



## MENTORING AND COACHING - EFFICIENT INSTRUMENTS FOR THE YOUNG OFFICERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *The article studies how mentoring and coaching improve the capability of a military organization to thrive for talent in today's competitive environment. It tackles the definitions of mentoring and coaching, their roles and functions, and their differences. The article mentions the benefits and issues of the organizational management which include established systems for leadership succession, employees' professional growth, productivity, talent recruitment and retention. The article suggests that mentoring based on a symbiotic relationship among the mentor, mentee and the organization has potentials for success. It is also mentioned that coaching and mentoring are not the same thing. Mentoring is a two-way mutually beneficial learning situation where the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and teaches using a low pressure, self-discovery approach. The mentor is both a source of information/knowledge and a Socratic questioner. In the case of a coach the one who learns works for him and the concerns of coach are disciple's performance, ability to adapt to change, and enrolling his support in the vision/direction for their work unit. Both coaching and mentoring are an approach to management and a set of skills to nurture staff and deliver results. They are, fundamentally, learning and development activities that share similar roots despite lively debate among academics and practitioners.*

**Keywords:** *mentoring, coaching, officers, organizational goals*

### 1. THE CONTEXT

In modern societies, organizations which have a proper management are highly concerned with developing human resources, this concern being part of a larger performance system that includes, in its turn, performance evaluation, formal training, and rewarding. Besides these more formal traditional activities, managers-subordinates daily interaction is as important since it can strengthen capabilities, enrich knowledge and trigger desirable professional values. Teamwork is present on all levels so that coaching has become extremely important. This is what coaching and mentoring do.

Lately, the literature, especially the foreign one has been dealing with mentoring and coaching, their place and role, their educational, psycho-sociological and manage-

rial qualities and competences. Even though these concepts are fairly new to our socio-cultural and economic life, they are fundamental and the multitude of definitions that the foreign literature use to define them clarify the reason behind the decision to take very seriously all aspects which refer to staff training. In this context, coaching is an activity in which managers work with their subordinates in order to develop the latter's skills, they share specialized knowledge and induce values and behavioural types that will help the employees to reach their organizational goals and prepare them for more challenging tasks. Mentoring, as well as coaching, is a way of developing human resource and it focuses on individual personal orientation in their efforts of personal growth through education.

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## 2. MENTORING AND ITS BENEFITS

**2.1 Mentoring as an instrument of professional development.** Even though the literature provides us with several definitions, it is important to mention that mentoring should be perceived as a process whose goal is to convey information and develop a set of capabilities. People who should be involved in such an activity should be highly experienced individuals who are willing to pass on their knowledge to young people at the beginning of their career. Yet, according to Richard Luecke, *mentoring refers to an experienced, capable individual who offers wise and substantial advice, information and counselling to another individual in order to help the latter develop his personal and professional skills* (Luecke, 2004: 76).

Any mentoring relation which takes place within an organization, requires a period of time sufficient for the mentor to make sure that the person he is 'counselling' is able to properly develop and use the information he is given. During such an experience, the needs, and the nature of the relationship change, the mentor needs to be aware of such changes and thus vary, according to certain requirements, the degree and type of attention, help, information and support he offers.

The successful implementation of such an initiative within the process of initial training in a military career needs a serious psychopedagogic substantiation and a rigorous selection of military personnel who can carry out such attributions. Not all experienced officers can be an efficient mentor for any apprentice he has been given. The young officer needs guidance in order to better adjust to the complexity of the military organization. Therefore the mentor should be willing to support in order to help the apprentice overcome any unexpected situation.

Mentoring pursues providing support for personal development and it has two important functions:

a. **Career function** – strengthens/improves basic rule learning and prepares the apprentice for a promotion within the organization;

b. **Psycho-social function** – improves the feeling of personal capability, personal identity and the professional role one assumes, helping people build self-respect both in and out of the organization.

Table 1: Personal development support through mentoring (Kram, K.E., 1988 adapted by Luecke R., 2004: 77).

Career functions	Psycho-social functions
<i>Sponsorship</i> – opens doors.	<i>Role shaping</i> – emphasizes behavioural, attitude and value types.
<i>Coaching</i> – teaches and ensures feedback.	<i>Counselling</i> – helps the protégé to deal with major professional dilemmas.
<i>Protection</i> – gives support to the apprentice and acts like 'silencer' of the effects of other individuals on his protégé.	<i>Acceptance and confirmation</i> – morally supports the protégé and shows him respect.
<i>Challenge</i> – encourages the apprentice to think out of the box.	<i>Friendship</i> – takes care of the protégé beyond formal requirements.
<i>Exposure and visibility</i> – stimulates the protégé to get involved and assume certain work tasks.	

The mentoring process is not a continual one, it unfolds on a certain period of time, and it has a main target reaching certain pre-established goals (both of the mentor's and the apprentice's). Thus, the relation formed between the mentor and the apprentice is based on the final goal which means effective assimilation and use of knowledge and abilities necessary for the position in question.

Mentoring can 'speed up socializing, encourages social interactions, provides opportunities for social interaction, provides opportunities for good interpersonal interactions, emphasizes identification and involvement in the organization' (Wigard, Boster, 2001, *apud* I. O. Pânișoară, 2010). As

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an unconventional system, mentoring is a personalized method, closer to employees' special needs in order to enhance their performance and motivation.

Mentoring main role is to reduce the staff's mobility. This training process must start in a very well defined system, it must have a clear structure and it must make instruments in a very efficient manner for the system.

Thus, regardless of whether the mentor works in or outside the organization, the mentoring process can focus on the following general objectives:

1. supporting the employee carry out his role within the organization (a new role);
2. smooth integration in the team and team development;
3. knowledge assimilation necessary for a present or future position within the company;
4. action techniques development for a more efficient adjustment to situations;;
5. communication and organization climate improvement;
6. professional abilities and capabilities development.

All these objectives, once reached, will help the individual identify a proper modality to have a better relationship with the organization. When someone manages to get integrated into the organization through mentoring or coaching, that person get immediate access to the mentor's experience and professional perspective. Studies and research have proven that such programmes are high successful, since they provide a great flexibility, openness, communication and mutual understanding.

In a military organization, the relationship between the mentor and the apprentice will be formal so that it could promote the employees' development. For example, the US army has adopted this concept and they have adjusted it to their own cultural view, understanding the need of such a formal programme. The relationship is based on mutual responsibility. Together, the two develop realistic goals. The programme depends on mutual understanding regarding the goals, missions and objectives. Mentors help their apprentices to better

understand the programme's goals and objectives and thus they can have a valuable contribution to the organization. Mentors play a very important role in building self-confidence which is essential for the success of the mentoring process. They help the apprentices to develop on both a personal and professional level. The mentor's signature certifies a contract between the two parties which serves as a measure for later success.

Within CIA, there are several ongoing formal mentoring programmes, from a low level structures (such as offices) to the directorates level. The projects are managed by a dedicated direction which makes sure that all employees, on all levels, get involved in mentoring programmes. CIA supports such programmes also financially; such programmes give annual awards of excellence, organize workshop meant to analyse the best practices in the field, etc.

Regardless of the mentoring type, whether formal or informal, the mentor has to show support:

- *information support* - the mentor need to be an information resource for his apprentices, he needs to provide the newest information, make them accessible, find the applicable side of information in general.
- *instrument support*- the mentor has to crystallise the apprentices' learning skills, to learn how to select a material, to decide on a piece of information using his own thinking. The apprentice must be able to make a clear difference between ability, skill and competence, so he will know how to deal with any given information.
- *evaluation support* - the mentor must provide continual and serious feedback through which he appreciates the quality and the quantity of the job done by the apprentice.
- *emotional support* - the mentor has to provide support and understanding when the apprentice needs them, which enhances the apprentice's trust in his mentor. Naturally, having more trust generates a deeper involvement, a higher voluntarily effort, a better learning climate.

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**2.2 Benefits of mentoring.** The mentoring relationship is beneficial both for the protégé and the mentor, but also for the organization. This is why companies must develop and carry on such programmes of personal growth..

- *The mentor's benefits.* People who undertake such an activity has the personal satisfaction of conveying something from their experience, knowledge to people who need it. In this way mentors get personal acknowledgment both from the people they help and also from other people within the organization. Kram (*apud* Sonnentag, 2002: 297) states that 'loyal protégés can also offer psychological support to their mentors'. Reflecting on this idea, mentors have suggested other benefits too: exercising and development of personal leading style; alternative perceptions over a way, activity or issue; insights regarding their personal development ; motivation and positive appreciations from his protégé.

• *The organization and apprentices' benefits.* One of the major benefits of mentoring on an organizational level refers to a better integration and socializing of the new employees, but at the same time old employees' career development as a secondary benefit such as 'diminishing organization migration, a better organizational communication, a more efficient management, improvement of managerial and power succession' (Zey, in Sonnentag, 2002: 297). The fact that new employees have access , through their mentors, to people who can explain certain action rules (that they cannot understand by themselves), people who can offer them feedback to their behaviour (both appreciative and less appreciative ones), make them feel closer to the organization and its goals, help them integrate faster and more smoothly, etc.

### 3. COACHING AND ITS BENEFITS

**3.1 Coaching - as a professional training instrument.** The organizational structure is comprised of positions which require more or less responsibility. It is very unlikely that

coaching programmes could aim at people who are on low responsibility position, since such programmes are extremely necessary for employees in a high position and with a high number of employees and apprentices he is responsible for. .

When the leader does not exercise a dominant authoritarian attitude and manages to develop a partnership with his employee, the relationship boss-employee changes into a mentor-protégé relationship which will be more efficient and profitable. Built on a mnemonic formula - ARDE: Abandonment, Recognition, Dedication, Extension- it pragmatically offers a very useful working tool in order to have organizational success supported by a life-long training (Bell, 2010.).

Without a clear delimitation, coaching can be often mistaken for mentoring, training or counselling. Coaching which is actually done by a coach means supporting a person- a client or coachee, within the process of obtaining certain results both on a personal and professional level. There are lots of structures and the methods used in the coaching process, but essentially they rely on client encouragement to discover new values of their personality and professional life.

Coaching is different from therapy, counselling or mentoring and can be done in individual or group sessions. Its objective can be similar to other techniques which imply helping people in need: supporting personal change according to the client and helping him to reach his highest limits.

Through coaching or personal development certain behavioural patterns could be changed such as stress management, time management, personal and professional relationships management, personal improvement. coaching is intended for people who wish a positive change in their life in order to improve their performance in different areas of life.

Coaching is intended for managers, entrepreneurs, people who wish to change something in their personal and professional life and who do not have a clear picture about their life.

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There are several types of coaching but the capabilities involved are generally the same; the difference comes in the way they are used in different fields. A coaching programme can specialize in one of these branches and quite often the fields overlap.

The purpose of coaching<sup>1</sup> is to identify the best solutions in order to eliminate issues regarding:

- weak communication within the team;
- misunderstanding and lack of commitment and responsibilities of the employees;
- cognitive dissonance, and the employee's difference in perception from his employer regarding the way things should be done and what results should be obtained;
- employees negative attitudes and behaviours;
- little volunteering and pro-activity of members of the team;
- integration of a new employee in the structures of the organization;
- an individual performance on a new or old position;
- identification of the real reasons regarding lack of determination of the employees and solving such issues;
- coach conceptualization in order to promote the image of the company.

According to its field of applicability (personal or professional) coaching can have different goals, but at the same time it has common features.

On a personal level, coaching

- offers personalized solutions according to the individual's personal needs in order to self develop, helps finding personal balance and skills which will allow choosing the right career;
- it allows the identification of emotional blockage which influence and slows down the individual's personal growth;
- through coaching we have the chance to define our role in life ('Know thyself') and

fulfil our destiny by identifying and reach important personal goals;

- adjusting to a new situation (for example when you find yourself in a new situation which can create issues on a personal level - death of a close person, moving to another city)

Coaching goals regarding professional development refers to:

- problem identification within team which lead to not reaching the team or organization's targets;
- defining clear objectives on a medium and long term in order to identify the elements which allow their achievement; problems identifying that can occur both on the team level and the organization one, but also the discrepancy between the requirements of the organization and the possibility of the team to cope with them;
- choosing the best ways to reach such objectives;
- adjusting to a new reality (for example, in case of a promotion or lay off or even opening your own business).

The activity of coaching takes place by providing consultancy services. Coaching courses - which allow a person to become a coach, are mainly a private enterprise and rarely, only in certain countries they are part of post graduation studies. This is why, the military system should develop such an instrument that relies on internationally accepted structures and standards and are internationally recognized.

**3.2 The benefits of coaching.** Among coaching benefits we can mention:

- establishing personal goals;
- performance improvement;
- overcoming blockages;
- improving communication;
- improving decision making;
- developing a personal vision;
- defining priorities;
- time management;
- crisis management;
- a better self perspective;
- personal balance;
- improving social skills.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cbc.ro/ro/coaching/scopul-coachingului.html>

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### 4. KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MENTORING AND COACHING

Richard Luecke claims that the goal of mentoring is wider than the one of coaching, the latter being, in fact, a subcategory of the former (Luecke, 2004: 77). The same author presents the main differences between the two activities.

**Table 2:** Key differences between coaching and mentoring (Luecke, R., 2004, p. 79).

	<b>Coaching</b>	<b>Mentoring</b>
<b>Key goals</b>	To correct less proper behaviours, to improve performances and share competences that the employee needs in order to accept new responsibilities.	To support and guide the protégé's personal development.
<b>Guidance initiative</b>	The coach guides studying and training.	The protégé is responsible with his own training.
<b>Volunteering</b>	Even though it is important that the employee accept the coaching process, this might not necessarily happen voluntarily.	Both the mentor and the protégé are pro-active.
<b>Focus</b>	Immediate issues ,learning opportunities.	Long term personal career development
<b>Roles</b>	High emphasis on the role of the coach of <i>telling</i> and also give a proper feedback	High emphasis on mentor listening, providing a new role model and offering suggestions and relationships/links to the protégé.
<b>Time</b>	Usually focusing on immediate	Long term.

	needs on a short period. Occasionally performed 'when needed'.	
<b>Type of relationship</b>	The coach is the hierarchic boss of the beneficiary/ client.	The mentor is rarely the direct boss of the protégé . Most experts insist that the mentor should not be part of the upper hierarchic chain.

The final difference between the two activities can be summarized as follows: coaching refers to the present job and present work of place, whereas mentoring refers to career in general. (Luecke, 2004, p. 78). This last feature defines coaching as professional training and mentoring as professional development.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Why would a military organization implement such programmes? The motivation behind such a decision could be both the costs advantage which is almost non-existent (in comparison with other options available to the Human Resources Department) and also the applicability in many areas of interest, as mentoring and coaching, as well, are extremely effective ways of:

- employees' stimulation;
- general capabilities improvement, leadership and management in particular;
- career planning and development;
- inter-departments communication;
- personal initiative;
- educational support/ reducing the distance between theory and practice;
- organizational development and a better adjustment and acquiring of the organizational culture;
- behaviour shaping;
- diminishing staff fluctuation.

If we were to compare civilizations' childhood to the individual's childhood we

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would notice that humankind has always chosen role models that they tried to follow and imitate, as well, and wise people that would both listen and offer guidance, just as a child would do.

Nowadays such acts have become modern practices of mentoring and coaching so that the individual, as part of an organization, could be both mentored and coached in order to be able to learn a pre-established pattern which would eventually benefit the organization. He could be trained to discover native skills and capabilities which are not sufficiently used, both for the individual's interest and the organization's.

All in all, these two instruments mentoring and coaching have both applicability in the military field, which is a field that requires long-life learning, thus exposing its members to such experiences is highly useful in order to improve personal efficiency and effectiveness.

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