

Reverse mentoring - Intergenerational collaboration

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"Nobody knows it all - the younger what the older know, nor the older that the younger knows. Reverse mentoring minimises the gap." - Auguste (Gusti) Coetzer



What is reverse mentoring?

It involves pairing a younger, tech-savvy employee as a mentor with a more experienced senior executive to exchange knowledge and insights. Reverse mentoring emphasises that each generation brings unique skills and aptitudes to the table.

In the past, often, a single age group dominated the workplace. Today, there is a greater mix of ages and generations working together because people live longer and stay longer in the workplace, and younger generations are hired for their digital understanding. It emphasises the need for sharing knowledge between generations. For instance, online transformation is embraced in the world of work today and the older generations may struggle with new technologies. A millennial could teach a baby boomer how to use Bluesky as a marketing tool.

Other than closing the generational gap in the workplace, what else are the benefits of reverse mentoring?

It supports diversity, equity and inclusion, enhancing gender-diverse leadership practices. It also demonstrates a fundamental interest in worker well-being, making millennials feel more appreciated. Millennial retention tenure is therefore achieved.

Reverse mentoring enhances creativity, open-mindedness and innovation in today's ever-changing business world. It results in that young learn more "tricks" from the old and vice versa. The younger generation is looking for digital transformation that leads to digital leadership.

James Taylor, Director at Dispense Digital, who benefited from reverse mentoring, also noticed its effect on younger employees.

"As someone who has been mentored by younger staff in agency roles, I can say that the one common benefit is that the younger person doing the mentoring learns just how much they actually know about their role, and you can quickly see their confidence increasing because of the mentorship. It's often a positive outcome that the younger staff members were not expecting!"

The most crucial factor to consider before embarking on a mentoring programme is to establish the business challenges you are trying to address and how reverse mentoring would improve your business's strategic objectives.

The most desired outcome is driving innovation – resulting in profitability, green corporate practices and sustainability.

Other positive outcomes are:

- Young top talent acceleration.
- Willingness to take calculated risks.
- "Aha moments" resulting and embarking on new activities to improve business practices in muddled business waters.
- Reduces biases in the workplace, increases mutual acceptance and trust and promotes a team-orientated environment.
- Improved marketing campaigns such as digital presence, public relations communications, and customer connectivity.
- Reduces conflict and increases moral support within the workforce.
- Creating equity, equality and enhancing cultural changes.
- Reduces fears and distrust between generations and racial groups.
- Reduces training spend and recruitment costs.

In conclusion, the most desirable outcome would be for older leaders to be recognised as pillars in the organisation and the younger mentors as future leaders.

Operating since 1990, Auguste (Gusti) Coetzer is the doyenne of executive search in the sub-Saharan Africa recruitment industry and is the founder and CEO of People Power Placements SA (PTY) Ltd, trading as Auguste Coetzer Executive Recruitment. P3 is part of a global recruitment partnership Talentor that operates across 5 continents in 35 countries and 52 offices.

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