

# Coaching And Mentoring For Retaining Talent In A Post-Pandemic World

## | 5 key ways mentoring must evolve

By Dr. Rosina Racioppi

A global crisis on the scale of Covid-19 has inevitably forced change into many organizations' cultures, including coaching and mentoring approaches. This, combined with an expected post-vaccination job market boom, is a major cause for talent manager concern. Rightfully so: studies show as many as half of all workers intend to look for a new job in 2021.

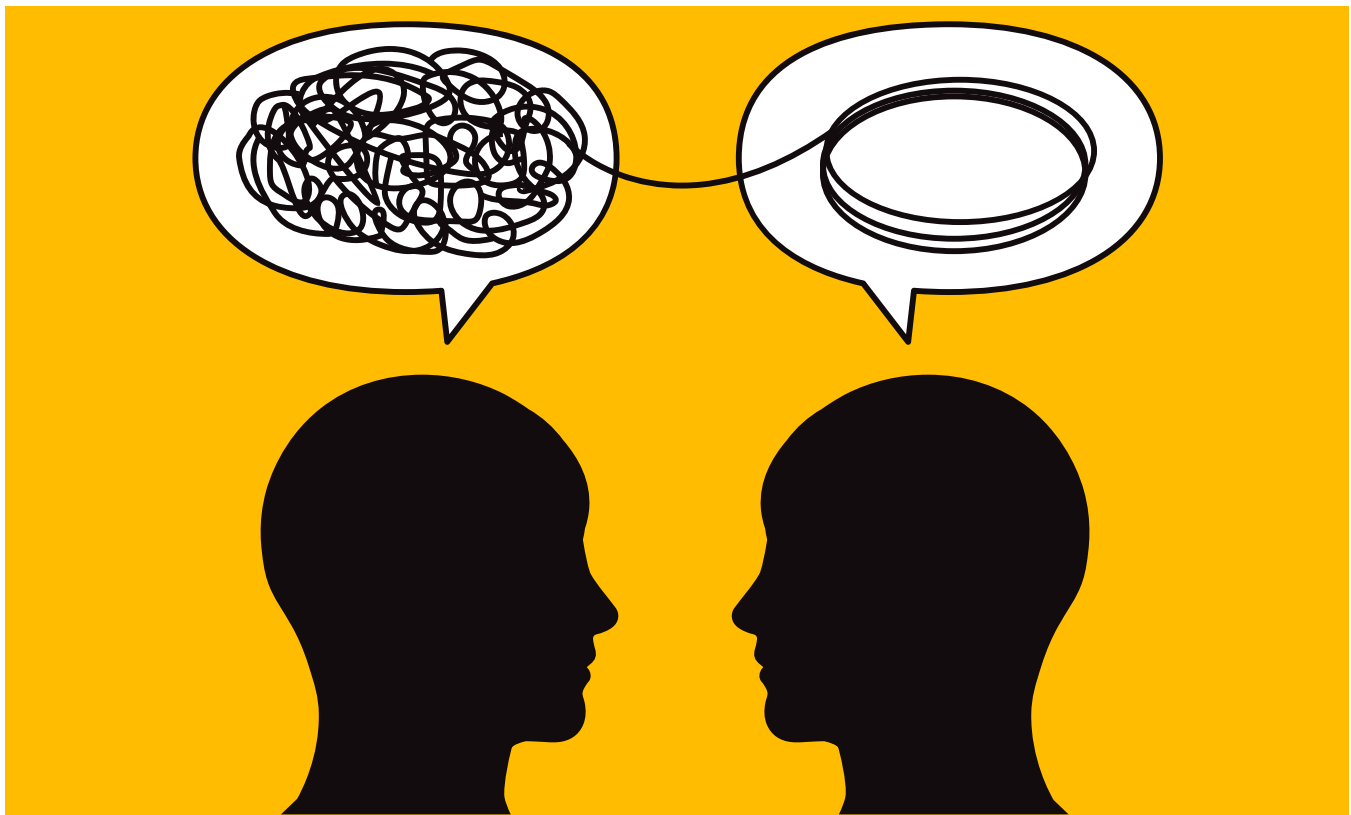
Even without a pandemic, successful coaching and mentoring are proven to improve employee retention, motivation, engagement and commitment. But mentoring will take on a whole new level of importance in a post-pandemic era, and here are five key ways it must evolve:

### 1. Restoke Career and Professional Development Conversations

The start of Covid-19 coincided with a surge in layoffs and furloughs. For many, career and professional development may have taken a back seat to simply staying employed. At the very least, even if goal-setting continued as a formalized process, many employees' goals are likely to have drastically changed pre- and post-Covid-19. It is now critical for mentors and mentees to get back on track with a regular cadence of annual performance reviews; quarterly touch-base meetings;



self-evaluations and a new round of goal-setting. With continued uncertainty, it can be difficult to plan long-term development and career goals, so remember that working with mentees to take even tiny steps in the right direction is good.



## 2. Talk Less, Listen More

One of the best ways to make employees feel valued and important is to listen to them. According to a study by John Izzo, the number one reason employees don't take more initiative at work is that their leaders fail to get their input before making decisions. Leaders dismissing employees' ideas without exploring them is the second biggest reason. This puts the onus on mentors to work extra hard to absorb information, as listening and implementing employees' suggestions is the cornerstone for increasing initiative and employees' levels of personal investment. Active listening and dedicated one-on-one time – especially at such a unique inflection point in history as the current one – will be appreciated far more than you can imagine.

## 3. Engage in Holistic Conversations

As the pandemic wore on, mentoring became as much about things like managing home working, coping with virtual relationships and juggling childcare (especially for women) as it is about talent and leadership development. This shouldn't change in the post-pandemic era, and checking

in with mentees regularly regarding their overall well-being is key. Mentors must be closely attuned to the messages their mentees are giving them. They must be always ready and available as a safe space for mentees to vent, and in some cases, a source of support in negotiating or maintaining flexible work schedules.

## 4. Focus on Work-Life Balance

A significant number of workers cite work-life balance as the primary reason they would search for a new job. While many employees gained significant flexibility as a result of the pandemic and working from home, that doesn't mean they necessarily achieved better work-life balance—and that's especially true among women. Rather, employees may have found themselves cramming twice the amount of what used to be a day's work, into one—leading to burnout, disengagement and ultimately turnover. Here, mentors can emphasize a results-oriented culture, demonstrating to employees that what they produce and when they produce it is far more important than the number of hours put in.



## 5. Always Remember to Put on Your Own Oxygen Mask First

Mentors cannot be effective unless they themselves set an example. Every mentor has the responsibility to demonstrate (in not only word, but action) the organization’s commitment to well-being. In practice, this may mean actually using vacation days, or being open about taking a mental health day. Also, consider “flanking” the beginning and end of each working day with designated blocks of time for morning coffee or team touch-bases. In the event that your organization plans to stay remote or go hybrid post-pandemic, this will help foster unity while also demarcating the clear beginning and end of the workday, for

everyone— thus avoiding the “blurring” of lines that often leads to employee burnout.

We all knew coaching and mentoring would need to change during the pandemic, focusing heavily on more psychological functions like empathy and compassion, while at the same time teaching new skills and behaviors like online meeting etiquette. What we didn’t necessarily know was that mentoring would need to evolve, once again, for a post-pandemic world. As the job market opens up and beckons employees, mentors must pivot once again in order to deepen organizational commitment and foster retention.



**Dr. Rosina Racioppi** is the President and CEO at WOMEN Unlimited. She has more than twenty-five plus years’ experience in human resource management partnering with business leaders to develop the human capital to achieve business results. She is the author or co-author of several books and publications, including: *RELATIONSHIPS MATTER: How Women Use Developmental Networks to Step into Their Power and Influence, Visibility, An Advancement Strategy Women Often Neglect* and *WOMEN Are Changing the Corporate Landscape: Rules for Cultivating Leadership Excellence*. Dr. Racioppi is a sought-after lecturer and public speaker on the subject of mentoring and women’s leadership.



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