



Mentoring in Facilities Management

By Edwin Robinson

After providing training to the Facilities Management staff of Arizona State University for the past 12 years, I realized that the leaders of Facilities Management comprise individuals that have a tremendous amount of experience in their field. Facilities administration and shop area staff have highly skilled people. Then I asked myself a question: How could this knowledge and experience be easily shared with others? The answer was easy, due to what most companies have embraced in the past ten years. What was my answer? It was mentoring.

Mentoring could generate a continuous cycle of knowledge and skill sharing that would make facilities management departments and shop areas more efficient. Then I asked myself another question: How could this be achieved and supported? The answer is that you would have to tailor a mentoring program that is not disruptive to the mission of the service units within Facilities Management. Additionally, it would have to be mutually beneficial to the directors, managers, supervisors, mentors, and their proteges or mentees.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAMS IS THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM AS FOLLOWS:

- The senior leadership must support the mentoring program and be visible program supporters.
- You have to conduct research to know the percentage of senior managers that will retire within the next five to ten years. Along with your Facilities Management leaders, you should use the soon-to-retire senior managers as mentors. Their knowledge should be retained.
- You can achieve your developmental objectives through the mentoring program.
- The mentor and their protégé must complete a development plan that is achievable for the protégé. How would you do this? The mentor should ask the protégé what they want to achieve from the mentoring relationship. Then the protégé must complete a development plan based on the early meetings. If required, the development plan can be modified during future meetings. The mentor should use the completed development plan to access progress and provide encouragement to the protégé.
 - The mentor and the protégé should agree on the methods for communication.
 - The method should be less hindering for both. For example, should you communicate by phone, e-mail, mail, in person?
 - An agreement should be made on the timeframe to reply from emails and phones messages.



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- Additionally, there should be an agreement on how many times you meet—how often and for how long?
- In order for the mentoring program to work, the protégé should remember and, if applicable, apply the information the mentor told them. The department should provide the resources for the protégé to complete their developmental needs.
- The department, mentor, and protégé should agree on the minimum and maximum time of interaction the mentoring relationship should last. There should be a goal of what needs to be accomplished at the end of the mentoring relationship.
- The Facilities Management administration should assign a Program Coordinator to the mentoring program:
 - The Program Coordinator will evaluate the mentoring program and improve the program as it

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- gets off the ground. The mentoring program should be evaluated once a year or when a mentoring relationship between the mentor and protégé has ended.
- The Program Coordinator should market the mentoring program that everyone in department is aware of the program.

- The Program Coordinator should facilitate the training of staff paired together in the mentoring program. Some examples of training programs for the mentor and protégé are as follows:
 - Mentors
 - » Building trust among other people
 - » How to utilize effective feedback skills
 - » How to successfully communicate with people from different cultures
 - » How to inspire or motivate others
 - Protégé
 - » Setting goals
 - » How to network efficiently
 - » Effective listening skills
- Create a mentoring team to have periodic meetings with the Program Coordinator. The mentoring team should represent all service units in the department. The team should consist of different cultures so protégés can be paired with mentors that provide comfort to them.
- Create mentor biographies for each service unit within the department. Each biography should include the following:
 - A picture of the mentor
 - Career experiences
 - Personal information
 This will put protégés in the position to choose who they want as their mentor and what career information they want to learn from their mentor. Knowing the personal interest of your mentor may cause an excellent match for the mentor and protégé.
- If either one is uncomfortable with each other, don't force the mentoring program on them. There may be serious morale consequences if the mentor and protégé are forced together.
- Initiate a small number of participants and gradually increase participants over a period of time. In other words, let the department get used to the mentoring program.



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MENTORING EMPLOYEES MAY PROVIDE THE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING:

- Your recruitment rates will increase because employees sense that you have an interest in their future.
- Less technical training may be needed because knowledge is shared throughout the department. This could be a tremendous saving to the department budget.
- There will be increased job satisfaction and loyalty to the department. People tend to be loyal to those loyal to them. Mentoring programs create effective job satisfaction by integrating newly hired staff into the department. New employees may immediately feel like part of the team.

WHEN DO YOU KNOW WHEN TO END THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MENTOR AND PROTÉGÉ?

- The protégé is constantly asking for information from other people instead on the mentor.
- There are long gaps of time concerning communication from the mentor and protégé. This is a sign that both need time away from each other and feel they no longer need to meet.
- When the protégé is scheduling meetings with other senior leaders and overlook scheduling meetings with their mentor; this may be a sign the mentor has nothing else to offer.
- When all the goals are accomplished in the protégé development plan.

WHAT ARE THE REWARDS FOR THE MENTOR?

- The mentor may be considered a person that has the ability to recognize and cultivate talent within the department.
- Protégés can help the mentor, within ethical limits, complete work projects and research.
- The mentor will have the satisfaction that they contributed to

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another person’s life that can be passed on to others.

- Protégés can move up the career ladder beyond the mentor and reward them with job opportunities.

Many companies have adopted mentoring programs because there is valid evidence that mentoring leads to more satisfied employees, increased retention, and a well-skilled workforce. Mentoring programs can only help build work relationships within facilities management departments by creating trust, respect, and possible life-long career

relationships. Skills and experiences can be exchanged from office to office and shop to shop through mentoring programs. ☎

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