

CORPORATE MENTORING AND THE EFFECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES
ON RELATED EMPLOYEE PREFERENCES

by

Jean M. Truscott

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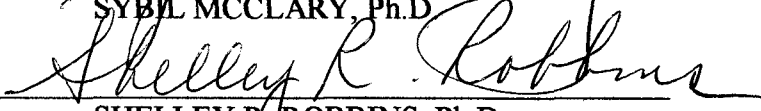
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Abstract

This research is an ex post facto research design and polls employees within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of a major U.S. steel manufacturing company to gather data related to their mentoring preferences and how they vary across specific demographic variables. The survey instrument implemented in this study was created on the basis of an extensive literature review and includes key mentoring attributes based upon earlier research findings of a group of experts on the topic of mentoring. The statistical methods used to analyze the data include descriptive analysis, discriminant analysis, and ordinal regression analysis. The findings indicate that it is essential to consider the demographics of the respective workforce prior to selecting and implementing a mentoring program. This study brought awareness to management of the study site that will allow initial recruiting efforts for mentoring programs to be focused on the groups that will net the greatest interest and program success—the oldest and highest-level females for mentors, and the most recently hired males for willing and highly motivated mentees. This research also highlighted the fact that most of the respondents favor a formal mentoring program associated with the corporate orientation processes. Most importantly, the findings of this study will ultimately assist management with future planning and the decisions necessary for successful implementation of mentoring initiatives.

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my children—Rebecca Lois Truscott and Jaclyn Pauline Truscott—to exemplify for them that hard work and determination will indeed bear fruit in their lives. With this work and achievement of a life milestone, I encourage them to embrace their dreams with passion.

Acknowledgements

I thank my family for their awesome support throughout my pursuit of the degree this study earned. I am deeply grateful for the important lesson of following through on commitment taught by my parents. I also thank all of my faculty and committee members—Dr. Muchnick, Dr. Pam Hanfelt, Dr. Norm Irish, and Dawn Bell—for their invaluable input and guidance, and my coworker, Dr. Richard Vance, for his generous contribution of statistical expertise. Lastly, I extend special thanks to my mentor, Dr. Sybil McClary, for leading me to a higher level of excellence.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept and practice of mentoring has existed for thousands of years. The term *mentor* originated from Greek mythology wherein the son of Odysseus—Telemachus—was described as under the care of his friend, Mentor, during the Trojan War (Dondero, 1997). According to Shea (2002), mentoring “is a relationship in which a person with greater experience, expertise, and wisdom counsels, teaches, guides and helps another person to develop both personally and professionally to meet exceptional standards of performance” (p. 15). The focus of mentoring is often on the development of partnerships toward the education and orientation of employees new to an organization. The process involves mentors sharing knowledge and experiences in an effort to improve the competency of their mentees. Research indicates the existence of many different types of mentoring including peer mentoring, reverse mentoring, team mentoring, and the use of outside consultants as mentors (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Monsour, 2000; Shea, 1995). In determining which type is best suited for any given work group, it is essential to consider the demographics of the respective workforce.

Background

Over the last several years, the annual employee performance evaluations of workers employed with a major U.S. steel manufacturer have consistently indicated their strong desire for additional career-development support. In response to this collective plea for assistance, a formal mentoring program was suggested. Mentoring is an effective avenue toward career development because it offers direct support to employees by pairing them with partners willing to share knowledge and experience as they assist mentees in achieving their career goals. Both mentees and mentors grow from this shared experience. The net result not only provides needed support

to employees, but also provides the organization with more knowledgeable workers. Such relationships are often so highly valued by all participants that they continue to thrive throughout the duration of their careers. Most importantly, mentoring tends to increase productivity as it motivates employees toward a higher level of performance (Barge, 1994; Jaffe & Scott, 1991; Shula & Blanchard, 1995). Although these many benefits indeed manifest with mentoring, the basic purpose is to help employees flourish within their current work environments.

For the past two years, the employee performance appraisals conducted by the managers of the U.S. steel company of this study site have not only indicated employee desire for career-development assistance, but also their desire for added opportunities for advancement and rewards for above-average job performance. No business can afford to leave such an issue unchecked. Such unmet needs can adversely affect employee motivation, morale, and productivity, which in turn, will ultimately affect corporate profits. In today's competitive marketplace and struggling economy, leaders within organizations such as the large manufacturing company analyzed in this research must do all possible to motivate their workers to their highest levels of productivity. The general manager of the study site enthusiastically supports a mentoring program to guide his employees and organization to higher levels of excellence (see Appendix A). To date, a few informal mentoring relationships are in place within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of this company; however, no formal companywide effort has been initiated.

Gathering employee preferences to develop a mentoring model of the type and structure conducive to work environments such as the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the company participating in this study, enhances the success of a mentoring initiative reflective

of those preferences. Casison (2001) documented the success of this process for a large American railroad company. She noted that the process encouraged employees to think like business owners. According to Nelson (2002), “One of the best ways to involve and energize employees is to solicit their ideas and opinions. Real motivation comes from within. People have to be given the freedom to voice their opinions and make suggestions—whether these ideas succeed or fail” (p. 12).

As described, mentoring has many benefits to both employers and employees. Peterson and Hicks (1996) explained that the process of offering mentoring initiatives to employees conveys a strong message that the respective company values knowledge sharing and learning. The very act of mentoring helps employees reach their full potential. Hagevik (1998) documented that mentors often increase the sense of self-worth for employees and have a talent for increasing learner comfort with implementing new ideas in the real-world context of the work environments of their mentees. Employees will grow when partnered with senior staff members willing to share their experience while providing professional visibility and career advice. As stated earlier, mentoring is beneficial for both the mentor and mentee. The organizations benefit in the long term with more knowledgeable employees who comprise the best companies with, ultimately, the highest profits. When such learning occurs, employee satisfaction and motivation will flourish along with the positive morale. Mentors receive similar benefits through the sense of gratification they experience (Kiser, 1999). Through mentoring, employee retention will also be more easily realized. This was recently exemplified by a state correctional department that improved employee retention through implementation of a mentoring program. The act of

partnering senior officers with junior officers has facilitated a significant reduction in their rate of employee turnover (Rackleff, 2002).

In lieu of borrowing a mentoring model from another company or division, this study developed a model for the sales/service and product-technology departments within the steel manufacturing company serving as the study site. The model is based upon the mentoring preferences of their employees. The act of including the employees in the process maximized the potential for future program success. Caudron (1997) supported this methodology with the documented belief that employees expect company action on identified problems. Such follow-through is crucial to maintaining organizational momentum and employee confidence. In fact, when employees have completed attitude surveys, they typically expect management response as to how the issues raised will be addressed.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Management of the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the study site sought to provide a formal mentoring program that would enrich the skill set of their employees; support career development; and improve morale, employee satisfaction, and productivity. The company had yet to research avenues prior to the proposal of this current study. As mentioned earlier, the mentoring plan proposed for development was based upon feedback received from the employees within these targeted divisions. The focus of the research was on the collection and analysis of data related to employee preferences surrounding mentoring. Key data included employee demographics such as years of service, professional level within the organization, age, and gender. The results provided pivotal information toward the development and administration of a mentoring program for this company, which is one of the largest steel producers in the

United States. Such positive action demonstrated that the company values employee input, career development, knowledge sharing, and employee retention.

This study first surveyed the employees of the two targeted divisions to collect data related to the demographic variables and their preferences in the area of mentoring. The survey instrument was also used to collect information enabling a clear understanding of how their preferences correlated to an extensive review of related literature focused on mentoring administration, partnerships, tools, program duration, the mentor role, purposes of mentoring, and program evaluation. The survey feedback is expected to be foundational to the development of the mentoring model implemented in this corporation, which can be used as an effective tool in support of employee career development.

Research Questions, Null Hypotheses, and Significance of the Study

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What preferences related to a mentoring-program model, involving both structure and process, are reported by employees within the sales/service and product-technology departments of the study site?
2. Do attributes of a mentoring program that is favored by employees vary with years of service, professional level, age, and gender?

The null hypotheses of this research stated that

1. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with years of service.
2. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with professional level.
3. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with age.

4. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with gender.

The significance of this mentoring-preference study is the ultimate development of a mentoring-program model that meets the existing career-development needs of the staff within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the steel manufacturing company serving as the study site. The survey results equipped management with the necessary information to make effective decisions, suggest possible program modifications, or perhaps guide the company to a different type of mentoring program with even greater benefits specific to their organization. Additionally, the act of collecting and summarizing employee preferences, as well as the subsequent action taken, is expected to have a positive impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, and morale. As mentioned earlier, such actions demonstrate that top corporate management value the provision of a learning environment for their employees. In turn, employees are more likely to embrace such new program models after being given a voice in their development.

Because minimal change had been previously made to the existing informal mentoring program within the study-site organization, and because employees had requested career-development support, the workers within the sales/service and product-technology divisions were expected to honor the introduction of the new mentoring program. Other divisions within the company had expressed similar needs. Consequently, the development of a new mentoring program has the potential of becoming an effective companywide tool. The introduction of such programs typically renew career excitement among employees (Daniels, 1994). Conversely, if management fails to follow through on the career concerns of employees, it could have detrimental effects on employee satisfaction, morale, and productivity. Due to the

wealth of knowledge within this organization, it made sense to share what is known toward innovative growth of both the company and its most valuable assets—its employees.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for purposes of this study:

Construct validity is a theoretical gestalt-type measure of the level of meaning presented by a survey instrument. Such measure is usually conducted after many years of experience by numerous investigators within varied settings (Litwin, 1995, p. 82).

Content validity is a measure of the accuracy of a survey instrument that involves a formal review by individuals who are experts in the subject matter addressed by the questionnaire.

Face validity is based upon a casual review of the accuracy of a survey instrument and is usually an informal assessment by nonexperts.

A *mentee* is a novice under the care and protection of a senior employee willing to share knowledge and past experience. Another term for a mentee is a *protégé*.

A *mentor* is a trusted advisor available for periodic career counseling. The individual is usually more experienced and senior member of a department willing to share expertise and past experience with others.

Mentoring is an intense relationship in which a senior employee oversees the career and psychosocial development of a less-experienced worker (Dodgson, 1987). The focus of mentoring usually revolves around nurturing relationships and the development of career competence.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Nature of the Study

This study was approached with the expectation that employees view mentoring as a meaningful attempt to satisfy their career-development needs. Because knowledge sharing is typically valued within the corporation that served as the study site, and learning from others is an excellent form of education, mentoring is an effective tool toward meeting the career-development needs of employees. This research was also approached with the expectation that employees would be more likely to embrace mentoring initiatives after being given a voice in the program development. Additionally, the majority of the staff within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the study site were expected to demonstrate a high level of interest in career-improvement advice. It was also anticipated that the survey tool used to gather data would be found valid and able to elicit honest information from the respondents.

A limitation of this study is the single study site and the fact that the researcher depended upon an assistant at the site to help with administration of the reliability test. Due to the use of an electronic survey, reliance on e-mail functionality and retrieval must also be viewed as a limitation. In cases where an administrative assistant controlled the incoming mail of potential participants, receipt of e-mail distributions could not be assured. Despite this shortfall, the process of administering a survey electronically is both time and cost effective. Lastly, the attitudes some employees may have had regarding the “soft” side of business could adversely affect the response rate of the survey because such individuals often place no value in the professional development of those around them.

As mentioned earlier, this study surveyed employees of the sales/service and product-technology divisions within the large manufacturing company that served as the study site. The instrument facilitated gathering data related to the mentoring preferences of employees and various demographic variables for variance analysis. The results will equip management personnel with the necessary employee feedback to make effective implementation decisions surrounding the mentoring program. The survey instrument was electronically delivered via a software application known as Web Surveyor and included an invitation to participate (see Appendix B). The instrument (see Appendix C) collected responses via an ordinal scale. An ordinal scale was used because in the 'No', 'Maybe' and 'Yes' response in the pilot study formed a ranking based on frequency. Such a scale reflects the amount of aversion or acceptance to the action suggested by a question. Likewise, a chi-square test analyzed the data along with logit regression analysis through the MINITAB software application. Responses to each item were averaged and a ranking for each question was calculated. In this manner, each item was analyzed in accordance to the preferences of the convenience sample. The results of the mentoring-preference survey can be potentially used to develop initiatives for a new mentoring program for implementation in the sales/service and the product-technology divisions of the study site. The data were gathered and are displayed in both tabular and graphical format for clarity and in support of the textual discussion. The process of collecting employee feedback will likely enable the participating steel manufacturer to design a mentoring program that will be readily accepted and used by their employees.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The original intent of this study was to meet the needs of employees within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the study site who expressed a desire for additional career development. Achievement of this ultimate goal was sought through the use of mentoring as a solution. Videos, audiotapes, articles, and books were reviewed to explore the benefits mentoring can bring to the workplace. In an initial review of the literature on mentoring, it was noted that many studies have been conducted through the use of survey tools. Literally thousands of studies have been performed on the topic and as many related consulting services are also available. A comprehensive review was conducted of mentoring attributes such as top-management support, marketing, program structure, selection, evaluation, and roles. Both the benefits and detriments of such a program, as evidenced in the study findings, are presented. Additionally, the variables of years of service, professional level, age, and gender are discussed as they relate to mentoring. The concept of mentoring usually involves pairing an employee with a more senior member of the organization. It is then typical for mentors to share knowledge and experience and provide challenging assignments, visibility, and career counseling to their mentees. In many cases, the partners will support one another throughout their careers. Most importantly, the company will reap great benefit because learners will typically advance in professional level as they demonstrate increasingly higher levels of excellence.

According to one professional consultant in a recorded session, "There are two ways to get wisdom; through one's own experiences and through someone who has already made the journey." Consequently, mentoring is an excellent choice in terms of an avenue to instill learning. The very essence of mentoring involves the creation of partnerships in which individuals are compatible and committed to learning from each other. Career functions involved

in mentoring include sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions include serving as a role model and providing friendship, counseling, acceptance, and affirmation. The mentoring process offers tools, knowledge, and opportunities to improve professional effectiveness within the workplace (Peterson & Hicks, 1996). The primary goal of a mentoring program is to provide guidance for inexperienced employees toward a successful professional beginning and later career advancement. To maximize the success of such a program, coordinators should always consider the necessity of top-management support, program structure, roles, benefits, detriments, observation, rewards, and program marketing. As with any corporate-sponsored initiative, “success will breed success” with embracement by top management.

Executive Support for Mentoring

Monsour (2000) placed critical importance on executive support when any corporate endeavor requires both new and experienced employees to assume additional responsibilities. Such endorsement by senior management “sets the tone” for success of a mentoring program by sending a message to employees that the firm values the professional and personal development of their employees (Brounstein, 2000; Gregg, 1999; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000; Messmer, 1998). As Peterson and Hicks (1996) explained, the clear message is sent that the company values learning; hence, it is essential to follow up through the provision of needed resources and opportunities to ensure program success. Jaffe and Scott (1991) supported this concept stating, “Organizations acknowledge that they must provide more intensive and regular support for employee career development” (p. 36). Consequently, these researchers stressed the importance of creating a climate supportive of learning.

Nothing sets the tone for a mentoring program better than a leader who values education. Any good mentor values continuous learning (Rowley, 1999). According to Hargrove (1995), “Organizations that put a high value on learning are a world apart from those that operate under the traditional command and control model” (p. 9). Peterson and Hicks (1996) documented that top-level managers can ensure an environment conducive to learning when (a) building their own visibility as a role model, (b) strengthening the learning climate within their areas of authority, and (c) leveraging organizational culture systems. Many companies make learning resource centers available for their employees. Ashby and Pell (2001) posited that senior managers should promote the positive impact that new skills and culture changes can have on productivity and profits. Gregg (1999) suggested these executives should also openly highlight the fact that mentoring relationships are designed to help employees adjust to the culture of the firm and provide for their ongoing professional development. Mentors also gain as their leadership skills are strengthened and careers enhanced (Gregg, 1999; Messmer, 1998). This finding supports the notion that valuable learning is also an outcome for those who teach.

Bullington and Boylston (2001), Ganser (1996), and Stone (1999) encouraged mentoring partnerships that emerge naturally. Such relationships are usually initiated when an employee seeks help from a more experienced colleague. Dockery and Sahl (1998) and Stone (1999) proposed that the very act of providing a positive work environment will inspire employees to address developmental needs. According to Hargrove (1995),

One of the keys to building commitment has to do with empowering and enabling people to have collaborative conversations with one another and allow them to come together around a shared purpose, agree upon objectives, iron out conflicts and generate a rallying momentum. (p. 24)

It is therefore most important for a mentoring program to become a permanent facet of the company culture (Coley, 1996). To do this, it is essential to promote the foundational concept of mentoring in all aspects of the business.

Introduction and Approach

It is important to first communicate to employees the rationale behind mentoring programs, explain related activities, and share mentoring success stories (Monsour, 2000). One idea would be to conduct corporate “town-hall” meetings to support the cause. Existing mentoring partners could be invited as guest speakers. Lindenberger and Zachary (1999) suggested to

publicize the program in a variety of forms and forums. Develop a strategic internal marketing plan as if you had a new product to introduce into the marketplace. Schedule mentoring briefings for each department within your company, kicked off by the department’s senior operating officer. If you have multiple locations, make sure that mentoring briefings are held at each location and that they’re open to all employees. . . . Use the mentoring briefings to introduce your mentoring program, explain and tell employees how they can get involved. . . . Enlist many program champions. (pp. 12–14)

When introducing a mentoring program, many leaders invite potential and existing mentoring partners to lunch meetings. Such events are excellent for sharing mentoring success stories with both current and new partnership candidates (Bullington & Boylston, 2001).

Smith (1996) supported the use of print media for the purpose of highlighting the accomplishments of mentoring partnerships. The act of acknowledging learning will likely attract others to the program. Coley (1996) and Lindenberger and Zachary (1999) elaborated by supporting the use of newsletters and internal publications written by the mentoring-program manager. Such venues provide excellent ways to communicate tips, program updates, and roles of mentoring participants. These researchers recommended

asking senior executives to promote mentoring in company speeches, and provide them with materials to make advocacy easy. Write articles about success stories for internal publications. . . . Create written questions and answers to explain the mentoring program, how to get involved, how to set goals, what the phases of a mentoring relationship are, and strategies for success. . . . Create mentoring resource centers that contain information on the program. (pp. 12–14)

Lastly, Bullington and Boylston (2001) encouraged volunteers to recommend mentoring to their colleagues. Such actions lend credibility to programs.

To achieve a successful mentoring plan, and because the variety of mentoring-program initiatives to consider are so vast, it is important for leaders to seek feedback from those likely to participate. Prior to the onset of any mentoring activity, it is most important to determine the mentoring needs of the organization. Such research will help to ensure that organizational goals are embraced and, hence, increase program effectiveness (Knackstedt, 2001). Related literature identifies many approaches including the following three (Gregg, 1999):

1. The buddy system—new employees paired with a staff member for a 3-month period.
2. Team mentors—a department manager, human-resources representative, or senior partner paired with employees to help them reach their full potential.
3. Consultant mentors—expert consultants, external to the company, hired to prepare middle managers to assume new roles.

It is noteworthy that consultant mentors are typically used when there is no manager with a specific skill set capable of developing another manager to assume a new role . Some companies implement reverse mentoring, which is dependent upon the knowledge base of younger employees in place of peer mentors or outside consultants (Bullington & Boylston, 2001). Successful use of this concept has proven that mentoring can also be beneficial for senior managers (Ashby & Pell, 2001). For example, according to Solomon (2001), “the

Cincinnati-based P&G's reverse-mentoring programs match up employees with executives to give senior management a new perspective in one of the following areas: diversity, biotechnology or IT" (p. 42). Such an arrangement takes the emphasis off of the reporting structure and places the focus on knowledge sharing. Consequently, defining the scope of a mentoring program, as well as the process by which it will be managed, is one of the first steps in its development (Bullington & Boylston, 2001).

Objectives

Blair-Larsen (1998) presented the implementation of a mentoring program as a challenge to the education profession. According to Price, Graham, and Hobbs (1997), to ensure success, such a program must satisfy the following three objectives:

1. It must contribute to the mentee's successful orientation and adaptation to the workplace and the specific job.
2. It must provide role models for the cultural integration of the employee into the workplace.
3. It must promote team-based communication. (p. 49)

These researchers supported a mentoring plan that addresses details surrounding design, the roles of mentors and mentees, and program evaluations. Likewise, Cook (1999) recommended that the mentoring partnership require adherence to documented guidelines; allow time for observation; and include evaluation, written records of meetings, participant feedback, and rewards for participation. Once in place, the establishment of positive relationships between mentors and mentees is key to a successful ongoing program.

Responsibilities for orienting mentees have been described as (a) observing their work performance, (b) acclimating them to the team concept, (c) communicating with mentees both directly and in writing, (d) evaluating their performance, and (e) formulating professional

development plans for mentees (Cook, 1999). Successful mentoring-program models include an introductory session at the beginning of the year and regularly scheduled group meetings thereafter (Blair-Larsen, 1998). Such meetings provide an excellent opportunity for mentees to meet their mentors and gain greater perspective from the group environment. Most importantly, a mentoring program should allow mentees time for personal and professional reflection. Cohen (1998) recommended the use of a form to help tabulate lessons learned. Such reflection is recommended with both formal and informal mentoring programs.

Formal and Informal Programs

Allen (1999) found that “protégés in formal mentoring relationships report receiving less career-related support from their mentors than in informal mentoring relationships” (pp. 59–73). Characteristics of a formal mentoring program include involvement of a program manager and committee representatives, administrative support from human-resources departments, and a formal application and selection process. For example, the mentoring program of a major American bank consists of 10 committee representatives and administrative support from its human-resources department. Coley (1996) supported a mentoring committee that is inclusive of a division vice president, senior management, human-resources personnel, and a mentoring-program manager. One of the major benefits of mentoring is its tendency to involve a greater number of employees (Bullington & Boylston, 2001). However, informal mentoring is also very common.

An informal mentoring program typically involves a self-selected sponsor and mentor-administrated learning sessions. Generally, if an employee desires to be mentored, the employee must take the initiative (Woodring, 1998). Most mentoring relationships begin

informally with an employee asking for advice (Stone, 1999). According to Bullington and Boylston (2001),

The size of the organization will largely determine how mentoring programs will be coordinated. Small firms often create company-wide programs managed by a single person, while larger ones may find programs tailored to and managed by individual departments more practical. (p. 430)

Simonetti, Ariss, and Martinez (1999) documented their belief that mentoring is too structured. They favor informal mentoring because of the camaraderie and friendships that develop as a result of the self-selection process. Regardless of the type of program, it is important that training and flexibility are incorporated (Bullington & Boylston, 2001).

Program Outlining and Goals

Each division of a corporation that participates in mentoring should provide “documentation that outlines the mentoring program including stated goals, methods for selecting mentors, the individualized plan, training opportunities, evaluation policies, and the allocation of resources” (Mills, Moore, & Keane, 2001, p. 124). Communication of the instructions is key; hence, e-mailing participants regarding the nature of their partnership and a time line of events is recommended. Such communication should also outline the activities and expectations of each partner (Templin, Engemann, & Doran, 1999).

Coley (1996) stressed the importance of ensuring that a selected mentoring program is consistently aligned with the overall objectives of the organization and of its employees. For example, it could be tied to an organizational goal of increasing the employee-satisfaction index over a specified number of years. According to Jaffe and Scott, “In the new workplace, every employee takes personal responsibility for his or her own learning and finds that, while the

organization cannot offer security, it can offer support for learning, growth and development” (as cited in Kummerow, 1991, p. 58). Other goals to which the program could be correlated might relate to employee performance, retention, and/or personal and professional development. Hargrove (1995) and Peterson and Hicks (1996) agreed on the importance of personal goals that included personal values, interests, and desires. Consequently, mentees should be actively involved in establishing the fundamental outline for the overall program and their specific mentoring partnership (Mills et al., 2001). This practice highlights the importance of preestablished goals.

Once participants are notified of their partners, mentoring pairs should meet to develop their goals for the year (Bullington & Boylston, 2001). It is important that details surrounding the knowledge and skills to be attained are made clear through thorough discussion (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Shula and Blanchard (1995) stated, “It is [in] the implementation of our game plan that goals get accomplished” (p. 84). Mentoring relationships will be most successful if and when are they tied to strategic, job-related tasks (Hall, 1995). Mentoring will then meet the needs of the organization as well (Price et al., 1997). Ashby and Pell (2001) and Shula and Blanchard espoused the necessity of goals because they keep participants on target. Shared goals is one of the most important factors in mentoring (Bullington & Boylston, 2001; Simonetti et al., 1999). Such direction will provide experienced leaders an opportunity to share knowledge toward the development of future leaders (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001).

Casavant and Cherkowski (2001) referred to the establishment of goals as the beginning of the accomplishment process. Mentors are a critical resource because they provide important advice to new employees on a wide range of topics (Ashby & Pell, 2001; Henderson, 2001).

Staff receive invaluable direction as they work to increase technical, business, and organizational skills. Brounstein (2000) warned mentors not to overwhelm learners with too much information too fast. In brief, mentoring goals should be directly related to gaining knowledge and skill development appropriate to the current professional level of the mentees. Medeiros (2000) urged mentors to educate themselves in role modeling, listening, reflection, questioning, and teaching skills. As Hargrove (1995) reported, “Again and again, managers tell us that the skills they need are those that have to do with expanding people’s capacity to think and work together” (p. 173). A primary goal for mentors should be to improve employee performance (Shula & Blanchard, 1995). As for mentees, some common goals relate to becoming more independent workers and increasing problem-solving and decision-making abilities. No matter which structure a mentoring program assumes, its overall success depends upon the quality of the individual partnerships (Bullington & Boylston, 2001; Gregg, 1999, Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).

Mentoring Partnerships

Many programs assign mentoring partnerships based upon the interest, technical knowledge, interpersonal skills, and availability of applicants. Lindenberger and Zachary (1999) recommend the use of a simple mentor/protégé bio sheet with photos as a tool to enable the preliminary review of career histories between prospective partners. A mentoring application will typically contain contact information, areas of interests, and the names of preferred partners (Bullington & Boylston, 2001). Announcements and applications can be distributed via memos, fliers, posters, and/or brochures (Messmer, 1998). Once interest in a mentoring program is “sparked,” the matching criteria for the partnerships must be considered. According to Stone

(1999), “The first and most important decision you make [with respect to] mentoring is whom you will mentor” (p. 162). Hargrove (1995) suggested the pairing of mentees with role models possessing a similar skill set. Howell (1992) and Welles (1998) believed peers to be excellent mentors due to the vast amount of knowledge and skill they bring to the partnership that is directly related to the current roles of the mentees.

Woodring (1998) documented the following ten characteristics that a mentor should seek in a mentee: intelligence, parallel values, organizational loyalty, political savvy, ambition, leadership qualities, potential, a positive reputation, strong interpersonal relationships, and a sense of trust. As this list illustrates, successful mentoring programs have been developed by giving consideration to the talent and personalities of the mentors and protégés (Messmer, 1998). As unusual as it may seem, many companies find that matching dissimilar individuals can also maximize learning opportunities (Bullington & Boylston, 2001; Gregg, 1999). Gregg elaborated by explaining that a mentor with an outgoing personality can inspire an employee who is less confident. Woodring urged leaders to ensure that mentors are competent and supportive. Bullington and Boylston (2001) and Montgomery (1993) espoused that those with similarities in work values and current career stages will create a good mentoring partnership. Prior to matching mentoring partners, consideration should be given to preferences, availability, supervisory recommendations, individual goals, and departmental goals (Coley, 1996). Most importantly, clear compatibility must be evident between mentors and mentees (Simonetti et al., 1999).

During the planning stages, mentoring partners should aim for a model that is cost effective and that requires minimal effort with a high “payback” (Peterson & Hicks, 1996). The

nature of the participants must also be considered. Most mentoring partnerships are comprised of junior and senior employees with similar personalities and skill sets, but different experience levels (Bullington & Boylston, 2001). According to Lindenberger and Zachary (1999), “Matches should be diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity” (pp. 46–48). Prior to making a commitment to a mentoring partnership, both mentees and mentors are advised to solicit advice from coworkers.

Some mentoring programs target “high-potential employees who are viewed as strong candidates for promotional opportunities and for additional job responsibilities” (Coley, 1996, pp. 46–48). Organization leaders often feel such a criterion is too restrictive. This same rationale leads Bullington and Boylston (2001), Ganser (1996), and Stone (1999) to support mentoring partnerships that emerge naturally. In fact, Bullington and Boylston, as well as Gregg (1999), espoused that no employee should be purposely excluded from participation in a mentoring program. However, Howell (1992) stressed the use of high performers as a guide in program development. According to Messmer (1998), “The most important qualifications for participation are commitment to growth, the ability to listen, trustworthiness and objectivity” (pp. s11–s12). Despite the application process, the most popular method of establishing a mentoring partnership is through self-selection. In fact, Simonetti and colleagues (1999) cited this informal selection process as the key to a successful mentoring program.

Kummerow (1991) recommended career-development discussion between managers and employees under their authority to reduce the potential for conflict. Mutual understanding of the time commitment involved in mentoring is key. Likewise, mentors are also encouraged to meet with managers of their protégés to review work goals (Coley, 1996). Mentoring plans should be outlined within an overall professional-development plan (Mills et al., 2001). The creation of

such documentation also facilitates initiation of the partnership and can serve to establish a positive working relationship between mentors and mentees. Once such plans are developed, it is recommended to commence training.

Training Tools

Some researchers believe that training within a mentoring program should be mandatory (Cutshall, 2001; Ganser, 1996). Coley (1996) supports meetings to “kick off” mentoring programs. He stated, “At such events, participants usually receive notebooks that outline the program and activities for the year” (pp. 46–48). These “handouts” serve as excellent reference guides. Appropriate training will also include an overview of guidelines, checklists, and evaluations (Price et al., 1997). With such structure, effective mentors can be developed over time through various training methods and knowledge-sharing sessions. Peterson and Hicks (1996) summarize this concept by stating, “You can help people find the best prescription for learning by pointing them to options as varied as books, seminars, work experiences and mentoring from others” (p. 84).

As mentioned earlier, when employees develop new skills as a result of training, the company also benefits. Training leads to more innovative thinking, employee retention, and ultimate profits (Ashby & Pell, 2001). Additionally, Williams (1999) reported that mentoring in a team setting tends to reduce job insecurities as effective techniques for cooperative learning are developed (Mills et al., 2001). The peer support adds to the effectiveness of mentoring and the related evaluation processes.

Evaluation

To ensure mentee progress, evaluations should be conducted periodically throughout the duration of the mentoring partnership. Hardy (1998) recommended evaluation at program midpoint, upon completion, and three years beyond completion. The periodic feedback related to participation and the effectiveness of the program is far more beneficial than a single survey upon program completion. Many college instructors conduct the same periodic review in their course-evaluation process. This avoids surprises at the end of the term. According to Shula and Blanchard (1995), “Correcting and redirecting performance is strategically important; it is where we outstrip the competition” (p. 12).

Midpoint evaluations are useful measures of the nature of a mentoring partnership. Bullington and Boylston (2001) and Stone (1999) documented that mentoring programs must allow mentees or mentors to request different assignments if partnerships are not achieving their stated goals. Occasionally, one participant may lose interest in the mentoring program, or personality mismatches can occur; hence, program flexibility with changing partnerships is essential to maintain focus on continual improvement (Dockery & Sahl, 1998). As Hopkins-Thompson (2000) stated, “Putting a formal evaluation process in place prior to the program implementation ensures baseline data for benchmarking progress. Attitudinal as well as behavioral evaluation is critical in revising or developing the process” (pp. 29–36). First and foremost, the mentor should be familiar with the professional role of their mentee to appropriately observe and evaluate the mentee (Price et al., 1997). Additionally, this will allow the mentor to share more applicable past experience.

The approach of the mentee to their mentor is also key; however, mentors must also be aware that some mentees will experience difficulty in asking for help (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). Monsour (2000) documented that successful protégés typically have an ability to disclose concerns, value confidentiality, and are comfortable asking for and accepting help when needed (pp. 62–65). Woodring (1998) offered similar success strategies for mentees—(a) be competent; (b) demonstrate competence; (c) be visible (i.e., write notes, teach, and volunteer for speaking engagements); (d) be accessible (i.e., make it easy to be mentored); (e) obtain a key assignment; (f) be an eager learner; (g) develop strong social skills; (h) be useful; (i) take initiative; and (j) demonstrate passion and enthusiasm. This researcher values mentees who are honest, show respect for knowledge sharing, and demonstrate a willingness and openness to new ideas.

Stone (1999) posited that managers who do not assess their employees on a frequent basis are not providing their employees with sufficient information to assist them in improving their performance. Organizations are now recognizing this and many are incorporating midyear evaluations as opposed to the typical solitary performance review at year-end. Howell (1992) advocated the use of scoreboards for the workplace in an effort to track annual objectives. Regardless of the method, evaluations help ensure that appropriate corrective action will be taken to improve performance (Price et al., 1997), keeping employees on track toward achieving their goals. Midpoint evaluations are excellent tools for determining the effectiveness of the mentor/mentee match and for optimizing the benefits of feedback (Bullington & Boylston 2001; Gregg, 1999; Messmer, 1998). Howell recommended very specific goals to maximize competence. When goals are too broad, it becomes difficult to track progress. According to Mills and colleagues (2001), “Several methods are used to evaluate the success of programs, including

reflective journals, self-observation through taping, student reflections, self-assessment strategies, and formal observations” (pp. 124–126). Blair-Larsen (1998) favors the use of journals because they serve as a useful means to express concerns and monitor the developmental stages of entry-level professionals.

Setbacks

A mentor must be honest in acknowledging mishaps, and learners must view mistakes as learning opportunities (Hargrove, 1995). It is recommended to acknowledge the positive contributions or attributes of mentees prior to verbalizing an adverse concern. As explained by Bullington and Boylston (2001), “A mentor is a counselor, helping the protégé to survive rocky periods and learn from stressful situations rather than becoming demoralized” (pp. 430–432). Businesses cannot tolerate ego-driven managers lacking in honesty, especially when disciplinary measures can result in even more adverse effects on subsequent behavior (Autry, 1991). Such leadership styles tend to cause employee frustration to the extent of hindering productivity.

Steinen (1993) espoused that negative thinking cannot be changed until it is replaced with positive thoughts. Daniels (1994) listed the following negative feedback to avoid: “We work under pressure here”; “I’ve got too much on my plate”; “They expect too much”; “Why are we always the one?”; “Why not ask them?”; and “That’s not my job” (p. 46). Negative reinforcement can be effective for getting short-term deadlines met; however, in the long run, it creates a frustrating work environment. It is always recommended to resolve issues by employing principles that focus on the problem and not on an involved individual (Posner & Kouzes, 1993). Unfortunately, leaders often rush to inaccurate conclusions before collecting all the facts. Glasow described this concept rather succinctly in the following excerpt: “There is no reward for finding

fault” (as cited in Ashby & Pell, 2001, p. 241). Such negative reaction will likely cause a deterioration of employee-management relations. Shula and Blanchard (1995) aptly stated, “Failure is a successful way of finding out what you don’t want to repeat” (p. 96). These researchers further advise, “If you are upset let it pass, don’t dwell on things” (p. 103). It is best to focus on observation and monitoring because these functions will produce the greatest positive impact on learning.

Feedback

Hargrove (1995) expressed his belief that the willingness of mentors to provide honest feedback demonstrates genuine care toward their mentees. This researcher also noted that such honesty from mentors allows learners to redirect after deviating from the plan designed for achievement of their desired goals. Brounstein (2000) supported this thinking by stating the importance of providing direction, information, and resources, as well as conducting follow-up meetings, to ensure progression to the next level. Effective communication adds strength to mentoring partnerships. Howell (1992) believes mentors must view each project as a “mini game”—one in which performance is continually monitored. Audiotapes are excellent tools for providing feedback to learners (Howell, 1992; Shula & Blanchard, 1995). Coley (1996) elaborated on the usefulness of videotaped interviews with past participants within which they discussed successful mentoring relationships as well as the separate roles, responsibilities, and benefits involved in business partnerships. However, trainers should use this method with caution since experimental education can be a source of anxiety for learners.

Exploring mentoring tools challenges employees to think and do for themselves (Brounstein, 2000). One of the most powerful coaching skills in mentoring is the ability to

provide effective performance feedback. Attention to details and results are critical (Shula & Blanchard, 1995). Shula and Blanchard reiterate that the focus should always be on how to help learners optimize their success. Stone (1999) warned not to undermine the self-esteem of a learner with negative feedback, and Brounstein cautioned to take the time to provide constructive feedback surrounding performance. In summary, a clearly defined program structure, mentor network, and sufficient time commitment are crucial support components to the success of any mentoring partnership (Medeiros, 2000).

Time Commitment

Most leaders view spending time with employees as return on their investment (Brounstein, 2000). The amount of time spent mentoring an individual should be consistent from week to week (Waugh, 1997). Coley (1996) recommends the use of a commitment form to record mentoring expectations such as the amount of time each partner is willing to commit. Bullington and Boylston (2001) and Templin and colleagues (1999) believe mentoring does not need to consume a great deal of time, but should provide enough time for learners to complete each lesson. According to Peterson and Hicks (1996), "You can be effective and efficient if you focus 5 percent of your energy and attention on career-development" (p. 17). To compliment learning, mentees must also be willing to invest added time gaining knowledge of their company and its products by reading internal reports and employee handbooks (Price et al., 1997). Setting a specific time each day will ensure such review is consistently conducted. Many employees devote the first half hour of each workday to reading their corporate news and other company-sponsored educational material.

Employee development requires a great deal of external encouragement, resources, and moral support (Peterson & Hicks, 1996). Rowley (1999) posited that leaders should offer “pre-conferences, classroom observation, and post conferences that lead to quality clinical support” (pp. 20–22). Most mentoring partners communicate monthly (Bullington & Boylston, 2001), creating brief reports summarizing the lessons learned by the protégé during the respective month. Such practices reinforce the education. It is critical that each partner is honest and direct in terms of the time they have available to commit to the mentoring program. Most mentoring models are intended to last one year. The complexity of the mentor role, as well as the skill set of the mentee, will often dictate the length of any given mentoring program. Bullington and Boylston recommended that partners meet no less than nine times per year. Howell (1992) and Welles (1998) favor a more aggressive meeting schedule of once per week along with daily e-mail exchange. Regardless of the communication modes established, face-to-face contacts should always be incorporated.

Formal mentoring programs designed to help new employees will typically meet regularly for three months. Related literature indicates that most mentoring programs last for one year; however, some extend for several years. It is noteworthy that “where the mentoring relationships extend beyond the transitional stage, dependency and dysfunctional behavior may occur” (Madison & Huston, 1996, pp. 316–330). In any case, it is evident that the duration of any mentoring program demands a high degree of commitment by both partners.

Roles

The Mentor

According to Hargrove (1995), “The coach is an organization leader or manager, a

front-line supervisor, a project manager, an internal consultant and external consultant, or simply a colleague” (p. 10). Coley (1996), Shula and Blanchard (1995), and Rowley (1999) described the main role of a mentor as familiarization with their protégé while maintaining a high degree of optimism. Likewise, Mills and colleagues (2001) described the role as the primary source of encouragement for mentees and one that greatly facilitated their career development through shared experiences. The role typically includes sharing knowledge and experiences; advising protégés on organizational issues; identifying goals, contacts, and resources; helping to set expectations surrounding personal development; and working with protégés to identify and implement challenging projects (Coley, 1996). It is clearly evident that the mentor role involves focused, long-term commitment.

Hargrove (1995) and Stone (1999) believe that mentors should begin by clarifying rules and guidelines and identifying competencies in need of further development. This process accentuates the importance of good communication in the early stages of the partnership. Hargrove stated, “The grand rule for collaborative conversations is to share all relevant information” (p. 221). Woodring (1998) referred to mentoring as an exciting way to gain personal growth and adds that it can prove to be the most important career relationship for both partners. Consequently, direct involvement and focused attention to communicating pivotal concepts is critical in such a partnership (Ramsey, 1999; Shula & Blanchard, 1995). Ramsey recommended the use of many leading questions and offered the following advice: “Teach values, not just skills; teach “people skills”; hold high standards; [be] tolerant of the mistakes of your protégé; expect to repeat lessons and vary your mentoring delivery; be a ‘cheerleader’ and know when to quit” (pp. 3–5). The main focus of any mentor should be to develop independent

workers. Shula and Blanchard stressed the following five-step plan for coaching: (a) make expectations clear; (b) incorporate the use of modeling; (c) allow for practice; (d) incorporate observation; and lastly, (e) praise and/or redirect the mentee. This cycle should repeat itself until the desired competency levels are achieved. Hargrove expressed that coaching involves challenging, supporting, and investing the time needed to benefit another individual. He quoted an old Greek saying that proclaimed, “Together we can be greater” (p. 91).

Waugh (1997) viewed skill building as a primary main role of a coach. According to Peterson and Hicks (1996), “People often need a boost over the hump between new knowledge and new behavior because trying new skills makes them feel awkward, frustrated, or vulnerable” (p. 102). Many new employees experience these feelings; hence, mentoring is extremely useful in the orientation of new hires. Stone (1999) summarized the role of a mentor as a role model, cheerleader, broker, and advocate. The overall success of a mentoring program will be driven by the passion of the mentors toward the professional development of their protégés, as well as their willingness to share their knowledge (Bullington & Boylston, 2001). Employees generally respond well to leaders, managers, coaches, and parents who show an interest in them (Shula & Blanchard, 1995). Brounstein (2000) described business coaching as motivating employees to deliver needed results, guiding them into independent thinking and action, motivating them to assume greater responsibility with greater effectiveness, and cultivating employee capabilities that will lead to progressive career development and success. The expectations of a manager for their employees will often dictate employee success or failure (Shula & Blanchard, 1995).

Not only is it beneficial to believe in yourself, but it is equally important that others believe in you. Consequently, effective mentors should strive to enhance both the personal and

professional growth of their mentees (Gregg, 1999). To accomplish this, it is imperative to develop the most crucial mentoring skills such as role modeling, listening, reflecting, questioning, and teaching. Mentors should be able to teach both technical and supportive skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and assertiveness skills (Howell, 1992). Ganser (1996) stressed the use of conferencing, observing, and problem solving with mentees. Such actions enhance mentee relationships with coworkers, supervisors, customers, and vendors (Ashby & Pell, 2001). Stone (1999) documented the following characteristics common to excellent mentors:

- Had strong interpersonal skills
- Had contacts both within and outside the organization and tremendous influence within the company
- He recognized others' accomplishments
- He was an excellent supervisor
- He knows his field
- He accepts the risk that comes with mentoring
- He is willing to be available to help another advance in the organization. (pp. 172–173)

In general, mentoring is teaching, learning, and transmitting learned information to the next generation of leaders (Bullington & Boylston, 2001; Howell, 1992). The process of mentoring not only benefits mentees, but also helps develop stronger leadership skills in mentors (Gregg, 1999). Because of this dynamic, mentors usually appreciate protégé assignments because the act of teaching broadens their own knowledge. As mentioned earlier, the main function of a mentor is to provide opportunities that will enable their mentee to reach their full potential (Simonetti et al., 1999). Hargrove (1995) listed the following characteristics of masterful coaches: the ability to inspire; set high standards; demonstrate honesty, integrity, and disciplined intensity; exemplify forward action; and to illustrate a passion to help others learn, grow, and perform successfully. Brounstein (2000) adds that mentors should challenge mentees to think

independently and facilitate such growth through posing leading questions. According to Waugh (1997), “The basic rule for coaching is to be friendly, frank, fair and fun” (p. 75). Howell posits that the role of a mentor includes six steps: goals, training people, building relationships, motivating individuals, building relationships, monitoring performance, and providing feedback. However, it is worth repeating that the skills and coaching characteristics of mentors must be received by a mentee willing to learn (Reicheld, 1996).

The Mentee

Price and colleagues (1997) documented the responsibilities of mentees, which include immersing themselves in their respective organizations by accepting feedback, developing needed skills, and formulating a professional development plan. Woodring (1998) supported this by maintaining the importance of mentees constantly challenging themselves toward optimal performance. Peterson and Hicks (1996) directly advised protégés to “demonstrate that you seek mentoring and feedback from others even in the areas where your skills are already solid” (p. 138). There is always something to learn. Reutter (2001) recommended that mentees demonstrate enthusiastic interest in career development, keep their mentors informed, and respect confidential information. Mentoring partnerships must develop mutual trust rapidly. Bullington and Boylston (2001) encouraged mentees to focus their development efforts on career planning, networking, and skill development. Linda Tsao-Yang stated, “If you only do things you know well and do comfortably, you’ll never reach higher goals” (as cited in Peterson & Hicks, 1996, p. 105). Jaffe and Scott (1991) described mentoring by explaining, “It involves seeking opportunities, making discoveries, taking risks, growing, and taking actions” (p. 39).

Peterson and Hicks (1996) encouraged mentoring partners to remain focused on priorities and to consistently incorporate reflection, feedback, and support. These researchers posited that “people who reflect on their development actions can consolidate their lessons, identify themes and patterns in their progress, and ensure they are learning the right things” (p. 73). Learners can further reinforce their education by sharing lessons learned with their work group (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). When lessons are shared repeatedly, learning is increasingly reinforced; hence, it is highly recommended that mentees debrief their supervisors following each learning session. Advice gained from mentors during such learning sessions also provides a strong background in the technical and operational aspects of the organization (Coley, 1996). The goal of a mentee should be to develop a broad-based set of skills and competencies that are relevant to many different organizations (Jaffe & Scott, 1991). Shula and Blanchard (1995) refer to this adaptability to new situations as *audible ready*. Managers favor employees that are cross-trained and able to temporarily fill in for a variety of job functions when needed. It is clear that mentoring benefits all involved—protégés, mentors, and organizations (Cotton, 2001; Williams, 2000).

Benefits and Detriments

According to Weinstein (1998), “Organizational mentoring has key benefits, including employee growth, socialization, satisfaction, performance and productivity” (p. 59). Brounstein (2000) supported this view by expressing that mentoring can also facilitate exceeding customer expectations. Thus, businesses also benefit from the new perspectives that learners have to offer (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001). As discussed, mentoring has become a dynamic

career-development tool. As a result of these varied and far-reaching benefits, hundreds of the largest American corporations have introduced formal programs. “Mentored learning is used by 15 percent of companies, and this figure will rise to 40 percent of companies by the end of the decade” (Eupen & Rajan, 1997, p. 26). Scandura, Tejada, Werther, and Lankau (1996) and Vincent and Seymour (1995) agreed that mentoring can rejuvenate careers. Keating (2002) challenged professionals to consider the rewards of being a good mentor by stating, “There is a deep satisfaction in knowing you have passed on to others some of what you have been given” (p. 28). Although it is a strategic method for businesses to develop future managers (Bullington & Boylston, 2001), masterful coaching can be observed as a universal skill within businesses, families, and communities (Hargrove, 1995).

Howell (1992) and Hargrove (1995) warned against coaches who cause learners to feel bewildered, frustrated, and resentful. In the same vein, mentoring should never be forced. Frustrating mentoring situations can be avoided through sessions scheduled solely for the purpose of relationship building (Stone, 1999). Stone documented that managers often lack the communication skills needed for mentoring and some fail to follow through with their commitment as a mentor. “Expressing one’s intention to mentor someone is, perhaps, at most only 10% of building the partnership. The day-to-day effort, the ongoing communication and support is the other 90%” (p. 211). Hibert (2000) stated, “I’ve learned that humor, support, and the courage to do the right thing allows us to tackle the bigger issues and not to give up even when solutions seem impossible” (pp. 16–18). It is evident that the characteristics of individual mentors collectively serve as a major predictor of success for any formal mentoring program (Allen, 1999).

A pitfall of mentoring is employee misinterpretation that participation equates to a “fast track” to professional advancement within the company. Many managers make the mistake of suggesting that participation can lead to a promotion or pay increase (Stone 1999). One of the first actions a mentoring-program manager should take is to communicate to all mentees that the program makes no promise of promotion (Coley, 1996). Stone suggested that mentors speak with honesty so protégés will understand the nature of the benefits they can expect to gain from mentoring. Most importantly, employees should be aware that good performance will be noticed and rewarded (Shula & Blanchard, 1995).

Another potential detriment to a mentoring program is leaders that may not embrace the career-development initiative. Many may abandon the idea, especially if it is not referenced on their yearly goal worksheets. Bullington and Boylston (2001) pointed out that some managers worry about how involvement in such a program will affect their annual evaluation. These researchers also noted that others resist involvement because they will view the new task of mentoring as a burden to their current workload. Peterson and Hicks (1996) stated, “Odds are, your environment sends mixed messages about the value of development” (p. 115). Hopkins-Thompson (2000) and Stone (1999) found that many managers identify time as a major barrier to the mentoring process. In fact, as Peterson and Hicks pointed out, even experts who desire to be mentors to employees under their direction often attempt to save time by performing work that should be delegated. These investigators warn both “experts and learners not to trade short-term pain for long-term gain” (p. 86).

Because mentoring programs vary with regard to the level of commitment, not all employees are able to participate, which can introduce employee conflict. Consequently,

jealousy is likely to develop. Stone (1999) explained that those without mentors may view participating employees as recipients of special treatment. To avoid this perception, it is recommended to instruct mentees to refrain from boastful discussion surrounding their mentoring partnership. Another potential barrier to implementation of a mentoring program is that, because benefits of the program are gradually manifested over time, it is often difficult to convince leaders that mentoring is the best initiative to pursue (Henderson, 2001). Additionally, mentors will not always be popular due to the need to encourage employees out of their “comfort zones” (Shula & Blanchard, 1995). Many leaders admit that coaching is frequently placed as low priority (Peterson & Hicks, 1996). This is usually driven by the fact that mentoring is not a common inclusion to the overall business plans of most companies. This lack of focused involvement can be a source of frustration for mentees.

Another “pitfall” to mentoring is that learners can become overdependent on their mentors. Managers often make the mistake of assuming responsibilities their protégés could handle themselves (Brounstein, 2000). As previously mentioned, if mentors focus their efforts on developing independent workers, this problem can be overcome. According to Stone (1999), “An equally awkward situation occurs when you mentor a subordinate of one of your direct reports” (p. 210). To avoid subsequent tension among staff members, it is important to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the mentoring relationship. Stone also stated that “good coaches are watchers, using their observational skills to determine the gap between employee performance and potential and closing that gap through development of the employee’s full capability” (p. 29).

Observation and Feedback

Coaching begins by assisting mentees in recognizing learning opportunities within their current work group (Hargrove, 1995). Woodring (1998) reported that the act of observing others is one of the most powerful methods of learning. Such practice assists the instructors in their efforts toward ensuring their mentees progress to the next level of learning. Managers frequently overlook opportunities to observe their learners and hence miss opportunities to commend or redirect their efforts (Shula & Blanchard, 1995). According to Price and colleagues (1997), “Observation time allows the mentor to assess how the mentee performs [on] the job, relates with others, operates in a team environment, and solves problems. Based on the observations, the mentor then guides the mentee into developing objectives” (pp. 49–59). Once such objectives are met, it is recommended to extend rewards highly valued by employees (Howell, 1992).

Shula and Blanchard (1995) agreed that the absence of rewards is intolerable for employees. According to Stone (1999), “Good praise is small, sincere, concise, and specific” (p. 27). Good coaches motivate their learners with potential rewards to improve performance. Such key motivation is desperately lacking in many firms. As described by Banks (1997), “In the workplace, rewards typically include money, promotions, job titles, attractive offices, praise from the boss or peers, bonuses, and perks such as a company car” (p. 48). As with mentoring, employee performance and retention objectives are driven by the need to reward. Retaining the brightest employees is essential to maintaining profitability. Yourdon (2001) documented that mentoring can save companies millions on the wasted expense associated with failed projects. When employees are provided with information, resources, and tools, as well as responsibilities allowing implementation of these components, they thrive toward success (Jaffe & Scott, 1991).

Consequently, coaching is the best option for positively influencing employee commitment (Brounstein, 2000).

Medcalf (1995) stressed the importance of creating an atmosphere for learning. Many business leaders are unaware of the positive correlation between the career development of employees and inspired employees. Too often, new processes are implemented without employee acceptance. Kohn (1993) believes that cross-functional assignments maintain the interest of employees because they are learning from being surrounded by successful people. Davenport and Prusak (1998) concurred by encouraging the grouping of “smart” individuals to promote dialogue resulting in knowledge sharing. Stamps (1998) summarized this by stating, “We need to create a place where the sphere[s] of work, play, thinking, and learning overlap” (p. 37). Employees are likely to excel in such an environment where feedback and recognition are shared openly.

Vince Lombardie, the coach of the Green Bay Packers said, “Love is teamwork and love respects the dignity of the individual. Heart power is the strength of your corporation” (as cited in Shula & Blanchard, 1995, p. 341). Hargrove (1995) recommended the following phraseology from mentors to their mentees: “One thing I appreciate about you is One thing I have difficulty with is One thing I want to create with you is ” (p. 144). When such effective positive reinforcement is infused in the mentoring partnership, employees tend to regain enthusiasm toward their roles (Daniels, 1994). Most employees appreciate recognition for a job well done. Leaders must find more creative ways to instill employee excitement surrounding their work (Caudron, 1997). For example, the cross-functional experience tends to generate increased interest. Additionally, most leaders are unaware of the power of recognition and

rewards (Nelson, 1994). Benefits are visible through measures indicating improvements in cycle time and customer satisfaction (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Recognition signifies that someone noticed and someone cares. Research indicates that employees perform at a higher level when thoughtful personal recognition is offered for completing a challenging task well (Nelson, 1994).

Research findings indicate that attitudes have the greatest impact on success (Oakley & Krug, 1994). As mentioned earlier, bad attitudes can frustrate other employees. Hargrove (1995) noted the admiration and respect that is shown for leaders who are dynamic, uplifting, enthusiastic, positive, and optimistic. In summary, the act of empowering others is noticed when learners experience respect, support, and growth through their managers and/or mentors (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997). There are other variables that can influence employee opinion surrounding mentoring initiatives.

Other Influential Variables

Prisk (2001) reminded readers not to discount the idea of using younger staff members for mentors of more senior employees. As previously mentioned, this is referred to as reverse mentoring and “partnering with a young person can reinvigorate the way we think, the way we act, and the way we see” (p. 122). For example, young new hires just out of college are typically proficient with the latest technologies and can be an excellent resource for managers as they work to maintain up-to-date skills using the latest technological advancements.

To prepare for mentoring, it is important to develop an awareness of the productivity, health, and abilities of older workers (Steinhauser, 1998). A key managerial role involves effectively managing older employees (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1996). Steinhauser documented that the act of respecting all age-groups will add strength to business relationships.

He reminded us that wisdom gained from experience is priceless; however, the general consensus is that people generally believe “as employees age, their ambition and ability to adapt to new situations may wane” (pp. 243–256). Conversely, Crampton and colleagues pointed out that the American Association of Retired Persons noted that four out of five workers over the age of 55 express a desire for training opportunities. Older employees typically gravitate toward initiatives such as mentoring because they find emotional fulfillment from work. Establishing a good rapport with coworkers is much more important to them than it is to younger employees.

Employee Level and Age

Mentoring is also linked to corporate rank. Most mentors are at a higher level than their mentees (Madison & Huston, 1996). Mentoring does not have to be a top-down process (Kolbe, 1994), nor end at midcareer (Hazzard, 1999). In fact, one mentoring program in place within a large American university extensively involves retired faculty members (Bedient, Snyder, & Simon, 1992). It is important that senior managers are encouraged to seek a role model or mentor to help keep them focused on their professional growth (Solomon, 2001). According to Peterson and Hicks (1996), “If you keep current, you are in a better position to help your people work on the right things” (p. 66).

Along with new hires mentoring higher-level employees, management should reciprocate by providing mentors for these new employees. Such effort will also help retain minority employees (Nathan, 1998). This is important because “women and minority workers represent 62 percent of the workforce and some 70 percent by 2005” (Kaye, 1992, p. 80). Mentoring is especially important for women within the field of education and is most in demand as employees move from middle-level to top-level management (Dodgson, 1987). Orpen (1995)

found that vocational mentoring received during the first few months of employment was associated with greater career success within the same organization, given that the individual was retained for a minimum of four years. With this considered, mentored employees who demonstrate a long-term commitment to their respective organization could be viewed as valuable corporate assets.

Not only do mentors facilitate skill development, but they are also instrumental in orienting new employees to their new work environments (Ashby & Pell, 2001; Ganser, 1996). Orientation sessions commonly include an overview of the facility, organizational structure, and available resources. It is common for a peer mentor to provide an overview of everything from locating supplies to finding resources to solving computer problems (Gregg, 1999; Messmer, 1998). Active learning can also help young, entry-level employees make a smoother transition from school to work (Stromei, 2000). When new employees receive ample training, support, and encouragement during the first three months of their employment, a productive and loyal staff member will be the ultimate result (Ashby & Pell, 2001). In turn, such collaboration will eventually have positive effects on the market share enjoyed by the company (Ball, 2001). According to Brounstein (2000), “Personal influence, not positional influence, builds connections between employees and managers and commits employees to your company” (p. 29).

The process of mentoring is actually continuous from birth (Hazzard, 1999). Mentoring begins with parents, coaches, and/or other authority figures “all forming a fabric of support and nurturance for us as we progress from infancy to middle age” (pp. 1466–1470). A former dean of a graduate school of education was 64 years old when he enrolled in a Colorado university to

pursue a second degree (Marcus, 1996). Even up to his death, he was passionate about education. He exemplified that learning should not be limited to the youngest generation. As noted by Crampton and colleagues (1996), “Older workers tend to be more conscientious, exhibit greater company loyalty and better job morale” (p. 256). Consequently, these researchers support a staff with a good mix of younger and older workers. They stated,

Older workers provide significant benefits to the workplace and it is, therefore, wise to invest in older workers. With high levels of loyalty, motivation, attendance and morale, low turnover, flexibility in scheduling, developed skills, experience, and mentoring abilities for younger workers, older workers are well suited for continued employment, training and development. What is most important is a person’s ability to perform a job, not the person’s age. (pp. 243–256)

A common misconception is that older workers are less creative than younger employees and unable to keep up with technological advances (Crampton et al., 1996). However, “a survey of 400 businesses commissioned by the AARP indicated that 74% of the companies polled rated older workers either excellent or very good in performance” (pp. 243–256). It is evident that a wide experience base will overshadow any decline in physical or mental state. In fact, as expressed by Scandura and colleagues (1996), older mentors find achievement and nurturing personally rewarding. Reicheld (1996) stated “The best training comes from on the job, where newcomers learn from older hands” (p. 145). The act of being fair to all age-groups will facilitate the strong relationships needed to support the success of any organization; hence, a diverse employee base is key.

Gender

According to Vincent and Seymour (1995), “Women and men tend to express equivalent intentions to mentoring but women anticipate greater drawbacks to becoming mentored” (p. 4). Saltzman (1996) supported this finding by reporting that few women in positions of authority are

currently willing to mentor younger counterparts. Research indicates that it is difficult for women to find mentors because of the shortage of female management in top-level positions and the family pressures existing with the few that do fill such professional roles (Nannery, 2001). Many potential mentors shy away from mentoring because of the time commitment and miscellaneous fears. Some resist involvement because they fear being passed up by the mentee (Loeb, 1995; Vincent & Seymour, 1995). Likewise, men tend to shy away from mentoring young female employees because many fear erroneous harassment accusations (Hazzard, 1999). Additionally, “women’s choices concerning marriage, childbearing, and careers may lead to perceptions that women are less committed to their careers, thus limiting their participation in mentoring relationships” (Hansman, 1998, pp. 63–67).

Due to the shortage of formal support for women, this population group will typically participate in cross-gender business partnerships (Schwiebert, Deck, & Bradshaw, 1999). Kelly and colleagues (1991) also found that the percentage of male administrators who have had same-sex mentors tends to be larger than that of their female counterparts. In fact, their study indicated that nearly 80% of the male participants reported mentoring with a same-sex partner, nearly double that reported by women. Consequently, the problems faced with men mentoring women are common. Hansman (1998) and Schwiebert and colleagues elaborated by saying that rumors and damaging gossip is the largest fear. As far as the mentees are concerned, women are neutral with regard to the gender preference of their mentor (Vincent & Seymour, 1995). However, organizations can combat such barriers by sponsoring social events at work where potential cross-gender pairs can meet (Schwiebert et al., 1999).

Schwiebert and colleagues (1999) espoused that the mentoring needs of men differ from women because of midlife career changes and the pursuit of higher education. They add that women value development plans with a focus on communication and relationships. Conversely, when women are paired with men in a mentoring relationship, the focus of mentoring is typically limited to career development. These researchers also found that women prefer female mentors because they tend to focus their training on leadership skills and building self-confidence. Keating (2002) and Saltzman (1996) found that women who are mentored are more likely to improve their professional skills, advance in their careers, and enjoy their work to a greater degree than those who are not mentored. A major correctional firm recognized the importance of providing career development for women, and the number of women in key leadership positions within the company has tripled since 1992 (Trimberger, 1998). Shea (1995) stated, “Supervisors need to strive to use mentoring to enhance the abilities of all those they supervise—equitable [*sic*] and evenly” (pp. 3–5).

In many of the studies that focused on the importance of mentoring women, most of the successful women surveyed noted they had indeed been mentored (Burke & McKeen 1990; Shea, 1995). The few women available as mentors tend to be overwhelmed with requests from potential mentees (Nannery, 2001). Employees want the chance to cultivate their careers within their company and appreciate being trusted and valued (Leland, 1999). Most male-dominated occupations, such as accounting firms, will typically have mentoring programs that consist solely of males mentoring other males. In fact, Madison and Huston (1996) confirmed that most mentoring relationships, overall, consist of males mentoring other males. Their research focused on the mentoring practices among nurse administrators in California. The study found that 71%

of American mentors and 77% of Australian mentors were male. According to Kartje (1996), mentoring “provides opportunities to balance the power and helps to increase the organization’s comfort factor with feminine styles of leadership” (pp. 114–125). It is evident that, “mentoring relationships are shaped by the participants’ gender, background, race, and career” (Schwiebert et al., 1999, pp. 241–253).

Summary

Mentoring introduces many benefits that focus on expanding employee networks, skill sets, self-confidence, professional knowledge, and overall job competence (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001). It therefore follows that providing employees with learning opportunities to implement this growth is critical. Such action will also benefit the company through improved employee satisfaction, performance, and productivity. Mentoring is a cost-effective avenue toward the successful transfer of skills and employee retention (Loeb, 1995). The president and creative director of a large Toronto firm stated, “It is madness that we are not investing [in our employees] as we should” (Medcalf, 1995, p. 14).

Research has indicated that companies that give consideration to top-management support of mentoring programs and their structure, roles, benefits, detriments, and need for observation and employee rewards, as well as to the marketing of a mentoring program, will enjoy the benefits that a successful mentoring program provides. Packer (2000) supported this belief by documenting that, if organizations deliver education, training, and learning tied to high standards, it will lead to valuable employee credentials and concurrently meet the needs of the labor market. The “bottom line” is that “if you ask people what they are interested in doing, and

then give them the tools and encouragement to try it, they will come back with something extraordinary” (Hargrove, 1995, p. 282).

This study sought to clarify mentoring preferences based upon information gathered from the extensive literature review regarding mentoring administration, partnerships, and tools; program duration; the role of mentors; purposes for mentoring; and evaluation of mentoring programs and partnerships. The research was designed to measure differences in mentoring preferences based upon the variables of years of professional service, professional level, age, and gender. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What preferences related to a mentoring-program model, involving both structure and process, are reported by employees within the sales/service and product-technology departments of the study site?
2. Do the attributes of a mentoring program that is favored by employees vary with years of service, professional level, age, and gender?

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Employees within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the large U.S. manufacturer of steel that served as the study site were surveyed to gather the described preferences and to test variances across the demographic variables. The findings will be of great value to the management of the study site as they consider the mentoring preferences in their decision-making processes.

Research Design and Sample

This research is of ex post facto design because no experiment was done, it was exploratory in nature, and it did not involve the random assignment of participants. Dunham (2003) favors this approach because “a prospective ex post facto design involves assessing the predictor variable (i.e., categorizing people into groups that you think will affect the DV), and then following them forward in time to see if the predictor variable affects the dependent variable” (p.1).

The survey responses yielded quantitative data with one open-ended question. Quantitative analysis is appropriate to the study because it focused on determining the number of employees who agree on the importance of certain mentoring-program attributes. For purposes of analysis, the *yes* on the survey rating scale was assigned a value of three, and *no* was assigned a value of one; *maybe* was valued at two. This allows for statistical tests appropriate to ordinal or interval level data. Again, because the focus was on gathering numeric values versus attitudes, quantitative analysis was fitting.

The survey utilized in this current research was administered at the study site. The company is headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and manufactures and sells a wide variety

of steel sheet, plate tubular and tin products, coke, and taconite pellets. The corporation also owns and operates another former steel business that is now an oil company. It is also involved in a number of other businesses such as coal mining, mineral-resource management, transportation, real-estate development, technology licensing and engineering consulting services, and leasing and financial services. It is noted for being one of the largest integrated steel producers within the United States. The convenience sample of this study included the sales/service and product-technology staff at a large U.S. steel manufacturer. Barton (2003) declares, "a convenience sample is a sample where the participants are selected in part or in whole at the convenience of the researcher"(p. 2). With this type of sample, the researcher makes little attempt to ensure that the sample is representative of the larger population. Even so, he stated that convenience samples do provide useful information. A hypothesis is defined by Baisley and Clover (2003) as "a tentative explanation for certain behaviors, phenomena, or events that have occurred or will occur" (p. 3). They also remind us that the hypothesis should be based on theory, previous research, or observation of actual events. When interpreting results of a hypothesis test, Barton urges the researcher to be aware of those who might be left out using such a method such as office personnel in a centralized office if a study is done at a decentralized office complex. He says, it is ideal to replicate the study in a controlled setting. With that known, a survey, which addressed the key mentoring dimensions, was used to collect data pertaining to employee preferences surrounding the structure and processes of a mentoring-program model. The following null hypotheses were generated for the research:

1. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with years of service.

2. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with professional level.
3. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with age.
4. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with gender.

Surveys were distributed to 114 management employees—60 sales/service representatives and 54 product-technology engineers working within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the study site, respectively.

Instrument

Construction of the survey administered in this study began with an extensive review of the literature. Key mentoring attributes were categorized, which included employee interest, mentoring tools, program duration, purpose of mentoring, the participant selection process, and program evaluation to determine how these attributes were perceived by employees within the study site. In so doing, a 30-question survey was created within which three of the items addressed employee interest, four involved mentoring tools, one targeted program duration, ten were related to the purpose of mentoring, five addressed participation selection, and two focused on program evaluation. Additionally, four demographic queries and one open-ended question were added in the interest of developing a thorough tool toward gathering mentoring preferences.

One shortcoming of survey administration is that researchers tend to develop the instruments to address already-known issues (Caudron, 1997). Additionally, few human-relations departments make effective use of survey results. Levine and Shinton (1998) documented that the crucial combination of obtaining commitment-setting objectives, and determining the administration method and design, is frequently lacking in one or more areas. According to

Bachmann, Elfrink, and Vazzana (2000), “Several measures can determine the quality of returned surveys, including the comparability of respondent demographics between samples, responses to open-ended questions, inclinations of the respondents to add further comments to questions, and the number of questions omitted” (pp. 10–15). McClenahen (1999) listed the following suggestions for survey administration:

- Make arrangements for absent or unavailable employees
- Post survey results to remind employees that they are involved
- Make a preliminary announcement of the forth-coming [*sic*] survey
- Prepare a memo to employees to indicate when and where the survey will be held
- Schedule small groups to complete the survey
- Allow approximately one hour for each group to complete the questionnaire
- Assign a neutral onsite [*sic*] survey
- Distribute blank questionnaires along with envelopes. (pp. 12–13)

To ensure that administration and interpretation of the survey administered in this research was uniform, the questionnaire implemented was brief and incorporated questions that were easy to read with an uncomplicated response scale. The survey questions were constructed with the use of the Web Surveyor software application. This application was useful because it provided templates complete with scale choices and drop-down list boxes that were essential tools in the elimination of errors that might otherwise occur with a manual intervention. To improve readability and functionality of the survey, the Web link and solicited advice was distributed to several individuals, including a group of content experts, for feedback.

Validity and Reliability

When developing a survey, it is essential to ensure both reliability and validity of the data the instrument will collect. Validity refers to the extent to which a survey measures aspects the researcher is seeking to measure (Caudron, 1997; Fink, 1995c). In brief, a survey is valid if it

indeed collects the desired data. Researchers suggest dimension, validity, reliability, and practicality as key considerations in survey preparation (Fink, 1995b). The survey instrument was tested for validity by forming and soliciting assistance from a panel of content experts. The panel included five individuals. One was a senior consultant within the field of education, one was a manager of education and development, one was a statistical specialist, one was an operations coordinator, and one served as an administrative assistant. These experts were asked to critique the survey for face, content, and construct validity.

The initial draft of the Mentoring-Preference Survey was developed from an extensive review of the literature on the topic of mentoring. Upon completion of this initial phase, the described panel of experts was approached for their validation of the instrument. The following changes to the original draft were made based upon their feedback:

1. Addition of instructions to the introductory paragraph with regard to time completion.
2. Suggestions regarding a definition of terms.
3. Elimination of excessive questions.
4. Clarification of vague questions.
5. Clarification of complex questions.
6. Correction of typographical errors.
7. Changed scale from *agree/disagree* ratings to *yes/no/maybe* ratings.

With the assistance of the content experts, the Mentoring-Preference Survey instrument was revised three times.

Reliability refers to the consistency of instrument scores and the extent to which the measures are free of error (Fink, 1995b). Caudron (1997) relates reliability to the consistency of

the survey year after year as well as the consistency between survey items. Litwin (1995) elaborates by saying, “Internal consistency is an indicator of how well the different items measure the same issue” (p. 21). Additionally, Pearson and Boruch (1986) explain that there are a number of ways to test for survey reliability including “test-retest, split-halves, and internal consistency. The scores of these test[s] will range between 0.00 and 1.00 with one being the most reliable” (p. 3). All of these forms of reliability rely upon the same sample for testing of the instruments (DeVellis, 1991).

The reliability of the instrument implemented in the current study was tested using the internal consistency method with a Cronbach’s Alpha calculation. The calculation

is basically the average of all the correlations between each item and the total score, [and] is often calculated to determine the extent of homogeneity. Homogeneity refers to the extent to which all the items or questions assess the same skill, characteristic, or quality. (Fink, 1995a, p. 48).

Litwin (1995) espoused that internal consistency is “applied to not single items but to groups of items that are thought to measure different aspects of the same concept” (p. 21). For example, the Mentoring-Preference Survey includes 12 basic questions that relate to the construct that measures employee attitudes toward mentoring-program attributes. The remaining questions are single-item questions focusing on mentoring-program administration such as the importance of incorporating the use of Web sites, books, and seminars as mentoring-program tools.

The internal consistency reliability test is preferred over the other methods because it requires only a single administration of a pilot test and is effective for evaluating survey items that have no “right” answer. Key (1997) stated, “This is a very useful tool in educational and social science research because instruments in these areas often ask respondents to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement on a particular scale” (p. 4). This method

is preferred over the split halves because the success of the split-halves method is overly dependent upon the manner in which the items are divided. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) noted,

The split procedure scores two halves that are usually odd versus even items and separate for each person. The correlation coefficient of the two halves scores the degree that the two halves have the same results which will describe the internal consistency of the test. (p. 178)

Another major benefit to using the internal consistency test is that “the data set is richer and more reliable if several different items are used to gain information about a particular behavior or topic” such as mentoring preferences (Litwin, 1995, p. 21).

Pilot Study

To facilitate evaluation of the mentoring-preference instrument used in the current study, a pilot survey was administered (see Appendix D). Once the pilot was completed, the internal-consistency reliability estimate was calculated using the Cronbach’s Alpha formula. According to Litwin (1995), “Reliability is usually expressed as a correlation coefficient, or r value, between two sets of data. Levels of 0.70 or more are generally accepted as representing good reliability” (p. 31). The Mentoring-Preference Survey used in this current study is viewed as reliable because the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.70. To be precise, the reliability of the instrument was .72 as calculated with the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability analysis.

The pilot group in this study consisted of 30 randomly selected individuals that were asked to participate in the validation of the Mentoring-Preference Survey. Prior to confirming the participants, individual characteristics were reviewed to ensure against differences that could potentially spur disparities within the data set. For example, an equal gender distribution was verified. After eliminating the demographic questions and the open-ended question from the test, the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability analysis was conducted on the 12 questions focused on overall

preferences related to the implementation of a mentoring program. More specifically, the 12 similar questions were computed using this method in an effort to determine the correlation of the responses across the pilot group comprised of 30 individuals. The questions evaluated addressed employee attitudes toward mentoring as it related to their career development. The other questions excluded from the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, and analyzed independently, related to mentoring tools deemed to present probable value to employees of the study site.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted with the 30-item survey presenting an ordinal *yes/no/maybe* scale because numeric values of three, one, and two were assigned to the categories of *yes*, *no*, and *maybe*, respectively (see Appendix C). The key mentoring attributes were categorized according to administrative questions such as program sign-up and reference materials. Questions related to mentoring-program participation included queries involving program selection criteria. The survey document explained the purpose of the questionnaire and provided definitions of particular terms to ensure clarity and respondent understanding. The electronic survey included 4 demographic questions, 20 administrative queries, 5 participation questions, and 1 open-ended question.

According to Standing, Martin, and Moravec (1991), "Attitude surveys are considered to be important tools for diagnosing corporate ills and assuring employees that management cares about what they think, although organizations rarely use employee surveys as prime motivators of culture change" (pp. 17–18). Such questionnaires are widely used to gather opinions on issues related to political, health-services, and consumer choices (Fink, 1995b). Bachmann and colleagues (2000) reported that rapid advances in computer technology have spurred the use of

e-mail surveys for purposes of research data collection. The most obvious potential benefit of using such surveys is their time and cost effectiveness (Stanton, 1998; Urken, 1999; Weible & Wallace, 1998).

The largest advantage of a Web-based survey over a paper-and-pencil survey is its accessibility (Stanton, 1998). Regardless of the delivery, surveys present shortcomings. However, the fact that all employees within the manufacturing company serving as the study site had Internet access, rendered use of the Web Surveyor software application and e-mail as the preferable delivery methods. Consequently, speed and conveyance influenced the survey selection. Fink (1995c) explained that practicality, which is commonly referred to as “efficiency,” concerns the complexity of the data-collection process and involves cost, ease of administration, and ease of subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Data collected via the Mentoring-Preference Survey described employee preferences related to the implementation of a mentoring program within the study site. The results can be used to assist management in decision making surrounding their mentoring initiative. This study explored mentoring attributes that are most valued by employees of the sales/service and product-technology divisions within the study site. The mentoring-preference data were gathered and organized using cross-tabulation, which included descriptive statistical analysis for an initial examination of the entire convenience sample. A chi-square analysis was subsequently performed in an effort to determine whether age, years of service, professional level, and/or gender affected mentoring preferences, as reported by the respondents. Additionally, a logistic regression analysis was subsequently performed to evaluate the data collected. This analysis

compared and reported on the differing mentoring preferences based upon matching variables. This statistical model is often used to take advantage of the additional information provided by an ordinal over a nominal scale. As a note, only the response to one question was mapped using logistic regression or any other model of responses. Because most of the queries posed in the Mentoring-Preference Survey have one of three possibilities, the logistic analysis can estimate the probability of a specific response (i.e., *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*) in terms of the demographic variables or responses to other questions. For example, the analysis would provide the probability of receiving a *maybe* response with any of the given demographic variables.

One of the goals of the current study was to maintain simplicity in the models and explanations of the responses; hence, the demographic variables are analyzed first. As expected, some variables were found to have little or no effect (i.e., a simplifying effect). In detail, the main result of the logistic-regression analysis was an estimate of the parameters of a model of $\log ([p_1 + p_2] / p_3)$ where p_1 is equal to the probability of a *no* response, p_2 is equal to the probability of a *maybe* response, and p_3 is equal to the probability of a *yes* response. Note that the sum of p_1 , p_2 , and p_3 is equal to 1.00; hence, the probability of not receiving a *yes* response is one minus p_3 equaling the sum of p_1 and p_2 . To compute the odds of responding *yes*, an alternate formula is applied ($p_3 / [p_1 + p_2]$). The value of $\log ([p_1 + p_2] / p_3)$ can be obtained by using the coefficients and *const(2)* of the logistic regression. Using the antilog (i.e., exponentiation) of this expression as a set of values for the independent variables, the model of \log is estimated ($[p_1 + p_2] / p_3$). Inverting this formula ($p_3 / [p_1 + p_2]$) provides the odds of a *yes* response. An excel spreadsheet facilitates evaluation of the model for sets of predictor values (i.e., years of service, professional level, age, and gender). Thereby, the effects of different values are directly observed

via the odds and odds ratios for the *yes* responses. Expressions for the other two responses can also be thus derived.

After examining the data through the use of preliminary descriptive statistics in an effort to evaluate the importance of the variables to specific responses, linear discriminant analysis was also performed. *Yes* responses were used as one category, and *maybe* and *no* responses as the other categories for specific questions. Discriminant analysis was used specifically to determine the influence of the demographic variables on responses to the questions and the cross-association with the other responses. This is a useful method of statistical analysis, even though it is not the most commonly used method, especially due to the ease in which the results are interpreted. In cases where there were less than five responses, the results were questionable, just as they would be when reviewing cross-tabulation and corresponding chi-square tests. Discriminant analysis performed in this manner provides a summary table, which displays a measure of how well the independent variables predict each type of response (i.e., *no*, *maybe*, and *yes*) to each question. Additionally, squared distances between the centroids of the predictor variables of each type of response measure how similar the demographics of the independent variables are to one another. The short distances indicate poor or mediocre discrimination, which would imply that the variables have minimal association with the responses. This statistical method also provides a tabulation of the count for each type of response. With that known, if 70% or more of the responses are the same, then demographics will have minimal effect on the answer to the question. More specifically, if 90% are the same, this would generate a high level of confidence that little or no association existed between the demographic variables and the response type (i.e., *no*, *maybe*, *yes*).

In summary, linear discriminant function can be effectively used to rank the relative magnitude of the association of each variable to the response selected. Klecka (1980) stated that it “helps distinguish the differences between two or more groups of objects with respect to several variables simultaneously” (p. 9). He referred to the process as engaging the researcher into the process of interpreting which groups differ. “One is able to ‘discriminate’ between groups on the basis of some set of characteristics, how well ... do they discriminate, and which characteristics are the most powerful discriminators?” (p. 9). This may aid in determining which variables affect the responses to a given question. In this study, simple discriminant analysis was conducted on each question while considering each of the demographic variables. In an effort to facilitate the creation of tabular summaries, the results of the survey were first entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The data were subsequently imported into MINITAB—a useful application for statistical analysis, and this was the software application used for the subsequent data analysis.

In a preliminary examination, the data collected in this study were summarized in a table of frequencies based upon the raw data through cross-tabulation. The tabular rows represent the demographic categories and the columns represent question responses. Descriptive statistics, such as larger frequencies, larger relative frequencies, zero values, and averages, were inspected for any obvious patterns. A simple table format was used as the basis for a number of contingency-table analyses, discriminant analyses, and ordinal regression analyses. In detail, linear discriminant and logit regression analysis were applied to determine if demographic factors, such as age, gender, professional level, or years of service, had any influence on the responses. The Pearson Chi-square was used as a test of the null hypotheses as related to the

logistic regression model. Hence, if a probability value is less than .90 then the null hypotheses cannot be rejected.

Goodness-of-fit and Modeling

Likewise, the “Goodness-of-fit tests” measures the probability of the model fitting the data adequately. The probability value of .05 or even .1 suggests that the fit is not adequate. To expand, the model was fit using an iterative-reweighed least squares algorithm to obtain maximum likelihood estimates of the parameters as supported by McCullagh and Nelder (1992). A direct approach using demographic variables was used. The criteria used for the ordinal logistic regression was that all slopes equal zero at the .05 level of significance. The direct method using all the independent variables was used not so much to model the responses but to detect which independent variable had any predictive effect and the relative importance in predicting a response to a question. The discriminant analysis was used only to demonstrate the inadequacy of a linear model approach which assumes a normal distribution of the variables. This method of analysis allowed for the following determinations:

1. What effect does years of service have on mentoring preferences?
2. What effect does professional level have on mentoring preferences?
3. What effect does age have on mentoring preferences?
4. What effect does gender have on mentoring preferences?

The results of the survey will be helpful in the creation of an appropriate mentoring program of a design that will benefit the greatest number of employees possible within the manufacturing company that served as the study site for this research.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The focus of the research was on the collection and analysis of data related to employee preferences surrounding mentoring. Key data included employee demographics such as years of service, professional level within the organization, age, and gender. The results provided pivotal information toward the development and administration of a mentoring program for this company, which is one of the largest steel producers in the United States. The survey feedback is expected to be foundational to the development of the mentoring model implemented in this corporation, which provided an effective tool in support of employee career development. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What preferences related to a mentoring-program model, involving both structure and process, are reported by employees within the sales/service and product-technology departments of the study site?
2. Do attributes of a mentoring program that is favored by employees vary with years of service, professional level, age, and gender?

The null hypotheses of this research stated that

1. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with years of service.
2. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with professional level.
3. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with age.
4. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with gender.

The study also seeks to address response rates, descriptive statistics, linear discriminant analysis, logistic-regression, hypothesis testing, and a summary of the results.

Response Rate

In doing so, a 30-question mentoring-preference survey was electronically mailed to employees within the sales/service and product-technology divisions of the study site on January 22, 2003. The survey was distributed to 114 management employees within these divisions through the use of the Web Surveyor software application. A brief background with regard to the mentoring-preference survey and its purpose was also provided within the survey distribution and respondents were asked to return the questionnaire within one week of its receipt. Initially, 37 sales/service and product-technology employees responded to the survey, which equated to a 32% return rate. Since the software application was equipped to distribute reminder notices, this feature was used to solicit 26 additional respondents, increasing the response rate to 54%. As described earlier, the four independent variables are gender, age, professional level, and years of service. Approximately 68% of the respondents were male—outnumbering females by two to one, as illustrated in Table 1. The age of the respondents ranged from 25 through 34 years (25 respondents) to over 61 years of age (1 respondent). The majority (70%) had less than ten years of corporate service. Nearly ten percent had more than 25 years of service within this company. The responses were returned to an online Web survey account for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

A review of the data collected was performed and approximately 70% of the respondents had less than ten years of service at the study site, and 11% had between 11 and 15 years of service, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the sample

Variable	Count	%
Years of corporate service (<i>N</i> = 63)		
1–5	32	50.79
6–10	13	20.63
11–15	7	11.11
16–20	1	1.59
21–25	4	6.35
26+	6	9.52
Professional level (<i>N</i> = 63)		
Manager	5	7.94
Account manager	5	7.94
Account representative	21	33.33
Product-technology engineer	25	39.68
Other	7	11.11
Age-Group (<i>N</i> = 62)		
Under 25	2	3.23
25–34	25	40.32
35–44	15	24.19
45–54	12	19.35
55–64	7	11.29
65+	1	1.61
Gender (<i>N</i> = 62)		
Male	42	67.74
Female	20	32.26

The remaining respondents had accumulated greater than 20 years of service. Impressively, analysis of the data also indicated that 94% of the employees support mentoring while 6% are opposed to the idea, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary statistics by survey question

Focus of mentoring question	Survey response			N	Missing value
	No	Maybe	Yes		
Overall concept	–	4 (6.35%)	59 (93.65%)	63	–
Willingness to act as mentor	3 (4.76%)	10 (15.87%)	50 (79.37%)	63	–
Willingness to be mentored	17 (28.33%)	17 (28.33%)	26 (43.33%)	60	3
Web-site tool	6 (9.52%)	16 (25.40%)	41 (65.08%)	63	–
Preference for initial orientation meeting	9 (14.29%)	16 (25.40%)	38 (60.32%)	63	–
Use of external consultants	31 (49.21%)	26 (41.27%)	6 (9.52%)	63	–
1-year program duration	2 (3.17%)	5 (7.94%)	56 (88.89%)	63	–
Increased workload	37 (58.73%)	9 (14.29%)	17 (26.98%)	63	–
Integrated with corporate orientation	–	2 (3.17%)	60 (96.83%)	62	1
Develop network contacts	8 (12.90%)	13 (20.97%)	41 (66.13%)	62	1
Experienced perspective	2 (3.23%)	1 (1.61%)	59 (95.16%)	62	1
Visibility	27 (44.26%)	9 (14.75%)	25 (40.98%)	61	2
Develop new skills	11 (17.46%)	14 (22.22%)	38 (60.32%)	63	–
Professional adjustment	–	3 (4.76%)	60 (95.24%)	63	–
Technical skills	20 (32.26%)	9 (14.52%)	33 (53.23%)	62	1
Increased efficiency	5 (7.94%)	7 (11.11%)	51 (80.95%)	63	–
Interpersonal skills	14 (22.58%)	13 (20.97%)	35 (56.45%)	62	1
Include in goal worksheet	15 (23.81%)	23 (36.51%)	25 (39.68%)	63	–
Periodic evaluations	15 (24.19%)	22 (35.48%)	25 (40.32%)	62	1
Higher professional level of mentor	8 (13.11%)	52 (85.25%)	1 (1.64%)	61	2
Committee assignment of partners	7 (11.11%)	34 (53.97%)	22 (34.92%)	63	–
Gender preference	8 (13.11%)	1 (1.64%)	52 (85.25%)	61	2

Additionally, most respondents were willing to act as mentors and some would consider being mentored. To elaborate, approximately 80% of all employees, regardless of their professional level, are willing to act as a mentor. Employees with less than ten years of tenure are the least interested in acting as a mentor. In fact, only 43% showed any interest in acting as a mentor and the others were unsure. Also, 43 of the 63 respondents who showed the greatest interest in being mentored had accumulated less than ten years of service at the study site. The majority of those who stated an interest in being mentored (77%) had less than five years of corporate service, as illustrated in Table 3 ($\chi^2 = 7.412$, $DF = 10$ and $\chi^2 = 7.412$, $DF = 10$) noting a $p = .75$ and $p = .1$ respectively. This indicated that the independent variables had no effect as to the way the answers to the mentoring preference questions were grouped.

Table 3. Summary statistics by years of corporate service and desire to act as a mentor and be mentored

Focus	Years of service	Survey response			Total
		No	Maybe	Yes	
Act as mentor ($N = 62$)	1–5	1 (1.59%)	7 (11.11%)	24 (38.10%)	32 (50.79%)
	6–10	2 (3.17%)	1 (1.59%)	10 (15.87%)	13 (20.63%)
	11–15	–	–	7 (11.11%)	7 (11.11%)
	16–20	–	–	1 (1.59%)	1 (1.59%)
	21–25	–	1 (1.59%)	3 (4.76%)	4 (6.35%)
	26+	–	1 (1.59%)	5 (7.94%)	6 (9.52%)
	Total		3 (4.76%)	10 (15.87%)	50 (79.37%)
Be mentored ($N = 59$)	1–5	5 (8.33%)	5 (8.33%)	20 (33.33%)	30 (50.00%)
	6–10	5 (8.33%)	6 (10.00%)	2 (3.33%)	13 (21.67%)
	11–15	2 (3.33%)	2 (3.33%)	2 (3.33%)	6 (10.00%)
	16–20	–	1 (1.67%)	–	1 (1.67%)
	21–25	2 (3.33%)	1 (1.67%)	1 (1.67%)	4 (6.67%)
	26+	2 (5.00%)	2 (3.33%)	1 (1.67%)	6 (10.00%)
	Total		17 (28.33%)	17 (28.33%)	26 (43.33%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 7.412$, $DF = 10$, $P = .75$; $\chi^2 = 16.717$, $DF = 10$, $P = .1$.

Process-Professional Level

With regard to professional hierarchy within the mentoring partnership, 85% of the respondents prefer a mentor at least one level above the mentee while 13% prefer a mentor at the same level; one individual expressed an interest in having a mentor with a lower grade level. One employee preferred a mentor one level above the mentee and elaborated by stating, "A mentor should be someone who is not in competition with his or her mentee." Thirty-three percent of those between the ages of 45 and 54 were most interested in having a mentor at the same level. Most managers, account managers, and product-technology engineers supported the model of a mentor one level above the mentee.

With regard to professional level, account representatives and product-technology engineers showed the most interest in acting as a mentor while representing nearly 50% of the interest groups across all levels. Noteworthy was the finding that over 80% of all age-groups within this sample are willing to act as a mentor, 16% are somewhat interested, while 4% of those between 25 and 34 years of age have no interest in serving as a mentor. As illustrated in Table 4, nearly 80% of those polled, regardless of professional level, supported the idea of serving as a mentor. Managers and account managers were the most certain about having a desire to fill such a role, and over three quarters of the product-technology engineers would seriously consider serving as a mentor. Overall, those individuals over 35 years of age were most willing to act as a mentor, as shown in Figure 1. Even so, a limited number of the younger employees (i.e., under 35 years of age) would also consider acting as a mentor (see Table 5). With regard to gender ($p = .189$), 68% of the respondents were male and 32 % were female. Both favored the a

Table 4. Summary statistics by professional level and desire to be mentored or act as a mentor

Focus	Professional level	Survey response			Total
		No	Maybe	Yes	
Act as mentor (N = 63)	Manager	–	–	5 (7.94%)	5 (7.94%)
	Account manager	–	–	5 (7.94%)	5 (7.94%)
	Account representative	–	4 (6.35%)	17 (26.98%)	21 (33.33%)
	Product-technology engineer	2 (8.17%)	6 (9.52%)	17 (26.98%)	25 (39.68%)
	Other	1 (1.59%)	–	6 (9.52%)	7 (11.11%)
	Total	3 (4.76%)	10 (15.87%)	50 (79.37%)	63 (100%)
Be mentored (N = 60)	Manager	2 (3.33%)	3 (5.00%)	–	5 (8.33%)
	Account manager	–	2 (3.33%)	3 (5.00%)	5 (8.33%)
	Account representative	7 (11.67%)	3 (13.33%)	10 (16.67%)	20 (33.33%)
	Product-technology engineer	4 (6.67%)	8 (13.33%)	11 (18.33%)	23 (38.33%)
	Other	4 (6.67%)	1 (1.67%)	2 (3.33%)	7 (11.67%)
	Total	16 (27.12%)	17 (28.33%)	26 (43.33%)	60 (100%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 8.218$, $DF = 8$; $\chi^2 = 12.234$, $DF = 8$.

Since the chi-square is 13.4, professional level does not effect the responses to 'Act as Mentor' nor to 'Be Mentor' at the 10% level of significance.

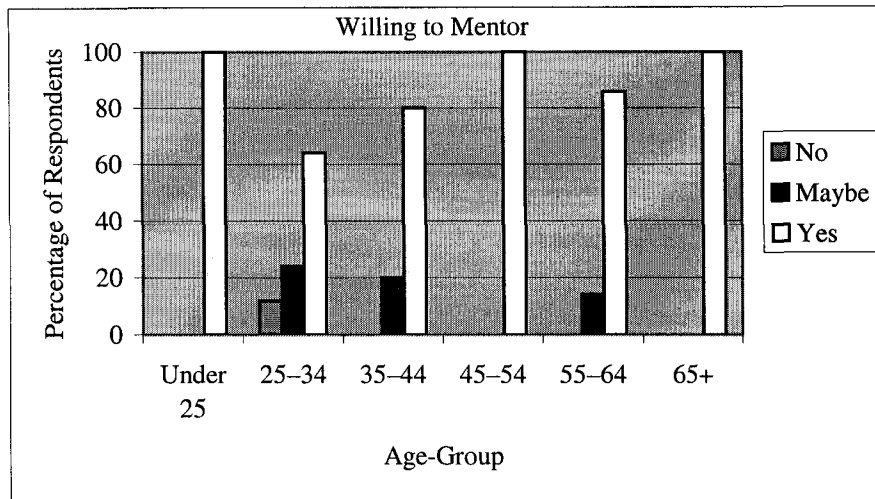


Figure 1. Study-survey respondents willing to act as mentors and categorized by age-group

Table 5. Summary statistics by age-group and desire to act as a mentor and be mentored

Focus	Age-Group	Survey response			Total
		No	Maybe	Yes	
Act as mentor (N = 62)	Under 25	–	–	2 (3.23%)	2 (3.23%)
	25–34	3 (4.84%)	6 (9.68%)	16 (25.81%)	25 (40.32%)
	35–44	–	3 (4.84%)	12 (19.35%)	15 (24.19%)
	45–54	–	–	12 (19.35%)	12 (19.35%)
	55–64	–	1 (1.61%)	6 (9.68%)	7 (11.29%)
	65+	–	–	1 (1.61%)	1 (1.61%)
	Total		3 (4.84%)	10 (16.13%)	49 (79.03%)
Be mentored (N = 59)	Under 25	–	–	2 (3.39%)	2 (3.39%)
	25–34	7 (11.86%)	6 (10.17%)	11 (18.64%)	24 (40.68%)
	35–44	4 (6.78%)	4 (6.78%)	6 (10.17%)	14 (23.73%)
	45–54	3 (5.08%)	3 (5.08%)	6 (10.17%)	12 (20.34%)
	55–64	2 (3.39%)	3 (5.08%)	1 (1.69%)	6 (10.17%)
	65+	–	1 (1.69%)	–	1 (1.69%)
	Total		16 (27.12%)	17 (28.81%)	26 (44.07%)

Note. The response to 'Act as Mentor' or 'Be Mentored' is not effected by the age group at the 10% level of significance.

concept of mentoring and stated a willingness to act as a mentor. However, the data indicated in Table 6 evidence a greater interest in the mentor role among the females of the convenience sample than the males, ($p=.009$). Contrary to that, men were more interested in being mentored than were the women. In fact, over 50% of the men expressed a definite interest in being the mentee while only 30% of the women poled favored the role of mentee.

Table 6. Summary statistics by gender and desire to act as a mentor and be mentored

Focus	Gender	Survey response			Total
		No	Maybe	Yes	
Act as mentor ($N = 62$)	Male	3 (4.84%)	9 (14.52%)	30 (48.39%)	42 (67.74%)
	Female	–	1 (1.61%)	19 (30.65%)	20 (32.26%)
	Total	3 (4.84%)	10 (16.13%)	49 (79.03%)	62 (100%)
Be mentored ($N = 59$)	Male	6 (10.17%)	14 (23.73%)	20 (33.90%)	40 (67.80%)
	Female	10 (16.95%)	3 (5.08%)	6 (10.17%)	19 (32.20%)
	Total	16 (27.12%)	17 (28.81%)	26 (44.07%)	59 (100%)

Note. There is a gender difference at the 5% level of significance for both 'Act as Mentor' and 'Be Mentored', females prefer to act as mentors.

Years of Service, Age, and Structure

In the review of the mentoring-preference survey results by years of service, it was evident that the participating employees of the study site with less than 20 years of service would give consideration to being mentored. Of those interested, over 53% favor the assignment of partners via a committee, 36% favor assignment of a mentor through their supervisor, and 11% prefer the self-selection process. The youngest employees prefer assignment by either a committee or their supervisor and stated no interest in the self-selection process. It is noteworthy that the male respondents were more interested than the females in assignments via a

committee—79% versus 21%, respectively. Additionally, 80%, of the account managers support the idea of the committee partnership-assignment process, as illustrated in Figure 2.

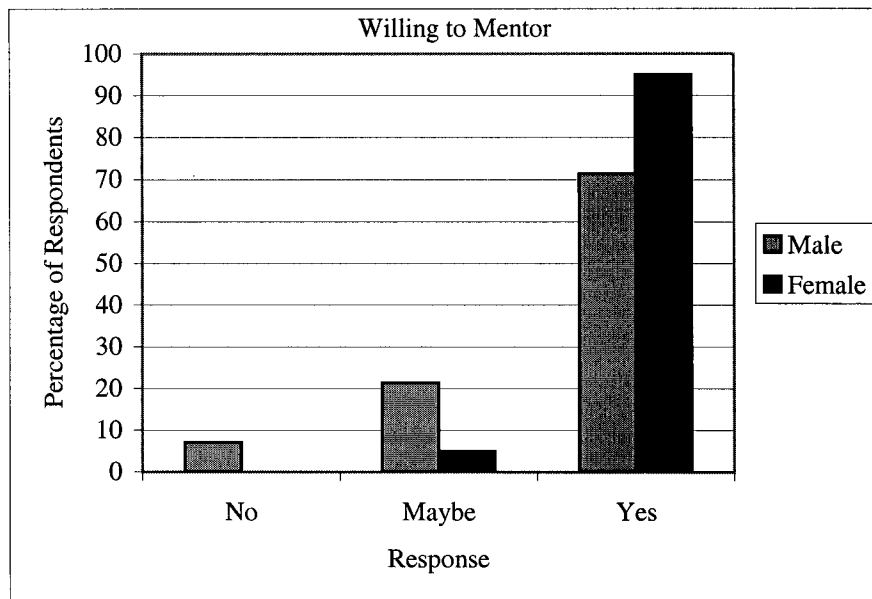


Figure 2. Study-survey respondents willing to act as mentors and categorized by gender

With regard to the proximity of the mentoring sessions, the majority (44 of the 63 respondents) stated no preference. In summary, 36% of the sample prefer to be mentored within the same division, but within a different work group, followed by 15% who prefer to be mentored within the same division and same work group, while 3% requested mentorship within a different division. Interestingly, 85% of those with under ten years of service prefer to be mentored within the same division but different work group. Of primary importance was the finding that all employees, regardless of their demographic characteristics, agreed that mentoring should be used for new-hire orientation, to help employees adjust to new professional roles, and to increase job efficiency. One staff member stated that mentoring “will help the new hire adjust; improve self-esteem; provide an outlet for advice; provide a higher-level contact; and ultimately, will reduce employee turnover for [study site named].” The survey scores indicated that strong

consideration should be given to using mentoring as a career-development tool and for the development of new skills. With regard to administration of the mentoring program, the data showed that participating employees within all age-groups supported the use of question-and-answer sessions, as well as the availability of a mentoring Web site, as ways of introducing the mentoring program. In fact, 61% of the sample favor the question-and-answer session, 24% are unsure, and 15% oppose the idea of yet another meeting. The responses over 80% of the account representatives and product-technology engineers who were within the 35 to 44 and 55 to 64 age-groups were found to be the most supportive of the question-and-answer forum.

Evaluations

Alternative means of communication, such as the use of evaluations, are favored by 40% of the study sample while 36% are uncertain and 24% objected to the concept. In fact, one employee supported the idea of “a survey sent to employees twice a year to evaluate mentoring relationships.” Another employee agreed to such a measure seeing it as a way to add “a little more structure in the program.” Similarly, others reflected uncertainty with regard to utilizing goal worksheets for “score carding” the mentoring initiative. The youngest group—those under 25 years of age—are the most certain about the use of goal worksheets as a means of maintaining focus. The largest opposition toward the addition of mentoring objectives to yearly goal worksheets came from employees over 55 years of age.

Regardless of the avenue of communication or evaluation, participating employees at all levels agree that the focus of mentoring should be on gaining the perspective of others. In fact, over 95% of all the employees, regardless of their demographics, support the idea while 2% are unsure and 3% oppose this focus. Noteworthy is that all managers and account managers agree with the idea of incorporating goal documentation with mentoring. Most of the highest-level

employees (over 80%) are also in favor of using mentoring to gain supportive skills ($p = .061$). Conversely, only 40% of the account representatives and product-technology engineers supported the idea. Similarly, 61 of the 63 respondents supported the idea of using mentoring to compliment orientation initiatives. In total, 97% agree and 3% are unsure. In fact, 50% of those with less than five years of service support a mentoring program focused on orientation. Similarly, 95% of the employees surveyed support the idea of using mentoring partnerships to help new hires adjust to the workforce while 5% are unsure.

Program Focus

Related to the employee adjustment period, 66% of the study respondents favor using mentoring as a way to develop a network of contacts while 21% are unsure and 13% oppose the notion. Those with less than ten years of service (70%) are most interested in using mentoring as a networking opportunity, and most (87%) are either account representatives or product-technology engineers. Interestingly, females of the sample favor networking more than the males, scoring 74% versus 64%, respectively. Those opposing the integration of mentoring with networking were between the ages of 45 and 54. Similarly, the focus of career development in mentoring received mixed results across all demographic groups. In fact, 62% of the sample are in favor of such a focus while 25% are unsure and 13% are opposed to the idea. One employee stated, "I think the program should not be used for training or skill development. The mentor should help the mentee with questions about their career development, questions or issues with coworkers or manager, and general corporate information." Likewise, approximately three quarters of those who support the career-development focus had less than ten years of service accumulated at the study site. More specifically, these employees, regardless of their demographics, had mixed feelings toward the idea of using mentoring as a tool to gain visibility;

41% agree with this use of the mentoring partnership, 15% are unsure, and 44% oppose the idea. In fact, employees with less than 15 years of experience at the study site (80%) expressed the most interest in gaining visibility through the use of mentoring and most were under 44 years of age. Conversely, 83% of the oldest employees—those between the ages of 55 and 64—oppose the idea of using mentoring for this purpose.

Program Structure and Processes

With regard to mentoring objectives, 81% of the sample agree that mentoring should be used to increase employee efficiency, 11% are unsure, and 8% disagree. The product-technology engineers felt the strongest toward this objective; 85% were in favor and most (80%) were under the age of 44. Similarly, 59% of the respondents support the idea of using the mentoring process to gain new skills while 23% are uncertain and 18% oppose the idea. Noteworthy is that the youngest group (i.e., under 25 years of age) unanimously support the mentoring focus of the development of new skills. Over 80% of the respondents with less than 15 years of service within the company are interested in the development of new skills. More specifically, the participating employees indicate mixed feelings with regard to utilizing mentoring for the development of technical skills; 53% agree, 15% are unsure, and 32% disagree with this use of such a program. In fact, 85% of those opposing the idea are account representatives and product-technology engineers with less than 15 years of company service. Approximately 50% of the study respondents were 35 to 54 years of age and opposed to the idea of using mentoring to gain technical skills. Interestingly, the managers and account managers unanimously support the idea. Both of these sample groups include over 30% who are undecided on this issue. In total, 30% of the account representatives and 28% of the

product-technology engineers are opposed to the idea of using mentoring to drive the development of technical skills. On the other hand, study participants with less than 15 years of service are the largest supporters within the convenience sample in terms of utilizing mentoring to facilitate the enhancement of technical skills.

Duration of Mentoring

With regard to the administration of a mentoring program, most of the participating employees, regardless of their demographics, agree that the duration of a mentoring partnership should be at least one year, should be managed by a committee, and support the idea of a mentor at least one level above the mentee. In fact, 89% of the respondents favor the idea of mentoring partnerships remaining active for at least one year, 8% are uncertain, and 3% are opposed to that duration. The participating managers and account managers unanimously agree to the one-year duration and 85% of the account representatives and product-technology engineers concur. Most employees at all levels (85%) expressed no gender preference with regard to their mentors; however, they did note a preference to be mentored from within a division other than their own. In total, 13% stated a preference for a male mentor while one respondent expressed preferring a female partner. These employees are also opposed to the use of external consultant mentors and are also against the idea of mentoring focused on gaining visibility. In particular, 50% of the participating employees at all levels oppose the use of consultants while 41% are unsure and only 9% support the idea. Those with less than ten years of corporate service and between 25 and 34 years of age voiced the strongest opposition toward the use of external mentoring consultants. Most were account managers and product-technology engineers.

Workload and Mentoring Learning Resources

Most of the responding employees (59%), regardless of tenure, do not view mentoring as a workload issue; 14% are undecided and 27% disagree. Over one third of those who view mentoring as a workload problem had less than ten years of service accumulated with the study site and 40% of those were between the ages of 45 and 64. Interestingly, views pertaining to workload differed according to gender ($p = .051$). Participants believing mentoring would increase their workload consisted of 82% males and 18% females. One respondent stated, "For this kind of program to work, it requires the daily/weekly discipline and accountability of both the mentor and the mentee. It can't be something that starts out well and then 'fizzles' a month later." The findings indicate that 59% of the product-technology engineers and approximately 10% of the account managers, account representatives, and managers have workload concerns with regard to mentoring.

With regard to mentoring tools, over one half of the study respondents expressed they would appreciate having books and multimedia available as learning resources; however, seminars gained the highest support. In fact, 57% of the sample favor the use of mentoring-related seminars as a learning tool; 70% of those in favor of this resource are women. Others suggested that consideration should be given to creating a Web site as a mentoring administration tool. Overall, 65% of the participating employees favor a mentoring Web site while 25% may consider the tool and 10% oppose a Web site in favor of another venue as a source of mentoring information. One employee agreed to the Internet resource by stating, "Tools are necessary to accomplish the goals." The largest supporters of a mentoring Web site are account representatives (27%) and product-technology engineers (40%) at the study site. Interestingly, 80% of those who favor the idea were between 35 and 54 years of age.

Overall, the respondents have varying viewpoints with regard to adding mentoring objectives to employee goal worksheets. In fact, 40% are in favor of instituting such a practice; 36% are unsure and 24% are opposed to the idea. The account managers express the most uncertainty about the idea; 80% are unsure. Similarly, some account representatives and product-technology engineers also expressed hesitation with regard to posting mentoring objectives on goal worksheets. However, the youngest group (i.e., under 25 years of age) responded with no opposition to the use of such mentoring measurements. The employees also favor the assignment of partners by a committee and prefer a mentor one level above their own position. Interestingly, those who showed an interest in mentoring prefer to be mentored within a different division than their own.

The demographics of the study respondents indicate that over 90% of the staff favor the idea of mentoring. Most females support involvement in either role of a mentoring partnership while some males demonstrate no interest in being mentored (see Figure 3). Both genders exhibit comparable desires with regard to mentoring. Approximately one third favor being mentored, one third may consider being mentored, and one third has no interest. Considering years of service, Figure 4 clearly indicates that those employees with less than ten years of service are the least interested in acting as mentors. Noteworthy is the finding that, of the total number of participants in this study, over 80% of all age-groups collectively are willing to act as mentor.

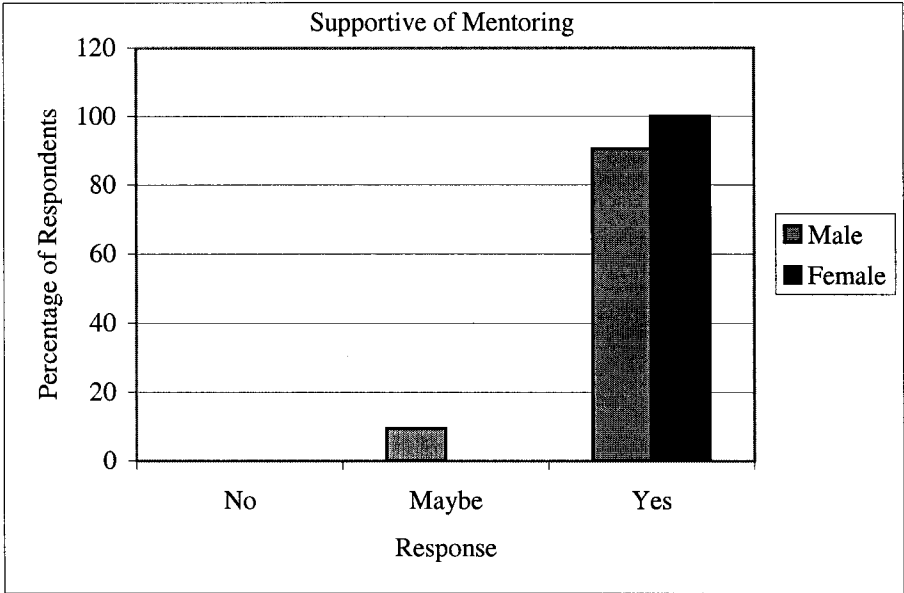


Figure 3. Study-survey respondents supportive of the mentoring concept

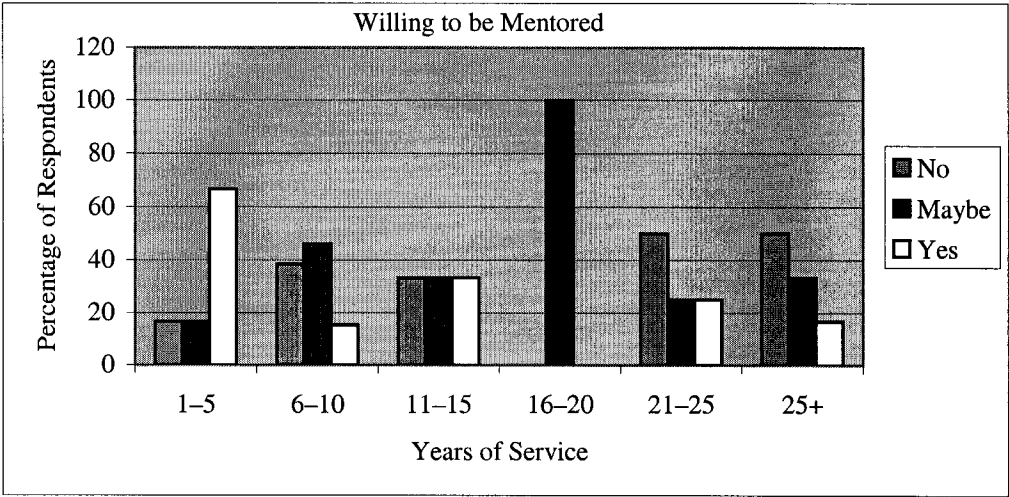


Figure 4. Study-survey respondents willing to be mentored as categorized by years of corporate service

The employees with less than five years of service indicated the most interest in being mentored. Figure 5 illustrates that all the managers, account managers, and the majority of the account representatives and product-technology engineers are more than willing to share their knowledge with colleagues. In other words, there are some employees at each level that are willing to mentor. More specifically, those under 25 years of age are unanimously interested in being mentored, while employees between the ages of 45 and 65 are most willing to act as a mentor (see Figure 6). Overall, nearly two thirds of the employee base at the manufacturing company serving as the study site for this research are either interested in, or would consider, being mentored, while one third were not interested, but willing, to share their knowledge with others. More specifically, over half of the account managers, account representatives, and product-technology engineers expressed a definite interest in being mentored.

Tests of Hypotheses

After examining the data through the use of preliminary descriptive statistics to determine the importance of variables to specific responses, discriminant analysis was conducted. This method allowed the construction of a summary table, which displayed a measure of how well the independent variables predicted each type of response (i.e., *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*). It also squared distances between the centroids of the predictor variables of each type of response to measure how similar the demographics of the independent variables were to one another. Short distances indicated poor or mediocre discrimination, which could imply that the demographic variables

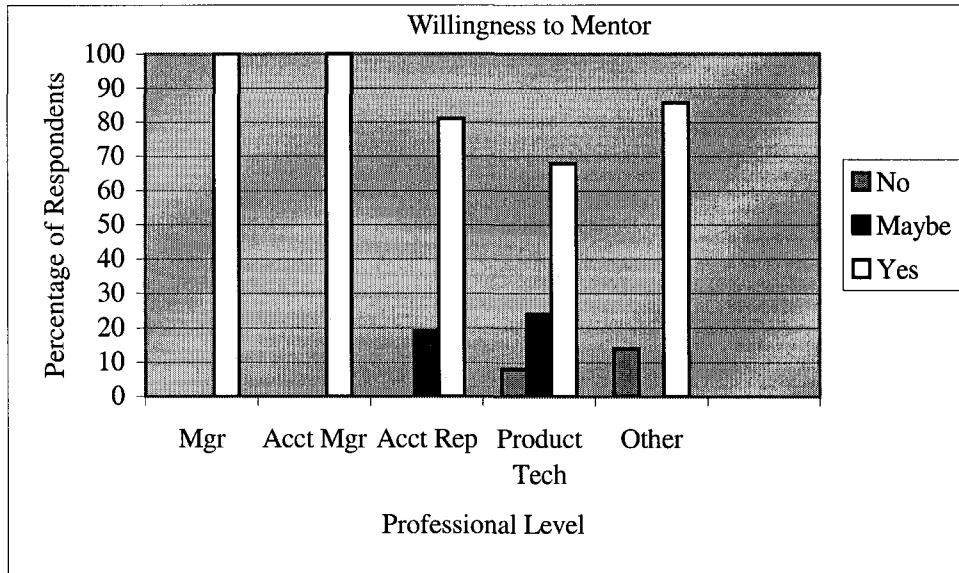


Figure 5. Study-survey respondents willing to act as mentors and categorized by professional level within the organization

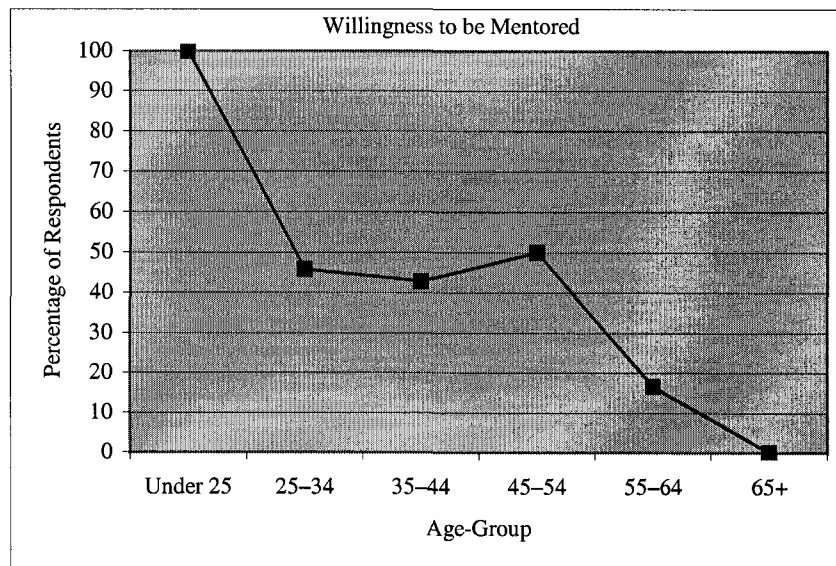


Figure 6. Study-survey respondents willing to be mentored as categorized by age-group

had very little association with the responses. In cases where there were less than five responses, the results were questionable, just as they were with the cross-tabulation and corresponding chi-square tests. This statistical method also provides a tabulation of the count for each type of response. Therefore, when 70% or more of the responses matched, little effect of the demographics on the responses was the indication. More specifically, if 90% of the responses matched, a high level of confidence was generated in finding that little or no association existed between the demographic variables and the response type (i.e., *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*). Consequently, linear discriminant function was used to rank the magnitude of association between each demographic variable and the response option selected.

As noted with the hypotheses, it was predicted that there would be no statistically significant attributes that would vary with level or gender. However the linear discriminant analysis of the data collected in this study clearly indicated that professional level and gender affected the responses to survey items pertaining to the attributes of a mentoring program. This held true for questions related to interest in mentoring, program administration, documentation, tools, mentoring-program focus, and the objective[s] of a specific mentoring program. The survey question relating to the willingness to act as a mentor produced results that highlighted the magnitude of the coefficients of gender and professional level as associated with each response option (see Table 7). Similarly, the question that asked the respondents if they support mentoring and if they would like to be mentored (see Table 7) confirmed that these coefficients have the largest association with the response options. It is noteworthy that the same results were found when linear discriminant analysis was computed for the remaining mentoring-preference survey questions. As mentioned earlier, because over 80% of the respondents favor involvement

Table 7. Coefficient of linear discriminant function

Focus	Predictors	Survey responses		
		No	Maybe	Yes
Act as mentor ($N = 62$) ^a	Constant	-10.565	-9.122	-10.446
	Years	0.725	0.479	0.342
	Level	3.743	2.872	2.357
	Age	0.376	1.133	1.681
	Gender	2.949	3.637	5.099
Support of mentoring concept ($N = 62$) ^b	Constant		-10.682	-10.131
	Years		0.780	0.400
	Level		3.465	2.629
	Age		0.967	1.448
	Gender		2.894	4.624
Be mentored ($N = 59$) ^c	Constant	-13.941	-9.852	-9.573
	Years	1.601	0.772	0.555
	Level	2.801	2.393	2.652
	Age	0.112	1.363	1.031
	Gender	7.963	4.826	5.099

^aPortion correct 0.613.

^bPortion correct 0.677.

^cPortion correct 0.593.

as a mentor; a program duration of at least one year; and a mentoring program related to employee orientation, adjustment to the workplace, and increasing job efficiency, questions related to these issues were not reviewed using linear discriminant analysis. Noteworthy, the independent variables used to predict the outcome of the mentoring preference questions related to the willingness to act as a mentor, support the mentoring concept, and the desire to be mentored was not the best predictors for grouping of the responses as noted by the .613, .677 and .593 accuracy rate respectively.

Ordinal logistic-regression analysis was also used in this study to summarize the relationship between a response variable and the four demographic variables (i.e., years of service, professional level, age, and gender). Because the results were noted in terms of probabilities and/or the equivalent expression using odd ratios, fewer assumptions were made surrounding the variables. If the probability value of a variable coefficient was greater than 0.1, it was rejected as having an association with the response. In fact, questions relating to mentoring attitudes, administration, focus, and documentation were rejected because their probability value was greater than 0.1. Additionally, questions related to the mentoring focus of career development, networking, new skill development, and the importance of gaining supportive skills had probability values of 0.478, 0.297, 0.364, and 0.210, respectively, and were thus rejected as demonstrating an association with the demographic variables. Questions relating to the support of a mentoring Web site, program duration, goal worksheets, and the use of evaluations generated probability values of 0.507, 0.933, 0.216, and 0.619, respectively. The probability value was also greater than 0.1 for the questions related to proximity of mentoring, the professional level of the mentor, job assignments, gender preference, gaining the perspectives of others, and using mentoring to gain visibility, as indicated by probability values of 0.348, 0.169, 0.124, 0.225, 0.281, and 0.251, respectively. In total, the first 25 logistic regressions were examined and any responses that failed to pass the test for all slopes at zero were eliminated from further analysis because computation could only include responses not associated with the four demographic variables. Specifically, the survey questions that probed support of mentoring for purposes of orientation and adjustment to the workplace were not evaluated because they

failed to pass the test for all slopes at zero. In other words, 80% of most responses matched in terms of response option (i.e., *yes*, *maybe*, or *no*).

In an effort to answer the research question that asked what preferences related to a mentoring model, involving both structure and process the survey item that queried interest in being a mentor, professional level, age, and gender were reviewed because the probability values were less than the 0.1 criteria. In fact, a probability value of .007 and .002 were calculated, which indicated that some of the predictors affected the responses, as shown in Table 8. The results show that a tendency to answer *yes* decreases as the professional level increases, as indicated by the probability value of .042, the positive coefficient of 0.9281 correlated to professional level, and an odds ratio greater than 1.00. However, the highest corporate grade level is *one* in this study and decreases to *six*, indicating that higher management levels present higher probability of a willingness to act as mentors. Likewise, given the probability value of .097, a negative coefficient of age and an odds ratio less than 1.00 indicates an increase with age in the willingness to be a mentor. The relatively large negative coefficient of gender with an odds ratio of only .13 and a probability value of .074 implies that females have a much greater desire to mentor than do the males. Using values from a logistic-regression table, the odds of a female being willing to act as a mentor (40 to 1) were calculated to be approximately eight times the odds of males, which was found to be five to one. Consequently, the data indicate that females are more likely to embrace the idea of acting as mentors.

Table 8. Ordinal logistic regression

Focus	Predictors	Coefficient	SE coefficient	Z	P	Odds Ratio
Act as a Mentor (N = 62)*	Constant 1	-2.3370	2.0670	-1.130	0.2580	
	Constant 2	-0.3940	1.9890	-0.200	0.8430	
	Years	0.1855	0.2992	0.620	0.5350	1.20
	Level	0.9281	0.4571	2.030	0.0420	2.53
	Age	-0.7652	0.4617	-1.660	0.0970	0.47
	Gender	-2.0440	1.1450	-1.790	0.0740	0.13
Be mentored (N = 59)**	Constant 1	-3.8100	1.3090	-2.91	0.004	
	Constant 2	-2.2530	1.2350	-1.82	0.068	
	Years	0.6593	0.2244	2.94	0.003	1.93
	Level	0.0708	0.2518	0.28	0.078	1.07
	Age	-0.4048	0.3092	-1.31	0.190	0.67
	Gender	1.6143	0.6006	2.69	0.007	5.02

* $p = .007$ for all slopes equaling zero. ** $p = .002$ for all slopes equaling zero.

The results present a measure of contrast to the responses relating to a willingness to be mentored. The results that considered years of service had a “years” positive coefficient, an odds ratio of close to 2.00, and a probability value of .779, which indicated low odds of any interest in being mentored. Similar results were found with the analysis of gender, which generated a coefficient of 1.61, a probability value of .007 and an odds ratio of 5.02 (see Table 8). The odds of a male favoring to be mentored are one to one—five times the one to five odds of a female. The findings support these statistics because the most recently hired male employees demonstrated the highest interest in being mentored. In sum, the table illustrates that the only demographic variables effecting the 'act as mentor' responses are level, age, and gender at the 10% level. For the 'be mentored' question age level, gender, and years of professional service variables are significant at the 10 % level. From these findings, the null hypotheses for the research were addressed. They were stated in the following manner:

1. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with years of service.
2. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with professional level.
3. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with age.
4. There are no statistically significant mentoring attributes favored by employees that vary with gender.

Hypothesis One

The study results indicate null hypotheses that stated there are no statistical mentoring attributes favored by employees that will vary with years of service was rejected. The study findings indicate that employees with less than ten years of company service were the most interested in being mentored and that the more senior members were the most interested in acting as mentors. Consequently, tenure within the company does have an impact on the mentoring preferences of the employee base.

Hypothesis Two

The study results indicate null hypotheses that stated there are no statistical mentoring attributes favored by employees that will vary with professional level was rejected. An analysis of the data reveals that professional level does have an effect on the mentoring preference of the employees at the study site. In fact, the highest level, such as managers and account representatives, were the least interested in being mentored, but were more than willing to share their knowledge in the role of mentor.

Hypothesis Three

The study results indicate null hypotheses that stated there are no statistical mentoring attributes favored by employees that will vary with age was rejected. Data analysis reveals that age does have an effect on the mentoring preferences of employees at the study site. The most conducive evidence indicates that the youngest employees at the study site are most interested in using mentoring as an opportunity to network and are in favor of adding mentoring objectives to yearly goal worksheets, while the oldest employees are opposed to these ideas. In fact, the youngest employees favor a mentor one professional level above them, and senior employees stated a preference toward a mentor at their same level. The cross-tabulated data and the logistic-regression analyses indicated that the youngest employees were the most enthusiastic toward being mentored, while the older and more senior staff members emphasized a willingness to share their knowledge.

Hypothesis Four

The study results indicate null hypotheses that stated there are no statistical mentoring attributes favored by employees that will vary with gender was rejected. Overall the males exhibit a greater interest in being mentored, while females are more willing to act as mentors. However, those females interested in being mentored preferred partnership assignments via their supervisors as opposed to committee assignments. As a whole, women favor mentoring more than men and view it as less of a workload issue. Not surprisingly, men are more interested in gaining technical skills than women. Also, women value the use of seminars over that of the male counterparts as noted by the related probability value of .189. In total nearly 70% of the

female respondents in this study support the idea of utilizing seminars as a forum for promotion of learning in lieu of books or multimedia alternatives.

Summary

This chapter discussed the response rate, provided descriptive statistics, result of linear discriminant analysis, logistic regression analysis and provided the research hypothesis testing. All in all, a 55 percent response rate was received. The descriptive statistics pointed out that over 94 percent of the employees at the study site support the concept of mentoring and those with less than ten years of service are more interested in being mentored. Of those interested most (77 percent) had less than five years of work experience. Of the interested, 85 percent wanted a mentor at least one level higher. In fact, managers and account managers expressed the most interest in being mentors while 75 percent of the product technology engineers would consider the role. Interestingly, women were more interested in the role of mentor than the men. With regard to the proximity of mentoring sessions 85 percent wanted to be mentored within the same division but different workgroup. With regard focus of mentoring, 75 percent of the youngest employees' support mentoring for career development while mixed feedback was received with regard to using mentoring to gain visibility and making career contacts. Additionally, uncertainty was received with regard to the use of evaluations, only 40 percent were in favor of the idea. Similar feedback was gathered with regard to adding mentoring objectives to goal worksheets. Hence, account managers were the most uncertain about the concept. Again, only 40 percent supported adding mentoring initiatives to their performance objectives.

Likewise, the results derived from the discriminant analysis and the ordinal logistic-regression proved that demographic variables do affect employee-mentoring preferences, especially those associated with an interest in being mentored or acting as the mentor. Specifically, the cross-tabulated data and the logistic regression analyses indicated that the youngest employees were the most enthusiastic toward being mentored, while the older and more senior staff members emphasized a willingness to share their knowledge. Also, data analysis reveals that gender does have a statistically significant effect on mentoring preferences of the employees at the study site. Overall, the males exhibit greater interest in being mentored while the females are more willing to act as mentors. Most importantly, the results of the hypothesis testing indicate that the null hypotheses can be rejected. Hence years of company service, professional level, age, and gender all affect employee preferences with regard to interest in corporate mentoring. The results will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One 30-question survey was sent to 114 employees of the manufacturing company serving as the study site for this research. The questionnaire included one group of 12 questions that were directly related to attitudes toward mentoring. The surveys were gathered between January 22 and January 30, 2003. Of this sample, 54% of the employees responded. Data were collected related to employee attitudes toward workplace mentoring and subsequent analyses attempted to determine employee preferences surrounding the structure and processes implemented in the creation of a mentoring-program model. Respondents were employed within the sales/service and product-technology departments of the study site. This research also sought to determine if the preferences conveyed vary by years of service, professional level, age, and/or gender. Respondents were asked a series of questions that related to specific mentoring-program attributes and were provided with a brief statement that explained the purpose of the study and defined several terms used throughout the survey. They were also informed that their responses would be used to assist management with decisions necessary toward mentoring-program implementation.

In detail, the study findings indicated that employees with less than ten years of company service were the most interested in being mentored and that the more senior members were the most interested in acting as mentors. Additionally, the highest level, such as managers and account managers, were the least interested in being mentored, but were more than willing to share their knowledge within the role of mentor. Also, the most conclusive evidence indicates that the youngest employees at the study site are the most interested in using mentoring as an opportunity to network and are in favor of adding mentoring objectives to yearly goal

worksheets, while the oldest employees are opposed to these ideas. In fact, the youngest employees favor a mentor one professional level above them, and senior employees stated a preference toward a mentor at the same level. The cross-tabulated data and logistic-regression analyses indicate that the youngest male employees were the most enthusiastic toward being mentored, while the older and more senior female staff member emphasized a willingness to share knowledge. Also, the females interested in mentoring stated a preference toward partnership assignments via their supervisor as opposed to committee assignments. As a whole, women favor mentoring more than men and view it as less of a workload issue. Women also favored the use of seminars as forum for promotion of learning in lieu of books or multimedia.

Noteworthy, the findings of this study indicate that the employees at the study site are most interested in a formal, yearlong peer-mentoring program correlated to the existing corporate-orientation initiatives. Specifically, the study participants expressed positive support for a structured application process including kick-off meetings, reference material, regularly scheduled evaluations, and educational seminars related to mentoring. With regard to the assignment of partnerships, most of the respondents favored the use of committee-directed assignments while the majority of women favored partner assignment based upon supervisor recommendation. Most of the participants stressed the importance of utilizing mentoring for skill development while some indicated interest in using the process to develop technical and leadership skills. Interestingly, many expressed the importance of creating a mentoring process that is supported by all parties—top management, mentors, and mentees.

The study results indicate that the null hypotheses can be rejected. Years of company service, professional level, age, and gender all affect employee preferences with regard to

interest in corporate mentoring. According to Peterson and Hicks (1996), with this knowledge, “You can help people find the best prescription for learning by pointing them to options as varied as books, seminars, work experiences and mentoring from others” (p. 84). The overall results of this study confirm that

one of the best ways to involve and energize employees is to solicit their ideas and opinions. Real motivation comes from within. People have to be given the freedom to voice their opinions and make suggestions—whether these ideas succeed or fail. (Nelson, 2002, p. 12)

Implications

Medcalf (1995) stressed the importance of creating an atmosphere of learning. Likewise, the research proved that the employees at the study site support the idea of a mentoring program and would be willing participants. Hence, inspired employees will likely guide program success. Most importantly, the findings indicated that the employees were in favor of a formal mentoring program closely related to the orientation program the organization already had in place. This supports Peterson and Hicks (1996) belief that says, “people often need a boost over the hump between new knowledge and new behavior because trying new skills makes them feel awkward, frustrated, or vulnerable” (p. 102). Knowing that, mentoring is essential to guide new hires through their transitional phase. Appropriately so, Stone (1999) referred to the role of mentor as a role model, cheerleader, broker, and advocate. More specifically, the respondents expressed the most interest in a program focused on helping employees adapt to the workforce, develop new skills, and improving efficiencies. The research of Woodring (1998) agreed by referring to mentoring as an exiting way to gain personal growth. Likewise, Waugh (1997) viewed skill building as a primary role of a coach. A crucial initiative because mentoring should focus on getting the learner to their next level of excellence. This finding correlated with the fact that the

most recently hired males were the most interested in having a mentor. The researchers Bullington and Boylston (2001) pointed out that some individuals would resist involvement because they will view the new task of mentoring as a burden to their current workload. The findings of this research proved to be opposite for women. In fact, only 26% of the respondents viewed mentoring as a workload concern. Peterson and Hicks (1996) explained it well by saying, "Odds are, your environment sends mixed messages about the value of development" (p. 115). One benefit of mentoring is that a lot of good can come from a minimal time commitment. In sum, as long as the partners are committed and are communicating consistently the effort does not have to be a burden on one's workload.

Similarly, Prisk (2001) said not to discount the idea of using younger staff members for mentors of more senior employees. He referred to this concept of reverse mentoring as away to "reinvigorate the way we think, the way we act, and the way we see" (p. 122). However, the findings of the study indicated that the older, more senior female employees were the most willing to fulfill the role of mentor...likely related to the fact that the female respondents do not view mentoring as a workload issue and that the youngest men aspired to be mentored. Hence, these results agree with Madison and Huston (1996) who noted that most mentors are at a higher professional level than their mentees.

Peterson and Hicks (1996) espoused that it is essential to follow up through the provision of needed resources and opportunities to ensure program success. The study results concurred. In fact, the majority of the study participants supported the use of seminars and also placed value on the use of books and multimedia. Additionally, Bullington and Boylston, (2001) encourage mentees to focus their development efforts on career planning, networking, and skill

development. However, the research findings of this study did not support using mentoring for networking. In fact, the majority of the respondents supported a mentoring program focused on skill development, adjusting to the workforce and improving efficiencies. Additionally, Howell (1992) stated mentors should be able to teach both technical and supportive skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and assertiveness skills. Again, the research results do not support this notion. In fact, only one-third of the respondents favored the option of focusing efforts on improving technical and supportive skills. Highlighting the importance of polling the employee base for their career development needs, Jaffe and Scott (1991) concur by saying the goal of a mentee should be to develop a broad-based set of skills and competencies that are relevant to many different organizations. Lastly, Stone (1999) reminded readers that “Expressing one’s intention to mentor someone is, perhaps, at most only 10% of building the partnership. The day-to-day effort, the on going communication and support is the other 90%” (p. 211). The feedback from one respondent agreed by reminding us that mentoring takes commitment and that it shouldn’t be something that “fizzles” shortly after the program introduction. Hargrove (1999) quoted an old Greek saying that proclaimed, “together we can be greater” (p. 91). Hence, such findings will be informative and useful to management of the study site for future mentoring-program considerations.

Limitations

While a 55 % rate for the survey is good in terms of noting the population characteristics of the group one cannot over generalize conclusions in a company at large without further replication or investigation of the sample size. “Clearly, we want to avoid making the sample so small that the estimate is too inaccurate to be useful” (Snedecor & Cochran, 1980, p. 441). Also,

since a convenience sample was used it is imperative to point out the fact that such a data collection method used at the decentralized location disregarded individuals in the corporations home office such as those in the Accounting and Human Resource divisions. If such employees were included via the use of a probability sample the results could have been different especially since the convenience sample polled held more technical jobs than the home office. If a random sample of the population had been used, it is likely that those employees in the human resource division would be more interested in a mentoring program focused on gaining supportive skills and less on skill development and adjusting to the workforce. Depending upon the number of new hires in the central location, a random sample of that group could have also been less interested in a mentoring program structured around the orientation program. Likewise, depending upon the demographics of the workforce, the effects of the demographics variables on related employee mentoring preferences could be different especially if there were a limited number of employees with low seniority.

Another limitation was the recruitment of participants from solely two company divisions. Replication in another corporate group, such as accounting or human resources, would present an interesting contribution to this study and other existing literature. Additionally, future studies should consider polling various organizations within various U.S. regions, incorporating additional demographic variables such as the inclusion of race and/or income level.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

This research utilized an ex post facto research design to determine the effects of demographics on employee mentoring preferences. A review of the pertinent literature revealed strong suggestions from other researchers that employee mentoring be used as an individual

career-development tool. As presented earlier, the focus of this study was on the examination of the following research questions:

1. What preferences related to a mentoring-program model, involving both structure and process, are reported by employees within the sales/service and product-technology departments of the study site?
2. Do the attributes of a mentoring program that is favored by employees vary with years of service, professional level, age, and gender?

The findings of this research indicate that employees at the study site favor a more structured mentoring program. More specifically, years of service, age, professional level, and gender affects the mentoring preferences of these employees. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, linear discriminant and logistic-regression analysis were all employed to examine the research questions. In summary, this research indicates that the oldest, most senior-level female employees are the most willing to act as mentors, while the most recently hired men are the most interested in being mentored. It is noteworthy that some employees at other levels within the organization demonstrate admirable interest in learning through the role of a mentee. Women exhibited the least amount of interest in developing technical skills and favored the use of seminars as the avenue of choice toward the promotion and growth of a mentoring program.

The majority of employees participating in this study support mentoring and favor a more formal administration process complete with committee involvement and mentoring tools. Most were interested in incorporating mentoring with the already-established orientation initiatives of the firm and favored a program focused on career development, skill development, and increasing job efficiency. These findings illustrate the value of learning and knowledge sharing. Overall, this research accomplished its task in revealing not only the mentoring preferences of the employees at the study site, but their interest in participating in a mentoring-focused

program. It is clear that these employees support the idea of mentoring, and the findings of this study can be used collectively as an effective tool to facilitate decisions toward mentoring-program implementation. Such data are valuable because they represent the voice of the employee. The use of these findings, coupled with top-management support, will help ensure that employees embrace future career-development mentoring initiatives instituted on their behalf, as well as on behalf of their respective organizations. Consideration of these facets of a mentoring program will likely add to employee growth.

Although formal mentoring makes no promises toward future promotion, it does provide excellent opportunities for partnerships with individuals willing to help newer employees reach their full potential through shared experiences, challenging assignments, and career guidance. While this research found that employees at the study site value mentoring, there are other traits of corporate mentoring, such as a method of ensuring employee retention, that could be explored in future studies. In addition, a case study of this study would be an interesting perspective for future research. This current research contributed to the existing knowledge base on mentoring in terms of the varied mentoring preferences of employees, as well as the added variance introduced by the variables of age, gender, professional level, and years of service. In the future, any organization considering a mentoring program should also consider polling employees for their mentoring preferences. As stated so aptly by Bennis and Goldsmith (1997), "The power of empowering others is noticed when the learner experiences respect, support, and growth" (p. 22). Likewise, this research validates the desire for an organization-wide and systematic new-hire development program so employees can share knowledge in an effort to consistently move

learners to a higher level of excellence on an ongoing basis. To do this, it is recommended that the management at the study site:

1. Ensure that top and middle management embrace the concept of mentoring in the workplace.
2. Appoint a mentoring-program coordinator to facilitate application, timelines, goal setting, evaluations and program promotion.
3. Ensure that mentoring-related books and multimedia are available within corporate resource centers.
4. Coordinate mentoring initiatives with new-hire orientation program with focus on adjustment to workforce, new skill development and improving efficiencies.
5. Focus mentor-recruiting efforts to effectively utilize high seniority females.
6. Take action on the mentoring-preference survey results by using it as a mentoring-program decision making tool and communicating the decisions and lessons learned to the workforce.

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APPENDIX A. RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

United States Steel Corporation
Automotive Center
5850 New King Court
Troy, MI 48098-2692

August 16, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to grant Jean Truscott—a Capella University doctoral candidate—permission to conduct a mentoring-preference survey within the Sales/Service and Product Technology division of the Automotive Group, United States Steel Corporation.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION

Harold E. Winkle
Manager, Facility & Administration

APPENDIX B. INVITATION FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION

E-mail Distribution:

Today we will be conducting a mentoring survey; participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, all data will be maintained in a strictly confidential fashion. The results will be used to help develop systems and processes related to mentoring within the workplace. By initiating the electronic survey link, it is an indication that you have agreed to participate in this survey.

Thank you in advance.

APPENDIX C. INSTRUMENT

Mentoring-Preference Survey

The intent of this survey is to determine attitudes toward mentoring. For purposes of the questionnaire, mentoring is defined as the intense relationship in which a senior employee oversees the career development of a less-experienced individual within the organization. Please complete this survey within 1 week of receipt. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. Number of years with the company:

- More than 25
- 21–25
- 16–20
- 11–15
- 6–10
- 1–5

2. Level within the organization:

- Product-technology engineer
- Account representative
- Account manager
- Manager
- Other

3. Age:

- 65 or older
- 55–64
- 45–54
- 35–44
- 25–34
- Under 25

4. Gender:

- Female
- Male

5. The company should offer a mentoring program:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

6. I would volunteer to be a mentor:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

7. I would like to be mentored:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

8. I would value a Web site for specific mentoring-program information, goals, due dates, etc.:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

9. An initial questions-and-answer meeting should be held after all participants are selected for the mentoring program:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

10. External mentoring consultants should be hired to assist with the mentoring initiatives developed by our companies:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

11. The mentoring partnership should last at least 1 year:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

12. Mentoring will increase my workload:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

13. Mentoring should also be used for the orientation of new employees:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

14. Mentoring should be a facet of my career development with the company:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

15. Mentoring should be used toward expanding contact networks:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

16. Mentoring should be used to assist in gaining the perspective of experienced colleagues:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

17. Mentoring should be used toward gaining increased visibility:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

18. Mentoring should be used toward the acquisition of new skills:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

19. Mentoring should be used to help employees adjust successfully to their professions:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

20. Mentoring should be used toward the development of technical skills:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

21. Mentoring should be used to help mentees become more efficient in their current jobs:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

22. Mentoring should be used to teach supportive skills such as communication, assertiveness, and conflict resolution:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

23. Mentoring-related goals should be recorded on an overall goal worksheet:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

24. I would value regularly scheduled evaluations related to the mentoring partnership:

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

25. I prefer to be mentored within (select one):

- My same division; same work group
- My same division; different work group
- Different division
- No preference

26. The mentor should be:

- A lower grade level than the mentee
- One grade level above the mentee
- The same grade level as the mentee

27. The mentor should be:

- Assigned by a supervisor
- Assigned by a committee
- Self-chosen

28. I prefer to be mentored by:

- Female
- Male
- No preference

29. Management should offer the following mentoring tools (select all that apply):

- Seminars
- Multimedia
- Books

30. Please expand upon what you would like to see in a mentoring program:

APPENDIX D. RELIABILITY PILOT TEST OF INSTRUMENT

The Mentoring-Preference Survey

The intent of this survey is to determine attitudes toward mentoring. For purposes of the questionnaire, mentoring is defined as the intense relationship in which a senior employee oversees the career development of a less-experienced employee. Please complete this survey within 1 week of receipt. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. Years of service:

- 1–5
- 6–10
- 11–15
- 16–20
- 21–25
- More than 25

2. Level within the organization:

- Manager
- Account manager
- Account representative
- Product-technology engineer
- Other

3. Age:

- Under 25
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65 or older

4. Gender:

- Male
- Female

5. The company should offer a mentoring program:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

6. I would volunteer to be a mentor:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

7. I would like to be mentored:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

8. I would like a Web site for specific mentoring-program information, goals, due dates, etc.:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

9. An initial question-and-answer meeting should be conducted after all participants are selected for the mentoring program:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

10. External consultants should be hired to assist with the mentoring initiatives developed by our company:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

11. The mentoring partnership should last at least 1 year:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

12. Mentoring will increase my workload:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

13. Mentoring should also be used for the orientation of new employees:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

14. Mentoring should be a facet of my career development with the company:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

15. Mentoring should be used toward expanding contact networks:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

16. Mentoring should be used to assist in gaining the perspective of experienced colleagues:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

17. Mentoring should be used toward gaining increased visibility:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

18. Mentoring should be used toward the acquisition of new skills:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

19. Mentoring should be used to help employees adjust successfully to their professions:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

20. Mentoring should be used to assist in the development of technical skills:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

21. Mentoring should be used to help mentees become more efficient in their current jobs:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

22. Mentoring should be used to teach supportive skills such as communication, assertiveness, and conflict resolution:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

23. Mentoring-related goals should be recorded on an overall goal worksheet:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

24. I would value regularly scheduled evaluations related to the mentoring partnership:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

25. I prefer to be mentored within (please select one):

- My same division; same work group
- My same division; different work group
- Different division
- No preference

26. The mentor should be:

- The same grade level as the mentee
- One grade level above the mentee
- Lower grade level than the mentee

27. The mentor should be:

- Self-chosen
- Assigned by a committee
- Assigned by a supervisor

28. I prefer to be mentored by a:

- Male
- Female
- No preference

29. Management should offer the following mentoring tools (select all that apply):

- Books
- Multimedia
- Seminars

30. Please expand upon other things you would like to see included in a mentoring program: