



Mentoring

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Our philosophy

You can be confident that our recommendations will always be based upon the findings of published academic research, tailored to meet the needs of your organisation.

At Anima & Atman we are committed to delivering solutions for our clients that make meaningful and measurable differences in the areas of *Emotional Wellbeing, Productive Mindset* and *Self-Awareness*.

Our clients are typically professional services organisations, who are trusted for their expertise, commitment to ongoing professional development and high ethical standards. Our approach seeks to reflect this, meaning you can be confident that our recommendations will always be based upon the findings of published academic research, tailored to meet the needs of your organisation.

What is mentoring and what benefits can it bring?

The demographic makeup of the workforce is rapidly changing, with many organisations finding they have as many as four different generations working alongside one another. In addition to this, organisations are also experiencing technological disruption and increased levels of employee turnover. It is, therefore, unsurprising that there is a renewed interest in the use of mentoring to capture organisational knowledge. However, these same changes mean that the type of assistance that mentors provide and the ways in which it is offered will differ from 20 years ago (Eby et al, 2006).

Traditionally, mentoring has been seen as an interpersonal relationship, where senior and more experienced organisational members provide support to junior or less experienced colleagues. This support typically falls under two broad categories – *career support* and *psychosocial support*. Career support includes providing the mentee with opportunities and links to powerful individuals or acting as their advocate. Psychosocial support includes counselling about anxieties and uncertainty, providing friendship and role modelling (Kram, 1983). Ultimately, mentoring has been directly linked to increased levels of individual career success and job satisfaction.

More contemporary approaches to mentoring recognise that the benefits need not only accrue to the mentee.

More contemporary approaches to mentoring recognise that the benefits need not only accrue to the mentee. Experienced professionals frequently experience increased personal satisfaction and extended career opportunities, as a result of mentoring others. They can also benefit from *reverse mentoring* where they learn from the expertise of a more junior colleague. More widely, organisations can benefit from a more effective exchange of information among employees, increased levels of productivity and reduced employee turnover (Young & Perrewé, 2000).

Creating a mentoring culture

Professional services firms were traditionally exemplars of mentoring. Junior professionals upon joining a firm could rely on one of the Partners treating them as protégé; frequently they would share an office. The implicit agreement was that in return for their hard work and dedication they would be taught the ropes and have their development within the organisation guided by those in senior positions.

Over time, successful firms have tended to grow, with individual teams becoming larger and more international. Some firms have even abandoned the partnership model, becoming publicly-traded companies. Increasing numbers have also shifted to open-plan working environments, in order to reduce office costs and promote collaboration. Alongside this, the procurement of professional services has become more complex and the regulatory burden has increased, meaning Partners have growing demands on their time.

In the face of such pressures something has had to give and the evidence suggests mentoring has been one of the casualties (De Jong et al, 2008). This research found that while all respondents over 40 years of age could name at least one mentor in their professional life, a significant minority of those under 40 could not name any. In addition, demands for more transparent promotion processes has meant seeking to support a protégé might now be regarded as favouritism – in most organisations the term protégé is now unlikely to be heard. A return to the past is, therefore, not a realistic option, instead an alternative mentoring model is required.

Devolved mentoring

Our view is that mentoring is not something that can be imposed on people through the use of centralised systems. This sort of approach tends to lead to mentoring being perceived as a bureaucratic and stylized charade that is devoid of any real benefits – another ‘box-ticking exercise’ imposed by the HR department. In reality, what professionals want is regular access to senior professionals, who will take a genuine interest in their career and who are able to offer clear feedback on their performance.

Developing this sort of mentoring culture takes time and effort. Rather than being assigned a mentor junior professionals need to learn how to catch the attention of prospective mentors and demonstrate that they are worthy of investment. To make this more informal approach

work, the focus needs to shift away from systems and towards helping individuals develop the skills required to drive their own career development. Once such an approach has been embedded it should be largely self-sufficient and require only limited on-going support from the L&D team.

The success of this approach can be seen in organisations such as McKinsey & Co who encourage their associates to identify their own mentors and 'make your own McKinsey'. By working closely with mentors to identify projects that will support their personal development, associates are given a high degree of control over their career progression, which results in increased levels of employee engagement and loyalty.

This is a radical departure from less flexible approaches that allocate mentors to emerging talent, usually with L&D acting as a broker and; where success is more likely to be judged by the proportion of employees with a mentor, rather than the quality of the mentoring relationships.

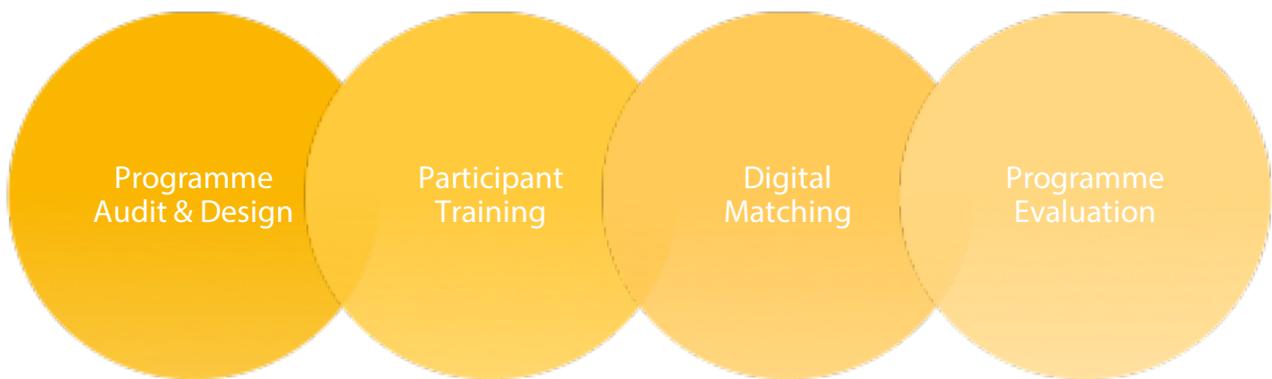
Capturing wider benefits

The potential benefits of mentoring have already been discussed but success cannot be guaranteed. Instead the observed outcomes reflect antecedents related to both mentor and mentee – individual, relational and organisational. These need to be understood and thought about carefully, before implementing a mentoring programme. This sort of careful planning has been shown to strengthen the use of mentoring as a developmental practice, allowing organisations to better prepare their employees for changing times (Ghosh, 2014).

Mentoring is not an end in itself, but it can support a range of wider organisational goals. These need to be identified in advance, as they will impact on the overall design of the mentoring programme; its marketing and; the resources that will need to be made available to potential participants. Organisational objectives that research has shown mentoring can help deliver include:

- Developing more diverse leadership teams (Parker & Kram, 1993)
- Enhancing the performance of interns (Liu et al, 2011)
- Promoting inter-generational teamwork (Chen 2013; Elmore, 2015)
- Retaining and developing leaders (Ghosh & Reio, 2013)
- Supporting resilience-building initiatives (Kao et al, 2014)

Our service offering



We are well-placed to support organisations that are either keen to launch a mentoring programme for the first time, or looking to refresh and improve an existing programme. We offer a modular approach to mentoring, which means you need only engage us in those areas where you would benefit from additional expertise. An overview of our core services is provided below.

Programme audit & design

We work closely with clients to help them better understand how mentoring can help their organisation meet its wider goals. We also identify objective ways to measure this. Our recommendations are based on our own experience and the findings of academic research, which means you can be confident that the design of your programme will reflect best practice that is already delivering tangible results elsewhere.

If you already have an established mentoring programme in place, we can assist by offering an independent review of existing practices. This can help detect areas for further improvement, whether that is refining objectives, updating content or evaluating the programme's impact to date.

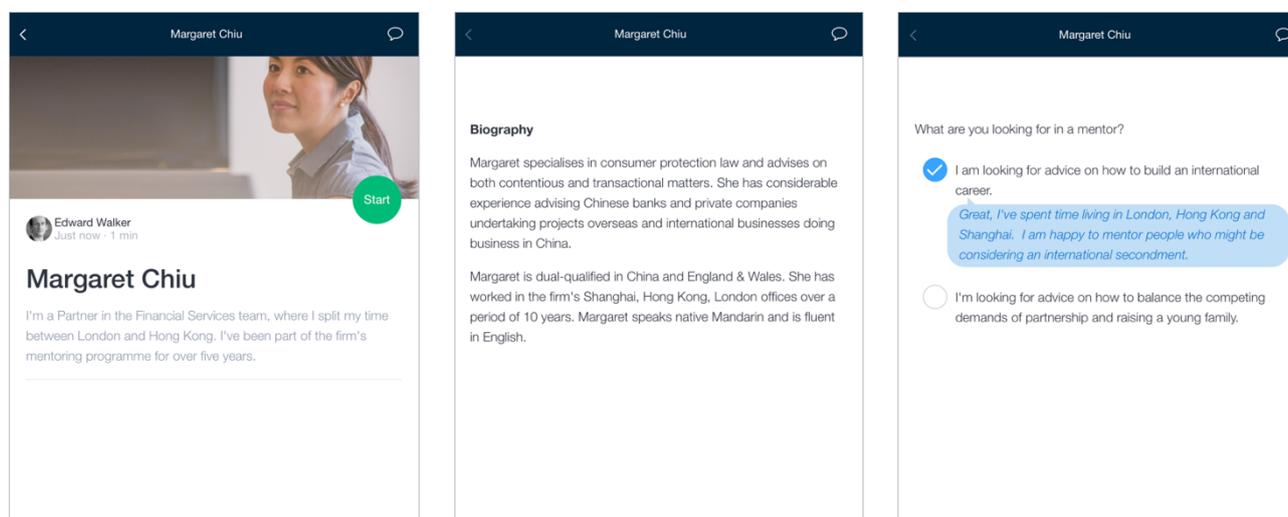
Participant training

One of the main reasons that mentoring programmes fail is that those involved are unclear about their role and what is expected of them. However, even well-designed mentoring programmes can be hindered if the participants do not have the necessary skills to perform their duties effectively.

We offer training for both mentees and mentors that ensures both parties to the mentoring relationship are aware of the expectations of different stakeholders; realistic about the level of commitment involved and; the skills they will need in to develop, in order to ensure that their mentoring relationships are a success. Training is typically delivered in small groups with participants then given access to additional learning materials through our digital learning platform.

Digital matching

The administration involved in running a mentoring scheme can be very time-consuming for members of the L&D team. In order to devolve responsibility for mentoring away from L&D and to the parties directly involved, we advocate the use of digital learning materials and a digital matching process, designed to help bring suitable mentees and mentors together.



Mentees are best-placed to know what they are ideally looking for in a mentor, so it makes sense to empower them to be able to identify and approach potential mentors, without the need for third-party involvement. This can be achieved through the creation of a searchable directory of mentor profiles. These profiles can then be made accessible to potential mentees through our digital learning platform.

Programme evaluation

Evaluating the impact of L&D initiatives can be time-consuming and require statistical expertise, both of which may be unavailable to in-house L&D teams. So, whether you are looking to validate programme performance for the first time, or require regular management reports we can assist.

Organisations who make use of our digital learning platform can also access relevant data that can be used to demonstrate the frequency with which mentoring materials are being used; identify the materials that are most highly-rated and; discover which mentors are attracting the most interest. This approach allows small, incremental improvements to be made on a regular basis.



If you would like to find out more about how you can unlock the power of mentoring in your organisation, contact us using the details below.

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