

Mentoring Programs for Succession Planning

Mentoring programs are good tools to help develop an organization's long-term management success. Today's executive may be effective but if there are no employees moving up in the organization to replace them, there will be disruptive, if not very costly, gaps in the future.

At the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation (MLC), a mentoring program was established in 2002 to help the Corporation in its succession planning and competency development. Les Parry, project manager of the mentoring program, explains that the purpose is to have a foundation in succession planning, to enable personal and professional growth, and to build staff competencies.

"Mentoring is a learning experience for the 'mentee' but we find our mentors also learn, especially more about the details of front line work," Parry says. "The program broadens the mentor's perspective; it's not just a one-way street."

The MLC mentoring program is founded on the principle of putting a succession plan in place and is evaluated consistently to ensure it is meeting its objectives from the larger perspective and from the individual mentor/mentee perspective.

"Both mentor and mentee must submit an application to participate," Parry says. "We apply rigorous acceptance criteria. Mentors generally are chosen first because there are fewer to choose from and they must have the time available to commit over the nine-month program."

Once mentors and mentees are selected, they are partnered based on interests and needs. Together, they determine the competencies they will focus on during the nine months, in addition to the competency Building Strategic Performance which is required of all partners.

"We have 11 core competencies including customer service, teamwork and cooperation, self-development and initiative, valuing diversity, and integrity and trust," Parry says.

Mentees self-assess on the competencies, deciding where they rank themselves. Depending on their position, they are expected to be at a certain level in each competency.

The partners then prepare a learning plan that includes objectives and a timeline to work towards developing the identified competencies. They also have an agreement both partners must sign.

Program participants attend an orientation session to understand the expectations of MLC. Parry follows up monthly with the partners to ensure the learning plan is being followed and to identify any issues that may require resolution.

A mentoring program toolkit is given to all participants. It includes: a list of all the competencies; a 'how-to' guide to create a learning plan that has objectives and a timeline; a written agreement; an assessment of competencies; and a meeting log.

The mentoring program at Manitoba Lotteries has been so well received; the demand for it is exceeding the capacity. That is an encouraging position that bodes well for its future. As more employees move through the program, their competencies and confidence increase at the same time the Corporation's succession planning base is strengthened.