

Transcription - John Eddy Part 1: Does Mentoring Help With Retention Of Staff?

Welcome back I'm Kim Baillie and she's Fulyana Orsborn and you're listening to Inside Exec. Today, we've got a special treat for you, we're going to talk about how mentoring helps retention of particular employees and we have with us John Eddy. John comes recently from a long stint at Citibank, but now consulting in his own right out of Taiwan. I'm going to let Fulyana introduce him because they have worked together for some considerable period of time.

I'm very privileged to have worked with John for a long period of time in Citi and also since he left Citi. John is a very, very seasoned professional in HR, he's well known, he's well connected and very highly respected. He has experienced many changes throughout HR and spent a lot of time in the Asia Pacific region providing services there and he's very sought after all the time. He spent a big stint in Korea, in Singapore, in Hong Kong and now Taiwan, so very, very happy to have John with us. Welcome John, thank you Kim, thank you Fulyana.

First of all, what I'd like to hear is something that we touched on briefly before we started recording and it's the difference between coaching and mentoring. An interesting subject and there are various views on that, my personal view is that in simple terms, coaching is a more structured approach to people development and it probably has a time limit. Generally, I would expect around six months working with somebody that is highly structured, setting goals with individuals, keeping them honest to achieve those goals. Whereas mentoring is, I guess, unstructured to a degree where an individual learns from someone who has far more experience than the individual being mentored.

That's in simplistic terms. And I think also the mentoring program can be a longer duration, probably up to a year if not longer. In some cases I've known mentor mentee relationships to continue on for many, many years. So you don't see the mentoring side of it as something that has a finite time necessarily?

Not necessarily, although I would probably say a year would be probably a standard to look at, but I know there are many mentoring relationships that I'm aware of that are still ongoing many, many years later because of the personal connection that people had together. I guess it is really because it's having a confidante, it's having someone to think aloud with to help you through your journey and what you're experiencing at that time. In a general sense, most senior positions in leadership positions, with their coaching, it's very, very specific and as John said, structured in that, how do I get better at a specific aspect of my work, as to how do I deal with a certain politics or relationship?

So would you also see it then as something that people seek when they get to a certain point in their careers or should they be looking at it from the time that they've decided this is what I'm going to do with my life? That's coaching or mentoring?

Often an organization will identify that someone needs some help, particularly today in today's business world, and it's much more popular today to have a structured coaching program put together for somebody and that's what I do and spend my time on now. Whereas mentoring, and for those organizations I think who are smart enough to put in a structured mentoring program, they will create a competitive advantage over other organizations much more if they have the structured program. Sometimes individuals would seek out a mentor themselves and at times organizations have a structured program where they offer mentoring across the organization. Is it easier, if we talk about the senior executive level, is it easier if the organization has that approach or is it easier for you to seek that assistance outside the organization?

I think it's much easier for an organization that adopts a formal mentoring or coaching program. It goes right back to recruiting and onboarding people in an organization. If you offer a mentoring program, for example, to new employees, they will assimilate into the organization much more quickly and it is a competitive advantage that people would come and want to work for you because you offer something that is different from everybody else.

It sort of brings us neatly back into the topic for today, which is retention and so I guess what we're hearing is that you feel that the right kind of mentoring and coaching for that matter as well, is going to aid with retention of the employees that you want, all the staff you want?

Most definitely. I'll give you a quick example that I've been running, Citibank's high potential development program for the last 10 years. And since 2005 to 2015 we would have put well over 100 people through that program and the retention rate is probably something like 95% people because all those people had a mentor at the beginning of the program and that mentor relationship even today, I know, continues on with many people who are still with the organization.

So certainly mentoring is a key aspect of retention and that also must lead to people seeking to join the organization because they know that programs in place or because they see that people stay there forever. So there must be something good. I think it's all part of the employment branding, what's the

employment brand you stand for and people get to hear about that organization offers this sort of program and that is certainly an attraction to people.

The program itself, just in case people aren't aware of how a mentoring program might work, we come in as a senior executive we're set up with this program, one mentor for a period of time or is it half a dozen different ones and the move between having coaching and then going into a mentoring program. They generally start with a mentor, generally a more senior person in the organization and that mentor relationship would continue until the completion of the mentoring program, where on the coaching side that's much more structured, the organization would identify normally either an internal coach and a lot of companies have internal coaches now or an external coach to come in and work with that individual.

I'm interested then in the selection process or the way that if they're all internal coaches and mentors, how do you identify those people and have them take on that role?

Well, firstly, if you're going to have a structured mentoring program, you need to train people so you need to train the mentor and the mentee. What is it all about? So you need, it's not just be a mentor, what is mentoring all about? People need to understand that. And often people have been given mentor roles and they're not sure how to conduct themselves. We're going to have to train people, put a formal program together and what's the goal of the mentoring program? What are you trying to do here?

What's the role of the mentor? What's the role of the mentee? How are you going to work together? So you need to train people and then how to select people to be mentors, can be voluntary, that people put their hand up. Often, that's the best way, that you want to give something back as a mentor, but most certainly you need to train them, you need to have a structured program put together, it can't be informal, let's give someone a mentor. I've known experiences where the mentor doesn't really do the job the mentor should be doing and I know it's a two way street. The mentee and the mentor need to take the initiative to make appointments and make times to meet.

Be holding each other accountable for those things. Some do a great job and some do a very bad job and I think those who do a bad job have not been through what is mentoring all about or been through the mentoring process themselves. We better let her say something, this is going to be a record for the last five minutes.

One of the main things in that program when you were talking about training mentors and mentees, would you, in your experience say it was very, very important that the two people gel, that the matching of the mentor and mentee is a key to the success. I think the chemistry has to be right. You can't have a disconnect on the personalities of individuals so they must be comfortable in the relationship they're going to have. And on some occasions I've known where the mentor mentee don't hit it off and that's fine and therefore let's stop the mentoring program and let's revisit that. Mentor chemistry is important, both in a mentoring and coaching situation. If that's not there, there will be a disaster.

Who identifies that? Who identifies that? It's not working and well one would hope that the mentee and the mentor are mature enough to identify that things are not connecting. I don't think it happens that often, but certainly human personalities, there are issues at times that come up.

What about when you as the mentee feel that you've outgrown, not necessarily the need for a mentor, but what the current mentor can offer? Then you stop it. There's no point continuing on in a relationship. If you've got enough out of it, there's nothing wrong with that. People are very busy these days. So stop the program.

John you mentioned earlier having a program, that program could be having an internal mentoring program or an external or both. I know that you've tried both for different organizations. Do you want to walk us through the benefits?

They both, you know, have advantages obviously. So the benefits of today,, I would suspect, that the majority of mentoring programs would be from an internal source, although there is growth in the industry or external mentors or coaches coming into an organization and offering those services.

If I had to guess what the split would be, I would think 70, 30 only. I guess that 70% of mentoring relationships would come from within the organization and possibly 30% externally and it would vary from company to company. I think some organizations may use 100% internal and others may use, I'm not sure 100% would be right, but maybe 100% external mentors coming in. Since we're talking about retention, do you think that there's a difference retention wise?

Personally, I favor the internal mentors. A lot of knowledge transfer is going to come from that senior mentor who's going to impart information to the mentee and external mentor cannot do that. They don't have the information from within the organization that they should have. So I think an internal mentoring program

is probably far more effective than an external mentoring program. Both can be as effective and you know, I've used both, but I think predominantly it's been the internal mentoring program.

So the investment for an organization in putting together a mentoring program is there because long term you're going to have more senior executives within the succession planning that understand the organization and understand its values and are moving the organization forward the way you want it.

I think both can be successful. I just think that the internal one probably has a greater degree of success than external, but you know, people who have had external mentors and they've been very, very effective as well. That's what we all are. So, you know, we think it's a good idea. I agree, I think that both have their advantages.

Some of the feedback that I've got about advantages of external mentors is the ability to speak about things that they're someone away from the organization, independent, not part of the politics of the organization. You can speak freely about your feelings without offending or you know, inadvertently or anything like that.

On the other hand, the internal people can also be your sponsor. So when they're mentoring you and they believe in what you're doing, they can be there at meetings saying, oh we've got a project, so have you thought of X? I found them very good. So there's advantages, but sometimes you're maneuvering in a political environment that is tense for a period of time from town to town and an external mentor is able to give you a place where you can think in safety and confidence without affecting internal thinking.

So what I want you both to answer for me is the biggest issue that instigates mentoring when we look at people moving into the senior executive arena or if we go a little bit further earlier in their careers and we look at them stepping up from what we used to call stepping up from supervisor into a management role into the first level of management? What is the issue that creates a need for a mentor?

I wouldn't call it an issue. I say that we identify people as high potential, people are talent, people doing really well and we want them to absolutely succeed and faster. So in thinking about people that way, I think these people have the potential, they're pretty good in all aspects, if the mentoring can help them even be a better leader, better people leader, that's where the, if you like, the trigger is from. That's the reason we would pick it.

That's on one hand. On the other hand, sometimes it's because people are new to the people management game, they have no idea about how to manage people, they've only managed one or two and so on.

So they need help with that as distinct from technical. I think you're right. I don't think people have an issue per se because they have a mentor, we want to make sure that that person grows and develops as fast as possible to take their career to the next level. And if they can learn from another person who's been there before, that's what we try to do with the mentoring program.

As distinct, of course, from coaching, where often there is an issue that's been identified for whatever reason they want someone to come and work with that person particularly about some of their development areas and I think a lot of it is around behavioral issues that people do have.

We were talking earlier about technical competence and being very smart people but then they suddenly become leaders or managers of people and they're not sure how to apply those learning principles that they should apply to be a leader. So most of the coaches work on behavioral issues, not technical issues on mentoring. It's not really identifying an issue. Although issues can arise in the mentoring relationship, it's more about helping that person to fast track the development and keep them in the organization.

I know that both of you have worked throughout the Southeast Asia area and other areas of the world. Is there cultural differences in the approach to mentoring? I think certainly in Asia there are. There are differences between Asia and Australia. I think Australia has been much more, certainly developed, as far as mentoring and coaching over the last 10 or 15 years. It's certainly now very popular in Asia and in the last two or three years, coaching and mentoring has become much more used across the Asian countries.

So is there a difference in how you mentor someone in Asia compared to Australia? Not really, I mean I don't think there is a lot of differences except in some of the Asian countries, it's fairly hierarchical and it's top down so people are not encouraged to speak up. That's one of the cultural nuances we have to deal with. Not in every Asian country, but in countries like Japan, Korea and probably a couple of others, but they are probably the two main ones that stand out as being very hierarchical and it's a top down approach. I know of instances where coaching and mentoring is undertaken in those countries.

How you apply that assisting from Australia, probably would be a little different if

you're in a multinational organization where you have, say you're based here, you have a mentor here and then you get placed somewhere else and you're in the somewhere else for a considerable period of time.

Do you keep the same mentor that you've got here or do you take on a new one where you are? I think it depends on the individual, but yes, there's no reason why you still can't have a mentor in one location and if you move to another. I guess it depends on what you're going to ask them for help. If they've not worked in Asia and you're asking about a cultural issue, it could be very difficult for them to help you. So you may want to look at seeking out a mentor in that location to help you through that in the same way that we've got technology these days that could keep you connected regardless of where you are, Well, I certainly found that once you were already established a relationship in country, it's so much easier with the technology. Now, whether you do a Skype or whether you do facetime and emails and all the rest of it, I'm doing that interstate with some of my mentees as well as in Asia and it works well. It works well, you know, you book in time because, you know, time differences in some cases and you already know the person and you already know what you're trying to help them with.

This is not taking away your comment John about advising them about the cultural difference of that country. This is more about the role they're in. It's particularly easy if you've already established the relationship and you help them continue with their career progression, I find that the fact that you're not face to face is not so daunting or diminishes the relationship in any way, the mentoring relationship.

Can you have more than one mentor? Yes. Why would you? Well, I guess because different people, you get different learning from different people, different styles is always so much better to observe and learn from, so that you're not just copying. You want to be an individual, but you also like different things about how different people handle it. Sometimes it's expertise, sometimes it's network, sometimes it's just the charisma. I think yes, definitely more than one mentor. I think I certainly had more than one mentor throughout my life. You know, more structured formal mentoring programs, informal, yes, you have maybe not mentoring, it's a relationship you have with a few different people who help you in your career. The formal mentoring program is normally, you would just have some people utilize these relationships far better than others. You have got to be careful that you don't abuse that relationship that you're having with these people as well and some people have done that.

I guess what you need to be aware of is that you don't bring the mentoring relationship back into a coaching role and rely on someone else to be leading you to make decisions or to address issues without the knowledge of how you have to implement it, how you have to work with the changes that you're going to make.

I think at this point we might take a break in the discussion. There's still a lot more that we want to cover. So come back and join us in Part Two of this discussion, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn we're with John Eddy and this is Inside Exec..