

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ENCOURAGING MENTORSHIPS AND ROLE MODELS

Best practices to reduce pay inequality in Oregon



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When Madeleine Albright was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, she responded to White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta's survey of cabinet members' future plans by saying, "I would love to continue serving at the UN, but I would also be interested in becoming secretary of state." Albright got that wish when President Clinton made her the first woman secretary of state. That probably wouldn't have happened if she hadn't spoken up.¹

The business case

The Oregon Council on Civil Rights, in its 2014 report, *Pay Inequality in Oregon*, makes several recommendations to reduce gender-based pay inequality. One of the council's recommendations is the expansion of personal career mentoring for women and efforts toward encouraging women's self-promotion behaviors, beginning at an early age.²

Research shows an alarming trend commonly occurring to adolescent women in which they "lose their voice" and are reluctant to speak up and assert themselves. A primary reason is cultural pressure from peers, society and media to adhere to a "feminine role" in which women are passive and "nice."

While mentorship opportunities, particularly those aimed toward encouraging women's self-promotion behaviors, should ideally begin before entering the workforce, well-planned workplace mentorships provide meaningful benefits to both employers and employees, and serve to reduce gender inequalities in employment.

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Mentoring can increase collaboration among employees from different generations and cultural backgrounds, thereby improving overall workplace productivity. Formal mentoring programs also play an essential role in the broader talent development strategies of companies.³



Workplace mentoring: Good for employees and organizations!

Benefits to employers

- ✓ Helps new hire orientation or on-boarding by helping new employees learn how the organization operates.
- ✓ Increases organizational performance and productivity by supporting continuous learning and skills development, stimulating creative thinking, problem solving, and fostering positive relationships among professionals at various levels.
- ✓ Improves an organization's ability to effectively serve diverse customers by increasing employees' cultural competence through mentoring partnerships with diverse colleagues.
- ✓ Boosts employee retention by providing employees with support and professional growth opportunities that lead to increased job satisfaction.
- ✓ Aids in succession planning by ensuring generational knowledge transfer.

Benefits to mentees

- ✓ Helps new employees learn the ropes and navigate the terrain by having a guide who can explain the unwritten rules and how to maneuver through office politics and personalities.
- ✓ Provides valuable support and a sounding board as employees adjust to new or changing responsibilities and expectations.
- ✓ Fosters employee self-confidence as they master new skills, solve problems, manage stress and overcome obstacles as they learn and grow in their professional role.
- ✓ Assists employees to self-assess, set improvement goals, and develop skills and knowledge.
- ✓ Creates a deeper knowledge base for employees as they explore and decide upon a career direction, reevaluate strengths and professional development needs, and pursue new opportunities.

Source: EARN.org Employer Assistance Resource Network⁴

What is mentoring?

A mentor in the workplace is a person who provides guidance to a less-experienced employee. A mentor may be another employee of the company or a professional from outside of the company. In either case, the mentor is a role model who shares knowledge and advice to help the employee grow professionally. Mentoring relationships benefit the employee, as well as the employer and mentor, and have long-term advantages.⁵

Traditionally, mentoring is a one-on-one relationship between a younger protégé and an older mentor who meet regularly in person; however, modern mentoring occurs in a variety of forms and may include peer mentoring, group mentoring or virtual mentoring. To address increasing diversity among employees, some businesses have adopted cross-cultural, cross-gender, and cross-generational strategies in their mentoring programs. All successful mentoring programs involve thoughtful planning, dedicated resources and staff for implementation and evaluation to measure outcomes and inform program improvement.⁶

Mentoring models

One-on-one

The most common form of mentoring is one-on-one mentoring, a relationship between a senior employee and a more junior employee in which the senior employee provides guidance, support and encouragement to the mentee.

Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring matches a new or less experienced professional with a more experienced peer in a job at the same level to provide support and guidance to the mentee.

Group mentoring

Group mentoring involves one or more experienced professionals providing guidance and support to a group of more junior employees.

Virtual mentoring

Virtual mentoring is a contemporary version of one-on-one mentorships in which mentoring can occur electronically between individuals in different geographical locations.

Professional networking

Professional networking can serve to complement mentorship by providing contacts between individuals with common career interests, not just locally, but nationally and globally.

Case study



Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTI), is dedicated to promoting success for women in the trades through education, leadership and mentorship. Founded in 1989 as a small support group led by four tradeswomen (an elevator constructor, two carpenters and an operating engineer), OTI was reorganized as Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, in 1999. OTI was founded on the principles that women deserve and can attain economic self-sufficiency through pursuing careers in the building, mechanical, electrical, and utility trades while helping and encouraging the trades industry build up a diverse workforce.

Today, the organization comprises nearly 400 members, three programs, an annual trades career fair for women and girls, and the support of trades industry employers.⁷

For more information about establishing mentorships, see sources in “Notes” below.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.fastcompany.com/3050430/strong-female-lead/why-women-need-career-sponsors-more-than-mentors>, Why women need career sponsors more than mentors, Fast Company
- 2 <http://www.oregon.gov/boli/docs/Pay%20Inequality%20Report%20FINAL%20202-26-2014.pdf> Pay Inequality in Oregon, Oregon Council on Civil Rights, January 2014
- 3 <https://www.earn.org/>
- 4 <https://www.earn.org/>
- 5 <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-mentoring-workplace-18437.html> The Advantages of Mentoring in the Workplace
- 6 Ibid
- 7 <http://www.tradeswomen.net/about/> Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc., 2015

**Need additional assistance?
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Bureau of Labor and Industries

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