

City of Fairfield

The City of Fairfield's Mentoring/Coaching Program

Jurisdiction

Population: 105,000

Total Full-Time Employees: 1,000

Budget: \$310 million

Program Description

The City has a Management Committee comprised of managers from all city departments and a few department heads. The department heads represent the executive management team of the city. The committee coordinates leadership development and succession planning programs. Since 2002 the City of Fairfield has developed programs to prepare the "next generation" of city employees to take the place of those retiring and otherwise leaving the workforce. The City's program today relies heavily on the statewide efforts of the Cal-ICMA Preparing the Next Generation (PNG) Committee.

Getting buy-in by managers and supervisors

The city's successes over the years began with the commitment of the city manager and the executive management team. Buy-in by managers and supervisors city wide began with the Management Committee that introduced a mentoring/coaching program to the organization in 2005. In October 2005, the Management Committee coordinated a kick-off meeting to managers/supervisors called "Help Develop the City's Mentoring/Coaching Program." The meeting was held off site and was facilitated by Don Maruska, the director of the statewide Cal-ICMA Coaching Program. At this meeting the following goals for the citywide mentoring/coaching effort were agreed on:

- Prepare the next generation of leaders inside the Fairfield organization
- Build linkages with colleagues across the organization
- Target key talent needs for the City
- Learn and teach best practices
- Sample effective mentoring and coaching approaches
- Enjoy the camaraderie of being part of a great team/family!

Survey

Under the direction of the city manager, the city's Human Resources Department also conducted an organization-wide survey seeking the following information:

What were departments doing currently to prepare the next generation?

What mentoring or coaching opportunities were being offered to department employees?

What cross training and team city wide team/task force efforts were going on?

How an effective mentoring/coaching program could be developed throughout the organization. (The Management Committee took leadership on many of these areas and in particular the development and delivery of an effective mentoring /coaching program.)

The mentoring program

One of the best parts of the development and execution of the City's PNG efforts was to see the managers and supervisors in all departments step up and take leadership. This was done through the Management Committee. With support and encouragement from the city manager and the executive team, the "Mentoring Program" has flourished over time. The Management Committee has developed and provided with support from HR:

An ongoing training program for managers volunteering to become mentors.

Mentoring guidelines

An agreement form

A sample program plan

Brochures and on-line access to mentor bios/vitas as well as contact info.

Norms set by executive management

The city manager and the executive management team have over time helped to build an expectation or culture for development and growth of city employees. This has been done in a variety of ways:

- It is expected that all managers and supervisors will make themselves available and provide time for their employees to participate in the mentoring/coaching activities of the city.
- Mentoring/coaching is the responsibility of all managers and supervisors.
- All managers must learn how to develop others.

Annual informational meeting held by the city manager

The city manager invites new and recently promoted city employees as well as those interested in preparing for higher-level positions to an informational meeting on the city's Mentoring Program and PNG activities. Employees from across the organization are encouraged to attend.

Program Successes

Indications of program success include the following:

- Currently there are more than two dozen managers and executives serving as mentors after they have gone through the mentor training.
- Managers from all departments participate on the Management Committee.
- Managers and supervisors are taking an active role in citywide presentations and meetings regarding the mentoring/coaching activities.
- Managers and supervisors across the organization participate in the Cal-ICMA Coaching telephone sessions.
- Employees who participate in these calls also engage in group discussions following the calls to consider what was discussed and how it applies to them individually and to the City.

Lessons Learned

1. Support from the top is essential! The city manager's endorsement of the activities promotes the culture for coaching citywide.

2. Ongoing kudos and other support from the city manager underlines throughout the year the importance of the program.
3. Currently one of the biggest successes has been the interest in not just the coaching calls but also the follow-up discussions that follow the call.
4. Although the City of Fairfield started out with a very formal and structured mentoring program, the city has found that there are many successful "informal" coaching/mentoring relationships developing throughout the organization.
5. The program must be promoted in a variety of ways. The city's Human Resources Department staff has written regular articles over time in the employee newsletter and has posted upcoming events and other related information on the city's E-bulleting board.
6. City management must encourage employees to seek mentors/coaches from a variety of sources: the employee's department, other departments, external organizations, as well as coaches from the Cal-ICMA "Coaching Corner" web page.

Future Efforts and Challenges

While the city has experienced some sense of success there continues to be a variety of challenges. For example, how does the city...

- Keep the program as a priority for the city as a new city manager takes over?
- Maintain this program as a priority given growing financial problems?
- Expand the program and make it part of all new employee orientations?
- Encourage employees to share their stories of how mentoring or coaching have helped them?

Attachments

- A. City of Fairfield Mentoring Guidelines
- B. City of Fairfield Mentoring Agreement
- C. Mentoring New Employees and Managers
- D. Development Plan

City of Fairfield
Mentoring Guidelines
November 2005

In addition to new employee orientation and training from the supervisor, new and newly promoted employees should have an opportunity to meet with another staff member who is a veteran employee and is interested in being a mentor. Long-time employees should also have an opportunity to be mentored. In either case, the mentor could be from the same department or from a different department.

A mentor is someone who shares expertise and experience to assist people on a particular career path. A coach is someone who helps people find their own path.

The mentor should be a superior performer in his or her own right and have good people skills. The mentor knows the ropes, so to speak, and can be an effective source of advice and encouragement. They can offer seasoned experience in the form of training and socializing the new or newly promoted employee to the work place.

The mentor should have a personal presence that will impress and persuade the new or long-term employee that the staff member is someone the employee can trust. Part of this role is to allow for a comfortable, more informal environment in which the employee can ask and receive information about the office culture and norms and those everyday, mostly unwritten, procedures and policies that help to explain how things really work. An element of the responsibility is to help establish a sense of belonging for the new employee.

With an effective mentor, a new employee or newly promoted employee will quickly become a contributing member to his or her new department. And, a seasoned employee will be able to contribute more to his or her department and to the organization.

Mentor Selection Criteria

- Demonstrates high performance.
- Is given time to be accessible to the new or newly promoted employee, or the seasoned employee.
- Is knowledgeable about the employee's job and about the City's organizational culture.
- Is proud of the organization.
- Has patience and good communication and interpersonal skills.
- Wants to be a mentor.
- Is a positive role model (well regarded and accepted by current employees).
- Is a management staff member.
- Preferably, has been employed more than one year.

Mentor Responsibilities

- Be an informational resource for the new or newly promoted employee or seasoned employee on policies, procedures, work rules, norms, etc.
- Help socialize the employee.
- Assist in training the employee, or identifying training needs.
- Be a tour guide.
- Identify resources.
- Provide introductions.
- Explain that while mentoring will help the employee with career development, it may or may not lead to a promotion for the employee.

What an Employee Expects from his or her Mentor

- General advice.
- Guidance.
- Encouragement.
- Positive attitude from the Mentor.
- Shared information is kept confidential.
- Honest feedback.
- Clear information.
- Help in understanding the culture of an organization and finding out how to get things done.
- Assistance in building networks and insight into how to make them effective and productive.
- Establishment of the best form of communication -- e-mail, telephone, in-person.

Tips for Mentors

- Don't worry about being perceived as the "expert." Your experience is important to the employee.
- Meet or talk on the telephone to decide if both of you wish to move forward with a mentoring relationship.
- Establish an understanding at the beginning of the relationship, covering confidentiality, intended duration of the mentoring, frequency of contact, approximate amount of time to be invested, requested role of the mentor and any additional points. (Sample form available.)
- The mentoring relationship can be specific to job training, an introduction to the culture of the organization, or general advice about career development.
- Be patient and positive. It takes time to develop a relationship. Don't try to cover everything right away. Allow enough time for growth.
- Don't try to force a relationship.
- Look for a preferred style of communication and/or cultural identification.
- Don't try to turn the employee into your clone. That person may have a different style from yours. Let the new, newly promoted or seasoned employee develop.
- Listening may be more important than giving advice.

- Don't be judgmental.
- The intent of the mentoring relationship is to be confidential. However, if an employee you're mentoring reports potential violations of City policy, e.g., harassment, you must report the item to Human Resources and explain why you are doing this.
- Don't lose heart because of an employee's failures. You cannot always ensure success, but you can help that person to begin again more intelligently. You can help them see a failed experience as valuable by honestly identifying where it went wrong. Mentors can often prevent failure from happening to an employee a second time.
- Keep a good attitude and stay in a teaching spirit.

Mentoring Benefits

- Give something back to your Department and the City.
- Share accumulated knowledge and experience.
- Gain a better understanding of yourself through helping others.
- Maintain or create a fresh perspective.

Mentoring New Employees and Managers

Don Maruska, MBA, JD, Master Certified Coach
Director, Cal-ICMA Coaching Program
visit the "Coaching Corner" at www.cal-icma.org



Mentoring gives new employees and managers key insights and support for their success in your organization. The person new in his or her role learns how to be effective. The mentor gains the satisfaction of sharing his or her knowledge and experience.

Here are some elements for a successful mentoring relationship.

1. Explain the organization and how things work.

Who are the players? Where does the new employee or manager fit in the bigger picture? How do you get things done in the organization? Where are we headed?

2. Highlight key factors for success.

Most jobs have a few things that are especially important in order to be successful. Develop a list, something like, "Top 10 Things to Be a Successful [position]." Get input from people who have succeeded in the role.

3. Identify and encourage opportunities for early "wins."

Where can the new employee or manager demonstrate success quickly? It's risky to swing for an instant homerun. A few solid hits will be a good start. Help the person think about ways to demonstrate value in his or her first few weeks and months.

4. Share stories and experiences.

Rather than telling the person what to do, offer stories about what you've seen or experienced that may be relevant to him or her. Stories help people understand the messages more deeply and integrate them into their own thinking.

5. Get him or her connected with key people and resources.

Help him or her identify the relationships and resources important to be effective. Introduce him or her to the appropriate people and connections.

6. Give positive feedback.

Most people thrive on a ratio of four positive comments for each improvement suggestion. Look for him or her doing the right things and reinforce those. Keep criticisms focused on behaviors rather than the person.

7. Help him or her chart a rewarding future.

How can he or she progress? What are some useful pathways that fit with his or her interests and strengths? Who can help on the journey?

Celebrate the results!

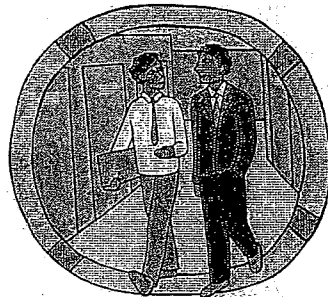
© 2005 Don Maruska & Company, Inc.
895 Napa Avenue, Suite A-5, Morro Bay, California 93442
805-772-4667; fax: 805-772-4697; don@donmaruska.com; www.donmaruska.com

Good Mentors....

- Model positive, professional behavior, i.e., are people to look up to
- Create safe environments for growth and learning by:
 - Providing challenging assignments to stretch skills and experience
 - Serving as an accessible resource and sounding board when needed
 - Treating mistakes as learning opportunities
 - Recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance
- Give protégés full credit for successes, but share responsibility for failures
- Provide candid observations, even constructive criticism, when deserved
- Work hard to develop a positive, mutually beneficial mentor—protégé relationship
- Push protégés onwards and upwards when it's time (Sometimes, even the bravest needs a nudge.)

Good Protégés....

- Take the initiative in scheduling regular time to meet with their mentor. Then, take the initiative in setting the agenda.
- Are open to candid feedback, even when it's not pleasant to hear
- Ask for what they need, when they need it
- Engage their mentor as a resource to discuss issues, evaluate results, and identify future steps for continued professional growth
- Are open to challenging, seemingly "impossible" assignments
- Work hard to develop a positive, mutually beneficial mentor—protégé relationship. Express appreciation for mentor's time and support.



MENTORING PROGRAM PLAN

This program plan is a suggestion for a way to organize and plan your mentoring process. This approach is *optional*, but if you think it would be helpful, you may devote time in your first meeting to developing this program plan.

Each goal will be recorded on a separate Development Plan sheet (sample on the back of this sheet). Your goals may be professional, educational and personal. The Development Plan is to be completed by the participant. Spaces are provided for:

Name: Enter your name.

Development Goal: In this space, write the goal you wish to achieve. Make the statement in terms of the outcome, or end result, rather than the process you will use to get there. Goals may evolve from the following statements:

- I want to achieve the following in the next year.
- I want to strengthen the following skills.
- The following are my short and long-term career goals.

Date: Enter the date by which you expect to accomplish the goal.

Action Steps: List detailed, sequential steps for achieving the goal.

Target Date: For each action step, enter a target date for completion. Pencil these dates in your daily planner to help keep on schedule.

Resources Desired: You may need assistance from sources other than your mentor. List people, places, information and any other items you anticipate needing to accomplish each action.

Status/Progress Comments: Use this column to prepare for discussion with your mentor and for reinforcing yourself to complete scheduled action steps. Enter comments about the status of each action, progress made since the last review, etc.

Add additional Action Steps and Target Dates when appropriate.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Name: _____ Date: _____

Development Goal: _____

Action Steps	Target Dates	Resources Required	Status/Progress Comments