

# IMPACT OF E-MENTORING ON INVENTIVITY IN COMPANIES

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**Abstract:** *One of the important key elements of development of human resources as the driving forces of each company is education. Entering in knowledge era, companies, task of each company is to provide its employees continuous development, through various forms of training and education. This paper shall be based on a system of e-mentoring, as a special form of personal education. Mentoring as one form of guidance and education is very represented in the modern system of education. E-mentoring, provides new opportunities for companies, to arrange education and development of its employees outside the major education centers. E-mentor assumes the role of coordinator of human resources development, which is not linked only to companies but also for society in general. Authors offer a functional model of e-mentoring, which should help the company to overcome the obstacles that lead to a lack of innovation, due to lack of knowledge and motivation.*

**Keywords:** *knowledge management, innovation, e-mentoring, distance learning*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The most obvious link between knowledge management and human resources functions is the field of training and human resources development. In this area of knowledge management and human resources functions have the most in common. Training and development is an area within the human resources function responsible for taking care about what people know and how they use what they know. (Bergeron, 2003). This is also the area of human resources, with already tested and well established methodology that encourages people to freely share ideas, collaborate and freely think in an innovative and creative way. Part of the challenge placed before the human resources function in an environment of knowledge would be to fit this methodology in the framework of life of a company, to

make it a routine by the following: to bring together people who have the skills for self-development (only training) and to bring together managers who should to create a “learning environment”, which could create workshops for learning and development within the workplace. For all these reasons, this area should be approached in a strategic way - through development of *training strategies and development*. (Harman, Berlade, 2000)

## 2. BASIC TASKS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. *Developing the ability of managers to appropriate innovation and creative ideas* - Training of managers for “hard” business skills - handling of information, budget, investment decisions, statistics, etc. Development of managers for the acceptance of innovation requires a focus on “soft” skills, which includes an element of “looking deeply into ourselves” and an understanding of human psychology and behavior. (Ristic et al. 2008)

2. *‘Equipping’ the employees with skills so that they manage their own training and development* - Individuals who successfully manage their own development and improvement strive for the following features: security, curiosity, creativity and commitment. They are in constant search for new sources of information, tend to continuously learn and to other individual subscribers watch as the sources from which they can learn something.

3. *Direct training for capacity and efficient use of information, idea generation and communication skills* - Today, keeping the information is no longer sufficient to achieve a competitive advantage. The information must be used in a creative way, understanding the business requirements and in the first place requires customers. This is achieved by stimulating the work of the right hemisphere, it must be understood the way of human thinking and to change the way of thinking. Increase innovation and creativity requires the engagement process of the right hemisphere. Techniques impulses are: Brainstorming, mind mapping, active listening, emotional and social intelligence.

4. *Training in the development and use of information systems* - The important role of the human resource function is the training and development in “equipping” the employees to use and develop information systems, which includes: providing IT training as part of a broader strategy training; use, the use of IT and learning of their software packages; Assessment of current and future demands for IT training; evaluate the effects of IT training and its results. (Ristic et al. 2008)

5. *Development of skills to work in a team and of cooperative model of workplace* - Among the key aspects of employee in the human resources function, which is responsible for training and development, are the following aspects: stimulating the creation of teams; training of personnel in team leadership skills and teamwork skills; Developing inner understanding through structured work experience; The establishment of joint training with the representatives of personnel; The development of a common set of values and a common language.

## 3. MENTORING AND E-MENTORING

Authors of this paper, in order to put light on the topic e-mentoring, herewith briefly introduce and explain the concept of mentoring and its purpose. Mentoring refers to the

development of relations in which people with more knowledge helps a person with less experience - that can act in the capacity of residents - in order to develop their talents and skills in the right direction. The word "mentee" is a very common expression in today's modern world, especially on websites such as MentorNetet.com. This word is classified as modern "slang" and means a person who needs tutoring, and with assigned mentor. There are several definitions of mentoring, which are listed in the literature. First of all, mentoring involves building a good system of communications and her foundation in building a relationship of mutual trust. Here are just one of the many definitions offered by the literature: "Mentoring is a process of informal knowledge transfer, development and transmission of social capital, and the necessary psychosocial support to the recipient that is relevant to career development or training. Mentoring involves an informal mode of communication, usually face-to-face over a long period, between the person who is considered to have greater relevant knowledge, of wisdom and greater experience - the mentor and the person who does not possess this knowledge - mentee. (Kelsen, Clutterbuck, 2002)". E-mentoring is a means by which to ensure direct mentoring relationship online by using software or e-mail. E-mentoring foundation lies in mentoring, and its upgrade is built on the discovery of internet and its exploitation. E-mentoring experienced its explosion at the end of 1993. This type of mentoring first dealt with connecting students with future employers, and it is frequently present in the United States, Great Britain and parts of Europe. In its early stages e-mentoring used both e-mail and telephone as a means of connecting mentors and protégés. One of the first e-mentoring program was developed in Canada in 1990, where the teachers of British Columbia provided online support and training by experienced colleagues. They have never met face to face, i.e. they never co-operated outside of the network context. (Kelsen, Clutterbuck, 2002)

The tendency of modern e-mentoring project is to rely heavily on solutions that are based on web design, especially when it comes to children. On-line software allow mentors and their mentees to access secure on-line environment (which is created just for this purpose), which can be safe for exchange of opinions and knowledge with colleagues, professors and mentors, all under the supervision of the facilitator and coordinator. In most cases, when you compare these two options (face-to-face mentoring and e-mentoring) sadly it is not in favor of on-line e-mentoring and e-mentoring. This form of communication is considered impersonal, because communication lacks a visual and tangible social context, so that it is harder for feedback to be formed, and sometimes there is no straight and true meaning. However, e-mentoring can influence people to give honest feedback. This type of communication is very present in the business world, with people who are mentors to the interns, because this way training takes a lot less time than if they did it face-to-face. (Kelsen, Clutterbuck, 2002) The point is often made that the quality of the relationship of mentor and protégé greatly affects the mutual interest of both parties, as well as the fact that both parties should have a common goal which would have led them toward a common goal. Most aid agencies and various business organizations that offer the option of e-mentoring, necessitating the common interests of both sides. Likewise, the generally accepted rule is that mentoring should be applied to milestones and in transitional periods of life for residents, whether it be on students, interns, employees who change jobs or making decisions about further career development. E-mentoring programs contribute greatly to increasing the motivation of young people after high school to further education. This because research shows that the experience of e-mentors gives direction to young people in their efforts to satisfy their needs. E-mentoring directs young people to strive for their 'dream job' and it proves to be

an extremely important step. This is something that is tangible and young people perceive it as something solid, that they can rely upon. We herewith present but one example of e-mentoring – The MentorNet network.

MentorNet represents a non-profit network for the implementation of programs-mentoring, which positively encourages young people to take a step forward in his career to retain young people and to encourage their development. This organized network of e-mentoring was established in 1997. Its goal is to provide highly motivated protégés - who will become mentors – from the most prestigious colleges and universities with a positive, one-on-one e-mail-oriented attitude. They the mentees of mentors from industry, government and higher education sector, they will learn so that later they themselves become mentors. In addition, MentorNet provides the ability to connect with other people around the world who are interested in developing the diversity of science and engineering. What is it that MentorNet community offers? Members of the community can use the following options:

- MentorNet program of e-mentoring, one-on-one relationship based on communication via e-mail, is one of the best programs linking colleges, high school students, students, graduates, PhD students with experienced professionals in their fields
- MentorNet e-forums: Web-oriented discussion group for those who are interested in the topic balance between life and work, job searches and colleges
- Accessibility of resources for information, about mentoring and how to become a mentor, a resource for career development in science or engineering.
- Bases biography and how to write, for students looking for work. (Www.Mentor-Netet.com)

We herewith present an e-mentoring project which is being implemented at Staffordshire University in the framework of the Faculty of Sciences. It will be shown only frameworks innovative e-mentoring scheme in this faculty. All the freshmen of this college will be offered free tutoring by their older colleagues from the second, third and fourth years of study. This mode is designed pre-planned goals: (Kelsen, Clutterbuck, 2002)

1. Providing an efficient system of support to freshmen by their older colleagues, who perfectly understand their position and look at it from the same perspective.
2. Providing students of the second, third and fourth year with a chance to gain experience through training and mentoring, which will enable them to further career advancement, with the experience gained in college and be able to apply it in practice, and thus enrich their CVs.

At the beginning of the first semester, all freshmen who participate in this project - depending on type of course - will be contacted by their personal mentors through university e-mail. These trained mentors, of the second, third and fourth years of the same faculty, can offer practical advice, encouragement and positive beliefs. They are already familiar with the initiatory and regulations of Staffordshire University and the work of the Student Union. By moving into the second year in college, these freshmen will have a direct placing on the market of the future mentors. Every e-mentor has a maximum of 8 residents. The project lasts for one school year, and then new e-mentoring scheme for the next generation is created.

#### 4. DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Every relationship between people of different rank (social, intellectual ...) carries with it the problem of the distribution of power. In particular, the tendency to establish order

among a group of people led to the creation of a kind of hierarchy. If we recall some definitions of mentorship we can see the pattern in which they appear: there are two elements, first we have mentors, and then students.. This relationship must be based on trust and authority (not the authoritative mentor) which requires some effort from both the mentor and student. The power of mentor over the student can be lacking, is very hard to establish, and trust too is very hard to establish. (Bergeron, 2003) Depending on what you want to achieve with mentoring, in that way the relationship must be built. Let us again mention the fact that mentoring is done by so-called "cloning" or creates changes in the thought construct in students, so students open opportunities for advancement that is not the mentor is not suspected. Since ancient times, the role of the mentor is to guide, advise, support your student, or the world of today offers much greater challenges than ever before. The very role of the mentor has changed a lot in recent decades. The role of mentor is changing from teacher to counselor who should help students to "trace" their further life, at least as far as the business segment goes, although in recent years more and more it has the task to popularize the term life coach ("life coach"). With this we come to the role of mentor that someone undertakes, and part of that role might be coaching. (Murray, 2001)

It is therefore very important that the mentor - student relation is relieved of the burden imposed by the power, this refers to the dominance of one side over another and constant fighting role changes. The key thing is the cooperation of two elements in order to increase the intellectual, moral, spiritual... ability of the student. A huge set of requirements is placed before the mentor: to continuous improvement and progress, not only in business but also personal on level. Of course, mentor must have the authority, but the authority that derives from the formal power is not "fit" for the job mentoring. The only "healthy" way of building authority is through the training of mentors, ongoing training, seminars and learning from the students themselves provide any guarantee of success mentoring. The theme of this work is closely related to the progress of the company, if the mentoring relationship is ensnared in the distribution of power there is no progress to help both students and companies. The goal of any company is profit, but if there is no creative energy that creates the conditions for profit making company suffers great damage. The processes of globalization creates an even more challenging market, that is why study of creativity is of vital importance.

## 5. CONTROVERSIES REGARDING E-MENTORING

Almost all the techniques that incorporate some type of electronic communications carry the stigma of depersonalization. This is not circumvent the no e - mentoring. Researchers dealing with issues of mentoring are awarded under this criterion. Some researchers believe that nothing can replace a meeting of mentors and students face to face. This opinion is corroborated by the conclusions of the study that took place in our country too. Mentors used the Internet service "facebook" to maintain contact with their students, and it was concluded that in this way mentors lose authority. Experiences from the surrounding confirm these conclusions, researchers and professors from the University of Sarajevo attempted to hold consultations using "facebook" service. After a period of time revealed that creases the authority of the students. While consultative teaching is not the same as mentoring Yet in many segments these two phenomena overlap.

On the other hand, researchers who advocate e - mentoring state that the nature of "facebook" is not at all suitable for mentoring. Some researchers believe that the aforementioned service reminds of a party, and users are already used to this service to provide them

with entertainment content. This might explain why the use of this popular service is not suitable for serious work.

Many experts in the field believe that communications using Internet improves honesty and creates a more intense communication among users. One of the reasons is the anonymity of the user, of course, with the e - mentoring there can be no anonymity, but it is this distance imposed by electronic communication that can speed up communication. (Murray, 2001)

Some people find easier to open up in front of a computer than in front of the "real" person. One of the golden rules of mentoring relationship is confidentiality between mentor and student: everything must remain between the mentor and his mentee. For businesses, mentoring can play a major role: mentor can be important in the professional development of employees. In the following part of this we offer a model from which all can benefit: mentors, students / employees and companies.

## **6. THE MODEL FOR INCREASED CREATIVE ENERGY IN COMPANIES THROUGH E-MENTORING**

Creativity is becoming one of the key features of every company that wants to survive in the business world. Again and again, to offer market-oriented products and services becomes imperative for a successful business, unfortunately small number of today's enterprises is able to follow this trend. There are many reasons for this: outdated procedures, inadequate reward system and so make the company sluggish in terms of response to sudden market shifts. In the following part of the paper we present a model that can help companies to overcome some limitations caused by inadequate knowledge of employees. The model is applicable to large and small businesses, was created on the model of mentoring that is practiced at the Faculty of Management. The authors, based on detailed study of reference literature, as well as interviews with students from mentoring groups, identified the relations and elements of the model. It is easier for large companies to bear sudden market shifts, but just how much longer will this rule still be applicable. In the future, to create, store, share new knowledge will be of great importance, but there is always the human component in the process of knowledge management of a company.

Without clear guidelines for the use of corporate knowledge base, knowledge is useless. Under the instructions we foremost include the education and development of necessary skills. Educated employees are relatively easy to find on the labor market, but most schools fail to instill in their students the specific knowledge and skills needed to enterprises, first and foremost the critical way of thinking, then creative thinking, etc. Through work in some workshops one can achieve much but continued regular education plays a huge role in this process, and mentor is the person who leads the students in their path towards excellence

The model of e-mentoring can help enterprises overcome the barriers imposed by inadequate knowledge and skills among employees. This model shows but a few of the more important elements, especially a student who is deliberately set outside the boundaries of the company. Each employee has his own share of private life that he uses as feels the best, one of the most successful class struggle at the beginning of the twentieth century is the establishment of an eight-hour working time. The idea was that one third of the time spent at work, one-third spend your holiday, and one-third on the cultural and spiritual elevation. Employees are given the opportunity to develop their life skills in their 'free' time. Companies can benefit greatly from this.

Another important element is the mentor who is set on the very border of the enterprise; mentor does not necessarily have to be part of an enterprise (in the sense that he works in the same), but he must have great interaction with the company. The nature and intensity of interactions mentors and companies depends on how the company will benefit from the development of the student. If the company acts indifferent to this kind of relations it may be that the student develops in a different direction than desired which may lead to the student's departure. This scenario is not beneficial for the company or from the standpoint of the mentor and the student does not have a major impact, we think about how a company is losing while the other company acquires high-skilled workers. Sector for human resources management, according to some logic should be a center where all information flowing on the needs of businesses when it comes to employees. This element has been chosen as the most suitable for model because it is somehow necessary to filter information, and the best way is to create a close cooperation with the sector human resource management. Industrial environment and society are two external elements that affect the entire process, these elements are so large and pervasive influence on each element of the model. One of the goals of the mentor is a constant "capture" foreign elements and providing the right advice about further student career development. Sometimes the company itself and its parts dealing with human resource management are not able for some reason to analyze well enough the environment and society. Figure 1 shows the 10 relations that connect elements of the model.

Relations 1 and 2 are relations of negative feedback. The mentor provides an overall strategy, and after some time gives the evaluating performance of the student. There are several tools that can be used for measuring the progress of his career. One tool is called "targeting", the purpose of this tool is to set some goals that would then be carried out control target achievement. This tool is used for a longer period of time, and some psychologists believe that in the business of setting goals there should be three years prior to evaluation. Relations 3 and 4 are intended for solving some operational problems; constant contacts between mentor and student are important. Mentor can help students to get through a professional or a life crisis, in the sense that it offers a framework for the solution of upcoming problems. Mentor is not a person that provides finished results, nor does he directly teach students, but together with the student he searches for the best solution.

Relations 5 and 6 represent a strong and open cooperation between enterprises and mentor, the sector of human resources should be the first place where data is converted into information. Permanent cooperation between enterprises and mentor achieved a synergy effect in terms of improving the training of students. Businesses have some strategic goals that are set for the future. To achieve these objectives the necessary resources are primarily trained people who can achieve its goals. A mentor is not someone who makes performance management for third parties, in terms of the evaluation of progress, but it can help in the process of improving performance. Relations 7 and 8 are internal links of companies with the human resources sector, if these links are not appropriate mentor is unable to get good information so that the student can pass a training that is not needed at the moment. These relations are of greater importance for the company than for tutors and students. Relations 9 and 10 represent mutual influences of environment on the company, the mentor and student. The environment affects all elements of the model so that if there is no positive mentors and communications companies, mentor can I take the role of a "filter". In this case the mentor in cooperation with the student creates a path of development that does not have to be the same with the development of enterprises. On the other hand, the impact of mentors

and students to the environment is indeed small, but the impact of companies on the environment can be significant.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Knowledge is becoming one of the most important resources of the company, regular “guidance” of employees in terms of training, education and development of crucial skills become imperative in business. Mentoring proved to be by far the best in the field of business but also personal development, this kind of informal education is becoming increasingly popular in highly developed countries. The reason for the popularity of mentoring did the complexity of the present, is no longer a problem to get information but also create the problem of adequate thought processes that could “recycle” the information from the environment. Due to the increasing mobility of today’s business mentoring had to be substantially amended, the emergence of e - mentoring is a logical response to changing market conditions and living conditions. Offered model of e-mentoring provides an opportunity for companies to actively participate in the mentoring process, for this way companies can better plan their development.

The task of the human resources and of the growing role of mentor is to deal with the presentation of challenges, and to help individuals to:

- manage their own workloads. Shall be accompanied by further steps to address the challenges and providing the results:
  - overcome the “conditionality” - most of the employees has been conditioned for years through a system of education that learning is seen as something that is Doing in their favor, not as something that they worked for themselves. Security share of individuals in their own training and development
  - “fit” learning skills that are necessary because of the many and various changes in the education system so that many are not trained to teach.
  - Overcome inertia - require the employees to overcome “mental inertia” - the resistance against the tendency to increase the effort that is required to invest in development. There is also the “comfort zone”, where employees thought to possess enough knowledge to do the job and that you should not learn. It must be designed for positive incentive out of this zone, for example, job rotation, extension range of activities, etc. or any financial incentive.
  - Overcome the short-term orientation. Achieve commitment to training as a strategic activity. Thus achieving the commitment to long-term return on investment
  - Provide the necessary “tools” to work - often the case of failure of the strategy of mandating knowledge workers is the result of failures in the provision of tools - information and resources - necessary for such a role.

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