



Ideas and information for
human resource professionals



Workforce Development

Mentorship Matters

Imagine highly tailored, expert advice for both professional and personal life goals and transitions being readily available. That's what a skilled mentor can provide. Having an engaged, intentional, and present mentor helps support and build talent. Beyond talent and skill building, research points to a trusted mentoring relationship serving to bolster emotional wellbeing for mentees as well. No wonder people seek out mentors, and that people who seek out mentors are promoted more frequently.

There are benefits to the mentors, too. In some studies, mentors report feeling like their jobs are more meaningful. Mentors also report lower levels of anxiety as well, according to the [Harvard Business Review](#). This relationship can be one that both parties learn from and creates a mentor pipeline with current mentees becoming future mentors.

Fortune 500 companies are keyed into the benefits of mentorship, with 70 percent of these large corporations having a program. Such programs can help boost a business' ability to attract and retain talent. This can be for all candidates but also for diversity and inclusion, since women and people of color report having a mentor as a valuable component of their success. This is particularly true for hiring Millennials, who want career direction and work that is meaningful and may benefit from strong mentoring programs.

With an ever-more-mobile workforce, mentorship can ensure your top performers share their knowledge in case they leave, per an article in [Feedstuffs](#). Likewise, newer employees onboard more successfully when they have a strong mentor. Beyond sharing how processes and systems work at a particular company, mentors can also share culture tips that can help a newer employee integrate into an office community more seamlessly.

Whether a formal program or a more informal relationship, mentorship is something employees want but may not know how to get, says [HR Dive](#). More than 75 percent say mentorship matters, but only 56 percent have ever had a mentor. Individuals currently being mentored falls



to only 37 percent. HR departments of companies of all sizes should be prepared to answer questions about programs during interviews and hiring.

A few keys to building a successful mentorship program include:

Provide opportunities for feedback. For mentors looking to improve and open to constructive criticism, one of the best resources may just be anonymous feedback. It would only be truly anonymous, but also likely most valuable, after mentoring enough people to find trends or notice areas from improvement. [Science](#) reports that, while face-to-face conversations are important for mentoring relationships, anonymous feedback is equally important for individuals to improve.

Look beyond direct managers/supervisors for mentors. An article in [Forbes](#) points to a manager's role as one of ensuring projects are successful and business goals met. That can get in the way of working on an individual's development. Look outside of direct management for an employee's mentor so the mentor can focus on the individual.

Invest in your mentoring program, and the mentors themselves. Creating a program is exciting and full of potential but taking time to train mentors is essential. Success happens after the launch of the program after all. Be sure you're spending as much time developing your mentors, says the [Association for Talent Development](#). If they feel like they are expected to just know what to do, they may struggle. Creating guides, training, and direction to mentors helps them feel successful from the start.

Make time for connection and conversation. Nearly half of mentees report that getting time with the mentors proves challenging. As an organization, consider how you can support a successful connection by carving out regular time for both individuals to be available. Trust building, boundary and expectation setting, and more all take time.

Read more:

[Mentoring Can Supercharge Your Staff](#)

[Most Employees Say a Mentor Is Important, but Few Have One](#)

[Want to Become a Better Mentor? Ask for Anonymous Feedback](#)

[5 Reasons Mentors Need Help](#)

[Stressed at Work? Mentoring a Colleague Could Help](#)

[Why You Need A Mentor Who Isn't Your Boss](#)

Wellness

Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace

Mental Health Month in May each year is a campaign to raise overall awareness about mental health in America that started in 1949. The effort to bring mental health to the forefront of employee wellness conversations is relatively new. According to [Employee Benefit News](#), it's only been in the last five years that employers have more aggressively worked to inform



employees about what help is available and also encourage employees to get help, putting mental health treatment in the same space as any health concern.

Work-related stress, ranging from pressure of our always-connected culture to burnout, impacts absenteeism and performance. So, too, does non-work-related stress, like personal and financial worries, health challenges, and even the current political climate, says [HR Executive](#). Anxiety and depression diagnoses are up by double digit percentages, per another article in [HR Executive](#). Additionally, the link between mental health and physical health is clear. Anxiety and depression are risk factors for health concerns like heart disease and stroke. With more than three in four employees saying they've struggled with a mental health challenge, this is not an issue concerning only a small minority of employees.

For many, fear about discrimination from peers, managers, or leadership, the stigma surrounding mental health in general, as well as specific concerns about job protection make sharing a diagnosis or seeking help unappealing. This is an organizational challenge and requires an organizational response. Since culture starts at the top, this must include an accessible plan visibly championed by leadership, who help create a workplace culture that supports mental health, offers comprehensive programs and benefits, recommends resources engages employees at all level in decision-making and more.

HR departments need to promote and share the services that are available via health insurance plans or employee assistance programs. Additionally, HR teams, or perhaps all employees, need training on how to recognize symptoms of a mental health challenge and respond by offering resources. Even simple steps like encouraging mindfulness about language or jokes that call out mental health can also help create a climate that encourages openness and support.

As we learn more about the spectrum of mental health, and how often and fluidly individuals move between fully functional and a crisis, the more important empathic, proactive support will be. Many companies have worked to bolster mental health offerings and de-stigmatize seeking help when a crisis strikes. The next step, according to HR experts, is to offer preventative or proactive resources to help employees build resiliency and learn stress management techniques, says [Harvard Business Review](#).

Beyond traditional components like talk therapy and medical interventions as part of health plans or employee-assistance programs, many companies are turning to tech resources, like apps for meditation or tools that gamify or encourage exercise and sleep as well as content on demand, like webinars on parenting, stress reduction, and other relevant topics.

Higher employee assistance plan utilization leads to lower short-term and long-term-disability claims, according to [HR Executive](#). Leaders concerned about employees seeking treatment and taking time away from work can look to data like this that shows returns on an investment in employee mental health. Beyond being the right thing to do for employees, it's often the right thing to do for the bottom line.



Read more:

[7 Ways to \(Effectively\) Address Mental Health in the Workplace](#)

[5 Ways Bosses Can Reduce the Stigma of Mental Health at Work](#)

[The Case for Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace](#)

[Use these Innovative Strategies to Improve Mental Health](#)

[It's Time to Remove the Barriers, Stigma Around Mental Healthcare](#)

Employee Benefits

Sabbaticals Can Benefit Employees and Employers

While many employees may be dreaming of a short summer vacation, others could have a longer block of time off in mind. Sabbaticals, whether paid or unpaid, are extended breaks from work without leaving a position. A sabbatical gives an employee the opportunity to take time to travel, spend time with family, do something meaningful or volunteer, pursue a long-held goal, learn something new, or simply recharge.

Many employers would agree that a recharged employee is a more engaged and productive employee. In fact, some firms require newly promoted senior employees to take a sabbatical before beginning their next role. And one noted example, designer Stefan Sagmeister, closes his studio for a full year every seven years. It might be the most direct modern use of the origin of the word *sabbatical*, which come from the Hebrew word for *rest* and relates to the practice of letting land lie fallow for a year every seven years so it can remain productive.

Beyond fallow time for land, the idea of a sabbatical has been around for years, particularly in academia says [Fast Company](#). Still, [Workforce](#) reports that in 2017 less than 20 percent of companies offered a sabbatical program. Most offer them to certain employees, like those getting a promotion to senior level, or management who've served over five years. It's interesting to note, though, that the number jumps to a quarter of employers on a list of 100 best companies to work for compiled by [Fortune](#).

A company without an explicit sabbatical policy may want to consider developing one, or can expect to be asked about it, says the [Harvard Business Review](#). For an employee who presents a well-considered proposal and is able to show their value to the company, it may be a wise investment. When weighing the value of the sabbatical for the employee, consider what may be in it for the employer, like the acquisition of new skills or perspectives, that can be brought back to the workplace. Employees who have successfully taken a sabbatical report feeling more resilient, focused, ambitious innovative, and engaged. They're also more appreciative of their workplace and employer, which can lead to improved employee loyalty and retention.

A sabbatical program would be appealing to new hires, especially in a tight job market or when recruiting Millennials, who value meaning over making money. In order to not miss out on a qualified candidates, consider a gap in a work history with curiosity about a potential sabbatical they've taken, says [The Muse](#). If your company is ready to support a sabbatical, just be sure the



recipients have a plan for limiting impact on other employees so burnout isn't simply transferred or resentment created. Be mindful, too, that the employee is aware of whether an extended leave would impact promotion or raise timing.

Not ready to offer a longer-term paid sabbatical? An employee may be open to an unpaid sabbatical. If that's not an option, encourage employees to take their vacation time since more than half of workers finished 2018 with unused time off. Or, create one day a month or even an hour a week that's dedicated to non-required tasks or meeting expectations. See what your employees can do with time delegated to freedom to explore.

Read more:

[Thinking About Taking a Sabbatical? Here's What You Need to Know](#)

[Should You Take a Sabbatical? 3 Women Weigh In](#)

[How to Ask Your Boss for an Unpaid Leave to Travel, Study, or Spend Time with Family](#)

[Sabbaticals Help Fight Employee Burnout](#)

In Brief

Get Ready for the Class of 2019

It's June, and that means that across the country college seniors have donned caps and gowns and preparing to enter the workforce. They've got good reason to be optimistic. [CNBC](#) reports that companies are looking to hire 16 percent more graduates than they did in 2018. In fact, it's the biggest increase in hiring since 2007, the last class to graduate before the Great Recession.

Continued low unemployment rates contribute to this and also give new campus hires leverage in the interview process. Companies looking to hire from this cohort will need to think about recruitment and retention strategies that will appear to workers born in the last few years of the 20th century. For companies interested in appealing to the class of 2019, it may mean being culturally literate to their moment in time. [The Mindset List](#) is compendium of trends and talking points that help orient others to the worldview of each graduating class.

Curious about what to keep in mind for the class of 2019? For these digital natives, Google has always existed and Wi-Fi has been readily available since they could know to want it. That lets the Internet be their main source for information. Books and journals are quaint, if sometimes required, resources for research. Princess Diana is the mother of Harry and Will — not a style icon and celebrity — since she died before most of the grads were born. A Brit who's been around their whole lives: Harry Potter. Email is the common formal way to communicate, important for Millennial managers to remember who see email as informal. Most of these new workers will have never licked a postage stamp or used a phone book not on their phone. And remember, the 20th century, not the 19th, is what's considered last century for your newest hires.



Read more:

[Good News for Grads: Employers Plan to Hire 16.6% More Workers From the Class of 2019 Than They Did Last Year](#)

[The Mindset List® For the Class of 2019](#)

Employer Webinar

Part Two: What Employers Need to Know about Handling Benefits When Employees Are on Leave

Tuesday, July 9, 2019 • 2:00 p.m. ET / 11:00 a.m. PT

This webinar is Part Two of our two-part series and will cover how an employer should handle health benefits when employees are on leave.

This webinar will:

- Briefly describe the laws and regulations that govern leave administration, including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA), and state law considerations including workers' compensation
- Discuss best practices for payment of premiums when an employee is on paid leave, unpaid FMLA leave, unpaid non-FMLA leave, or receiving workers' compensation, short-term disability payments, or long-term disability payments
- Discuss how an employer should approach premium payment during leave when the employer doesn't have a policy regarding premium payment or hasn't communicated its premium payment policy to an employee who is already on leave
- Describe how an employer counts an employee's hours under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) when an employee is on leave, including whether hours are counted differently depending on the type of leave or depending on the employee's status as full-time or variable hour
- Provide practical tips to properly administer benefits during leave

This 60-minute intermediate level webinar will help employers understand how to administer benefits when an employee is on leave

Registration

[Register here for the webinar](#). The presentation will be posted on the [UBA website](#) the afternoon before the webinar.



About the Presenter

[Chelsea Deppert](#) is an associate in the Atlanta office of Fisher Phillips. She provides practical guidance to employers on the technical aspects of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and other state and federal laws impacting the design, implementation and ongoing compliance of employee benefit plans and programs. She advises clients with respect to all aspects of employee benefits, including retirement plans, health and other welfare benefit plans.

Certification

This webinar has been submitted to the [Human Resource Certification Institute](#) and the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) to qualify for 1 recertification credit hour.