atmosphere where mentoring is actually possible. In an environment like that, leadership becomes a blast rather than a chore. The environment for everyone becomes more enjoyable, and many people grow in their ability to lead.

It is extremely difficult to convince most CEOs to carve out 15% of the time to work on culture; they are just too busy solving problems. The organization becomes like a whirlpool sinking deeper and deeper into a situation where some workers just resign or check out mentally. Of course, that makes the whole problem more acute.

Summary

As I observe leaders, I see the brilliant ones have figured out that, despite the frantic pace of business problems, they have a mandate to grow the next generation of leaders. They invest calendar time to that function, and over time, things start getting better.

The number one time-burner for any CEO is the inability of people in the organization to get along and work well together. By building a culture of higher trust, people do get along much better. There are fewer problems to be resolved, so that also frees up time for the CEO to do more mentoring.

These leaders feel free to delegate more to their employees, which is also a way to develop their skills for the future. The culture improves for everyone. The pathway is there for the taking. It is too bad few CEOs recognize the way out of their current pain.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals, Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online, Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind, and Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.