



PAY IT FORWARD

Becoming a mentor is not only beneficial for the mentee, writes Melanie Burgess

MENTORS are in high demand, particularly from Millennials, but it is not just the up-and-comer who benefits from a mentoring relationship. Mentors themselves use the relationships to gain skills in stakeholder management (46 per cent do this), project management (30 per cent) and people and team management (16 per cent), a survey by mentoring software platform Mentorloop reveals.

After “paying it forward”, their most common goals were to discuss career progression (21 per cent), connect with the next generation (18 per cent) and enhance their own network (16 per cent).

Mentorloop co-founder and chief operating officer Heidi Holmes says many people become mentors for the altruistic thrill but then stay for the fresh perspective the role provides.

“In the very act of giving advice or sharing experience, mentors relearn fundamental lessons and in turn further develop their leadership skills,” she says.

“For mentors, mentoring is about staying connected, staying relevant, paying it forward and continually putting themselves out there.”

The benefits for mentees also reach beyond having a soundboard to bounce ideas off.

Holmes says by having a mentor, a worker can feel more confident, engaged and satisfied in the workplace.

They can also finesse soft skills that employers are looking for, such as communication, management and negotiation.

“Individuals who have access to great mentors also tend to receive more promotions at work,” she says. “The right connection can change a life and the demand for mentoring is exploding, particularly among Millennials.”

Despite the common perception that a mentor should be much older and wiser than their mentee, Holmes says the most valuable relationships are often between people whose careers are only a few months apart.

“Rather than the traditional, hierarchical

view of the elder statesman imparting knowledge to a lucky protege, mentoring is now flatter and more reciprocal,” she says.

“Everyone has something to learn and to offer. By widening the talent pool, this allows people to connect based on what they need help with right now, rather than years of experience being the driving factor of a connection.”

Holmes also says mentoring should not be restricted to white collar industries.

In 2017, the Australian Government introduced the Industry Specialist Mentoring for Australian Apprentices (ISMAA) program, which aims to increase apprentice retention through regular face-to-face guidance.

Dr Brett Dale, group chief executive of The Motor Trades Association of Queensland, which was selected as an ISMAA provider, says

mentors have a major positive effect on the future workforce of the automotive industry.

Apprentice Kate Stallman took part in the program and says it helped with her transition from part-time desk work to 50-plus hours a week of physically active work.

“Just knowing there was someone I could call

who was knowledgeable about the industry (and) who would listen and be able to offer relevant and experienced advice was invaluable,” she says.

“I really don’t know whether I would still be an apprentice without the support of (my mentor) and ISMAA.”



MAKING CONNECTIONS: Mentorloop co-founders Heidi Holmes and Lucy Lloyd say having a mentor makes employees feel more confident in the workplace. Picture: AARON FRANCIS/THE AUSTRALIAN