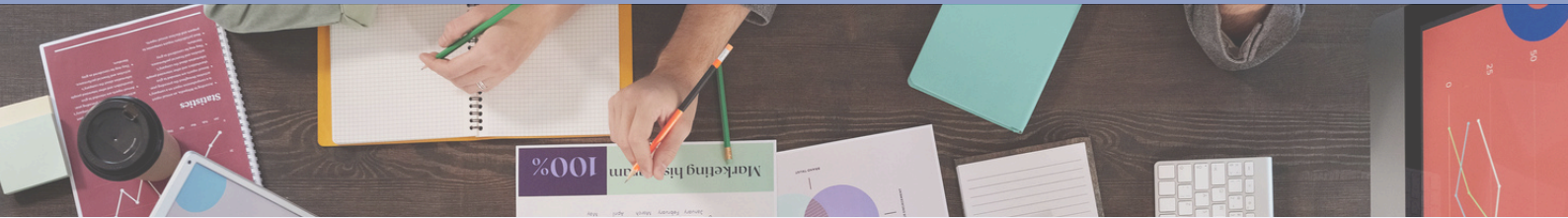


# IntegrAGE

## Curriculum



# MODULE 4

## Knowledge capitalization and mentoring

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



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## Summary

This module focuses on the importance of mentoring and reverse mentoring and their impact on employees and organisations. Its introduction and integration into organisational culture is justified because it contributes to the efficient functioning of companies, helps to raise awareness of corporate knowledge management and, not least, helps to develop good employee relations. The theoretical part goes beyond the conceptual framework to explain the importance, benefits and objectives of mentoring and reverse mentoring, and to define the skills and competencies of each role, as well as the depth of responsibility. Beyond the process of mentoring, the practical part will show how it relates to technological literacy: what assistive technologies or software can be provided to help disabled or older workers perform their tasks more easily. Indeed, when it comes to training on digital tools, it is important that older workers receive adequate training on the digital tools needed for teleworking.

## Glossary

1. **Mentor:** a senior or more experienced individual is assigned to act as an advisor, counsellor, or guide to a junior trainee,” including providing “feedback and support” for the mentee.
2. **Mentee:** someone who needs guidance and training from the mentors to be more qualified.
3. **Mentoring:** employee training system under which a mentor is assigned to act as an advisor, counsellor, or guide to a junior trainee,” including providing “feedback and support” for the mentee.
4. **Reverse Mentoring:** a partnership between a senior-level employee and a junior-level employee in which the junior-level employee helps fill in possible gaps in the more experienced person's knowledge. Reverse mentoring programs often focus on new technology and business practices.
5. **Work or employee engagement:** organisational, affective (i.e., the emotional attachment to the organisation) and continuance commitment (i.e., the desire to stay with the organisation); extra-role behaviour (i.e., discretionary behaviour that promotes the effective functioning of the organization).

## Introduction to mentoring and reverse mentoring

**Experiential learning** in the workplace is important, but it should not be left to chance. This should be enhanced through mentoring or its new trend, reverse mentoring.

A planned, systematic approach to training is desirable at the firms, this can incorporate the definition to employees of what they are expected to do (their roles), an assessment of what they need to learn (a learning specification), the use of designated colleagues to act as guides and mentors and coaching by team leaders or specially appointed and trained departmental trainers. These **on-the-job arrangements** can be complemented by **self-managed learning arrangements** that offer access to e-learning material.

**Mentoring** is the process of using specially selected and trained individuals to provide guidance, pragmatic advice and continuing support that will help the person or persons allocated to them to learn and develop.

Within training and development programmes, mentoring is **less concerned with performance and more concerned with potential**. Mentors prepare people to perform better in the future and groom them for higher and greater things, i.e. career advancement.

Mentoring can play an important role in a leadership, and it is a way of helping people learn and develop; **it complements formal training** by providing those who benefit from it with individual guidance from experienced managers.

The key to mentoring lies in the **power of relationships** to encourage personal, academic and professional development. If a company is serious about the importance of professional development, or if it is looking for talent and clients, mentoring can also give conscious companies and managers a competitive edge - especially in today's fast-changing world with many job changes.

In addition to technology, organisations are also struggling to retain millennials with excellent technology skills. This poses a challenge for organisations in retaining organisational knowledge: on the one hand, a large part of the baby boomer generation approaching retirement age is taking with them a vast **store of organisational knowledge**, and on the other hand, the younger generation, especially millennials, are in a race to grow fast and are therefore chronic job changers.

## Intergenerational learning

To address this challenge, **intergenerational learning** is being proposed to retain millennials and attract boomers. Mentoring and reverse mentoring, in which experienced, and more seasoned employees are paired with mostly fresh and less experienced organisational newcomers, has become a sought-after intervention bridge the knowledge gap between generations.

This works very well when younger, newer and more junior employees in the organisation have **expertise in a particular area** (e.g. technology skills, social media skills, subject matter advancement, diversity and inclusion issues, openness to work-life balance, etc.) and are willing to share this knowledge with their older and more experienced colleagues. This also helps millennials' leadership development, as they gain greater visibility and access to organisational knowledge by working with senior colleagues.

But mentoring extends **far beyond just sharing knowledge about technology**; today's programs focus on how older employees think about strategic issues, leadership, and the mindset with which they approach their work. Many organizations are still exploring how mentoring and reverse mentoring can be innovatively institutionalized organization wide.

## Benefits of mentoring

The main aspect that is to highlight is that older employees have valuable expertise that cannot be wasted and also, they usually find satisfaction in sharing knowledge. Mentoring highlights the value of older employees' expertise, making them feel valued and integral to the organization.

The main **benefits** of mentoring programs:

- **Knowledge Transfer and Retention:** Mentoring ensures this knowledge is transferred to younger colleagues, reducing the risk of loss when older employees retire.
  - *Example:* An experienced project manager trains junior staff on proven methodologies, problem-solving tactics, and organizational norms, ensuring smooth project execution. A colleague over 55 years old mentors a young person on career advancement and explains the different positions he or she undertook to be at the current position.

- **Stronger Team Dynamics:** Mentoring fosters intergenerational collaboration, breaking down silos and improving communication across age groups.
  - *Example:* In a cross-generational mentoring program, senior engineers mentor younger ones, creating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration.
- **Improved Productivity and Innovation:** By sharing practical insights, older mentors help younger colleagues avoid common pitfalls, enhancing efficiency and encouraging innovative approaches.
  - *Example:* A mentor over 55 years teaches a younger salesperson negotiation techniques while learning about new CRM tools from their mentee.

## Benefits of reverse mentoring

As an interpersonal workplace resource, reverse mentoring positively impacts **workplace engagement**. Given its benefits, its accessibility is perceived by participants as organisational support, which in turn leads to them feeling valued.

The main **benefits** of reverse-mentoring programs:

- **Increased retention of Millennials.** Reverse mentoring programmes provide Millennials with the transparency and recognition they seek from management.
  - *Example:* the so-called fireside chat helped the CEO connect with employees. These chats discussed critical issues and requested feedback from employees. This helped the executive committee to not only be more transparent, but also to seek the input of people within the organisation for many decisions.
- **Sharing of digital skills.** While digital skill development should not be the focus of a reverse-mentoring program, many of the companies mention that it is a meaningful part of the relationship.
  - *Example:* A CEO used his mentor to help him with social media, which he had never before integrated into his working life and it shifted the way he/she interacts and communicates with employees.

- **Promoting diversity.** A global firm piloted a reverse-mentoring program in order to improve leadership's understanding of minority issues, including those of LGBT and ethnic minorities. The program now has 122 Millennials mentoring 200 partners and directors worldwide.

## Who is a mentor

Mentors are defined as **individuals with advanced experience and knowledge** who are committed to providing upward support and mobility to their mentee's careers. Traditionally, mentors provide help in two general areas, career development which facilitates the protege's advancement in the organisation, and psychosocial support which contributes to the protege's personal growth and professional development.

It is often assumed that experienced professionals will automatically be effective mentors. However, developing the skills to mentor others requires conscious intention and effort. The strategy to **train mentors in-company** can lead to an improved mentoring culture, as well as organisational learning and growth.

Being a mentor implies having different **roles and responsibilities** that they need to do and provide their mentee with the best mentoring and learning experience possible.

These are some examples of what a mentor can support with:

- **Motivate their mentee**, even during the most challenging times and situations.
- **Act as role models** for their mentee to look up to. A mentor acts as a prime example of professionalism, integrity and positive values.
- **Offer constructive feedback**: the mentor needs to provide their mentee with honest and effective feedback to help them achieve their goals and grow both personally and professionally.
- **Provide career guidance**: mentors provide knowledge and guidance to help the mentees go further in their professional lives.
- **Help set goals**: If individuals want to see success they need to set goals and track their progress. A good mentor helps their mentee build SMART goals, which gives them something to work towards.
- **Accelerate growth**: The role of a mentor is to accelerate and enhance the growth of their mentee. The responsibilities of a mentor include helping the mentee develop their personal and

professional skills, which can be achieved through feedback, dedication and guidance from the mentor.

- **Act as a connector:** Mentors are typically seasoned professionals with a large variety of connections in their industries and it creates valuable networking opportunities to help enhance the mentee's career.
- **Actively listen:** A good mentor makes their mentee feel comfortable and safe enough to express their goals, thoughts, ideas and concerns freely without fear of negative critique.
- **Identify resources:** From e-books to the latest trending podcast in the industry, a mentor needs to be able to identify and seek resources that they can share with their mentee.

## Who is a mentee

A mentee is a person who is guided and supported by a mentor, typically **seeking to gain skills, knowledge, and insights** to advance personal and professional development.

For mentees, roles and responsibilities tend to overlap and may include the following:

- **Actively seeking guidance and feedback** from the mentor to enhance professional skills and knowledge.
- Demonstrating a **willingness to learn** and apply new skills and concepts in their work.
- **Setting and communicating clear goals** and objectives for their professional development.
- **Being open to constructive feedback** and willing to engage in self-reflection and improvement.
- **Taking initiative in their development** by asking questions and seeking out opportunities for growth within the organisation.

While the role of the mentee is less varied, they still play an important role in the relationship.

- **Planner:** A mentee takes the initiative to schedule meetings, provide an agenda, and create action plans for their short and long-term goals. Essentially, a mentee's primary responsibility is to show proactiveness.
- **Investigator:** A mentee keeps a flow of communication. That means asking probing and open-ended questions, following up frequently, and consistently communicating updates to their mentor.

- **Student:** a mentee takes on the student role. They act as a sponge and soak in the knowledge from their mentor, continue their learning outside of their mentee-mentor relationship, and find opportunities to learn even in moments of challenges.

## Key aspects in mentoring practice


Successful mentoring programs require proper planning, clearly defined objectives, regular exchanges between mentoring partners, and follow-up activities.

- a) **Mutual interest and clear goals:** Key features include pairing mentors and mentees according to their previously researched needs. The training and support provided should be meaningful for both participants, who must show a proactive interest in being part of the program. Clear definitions of mentoring roles and realistic expectations are essential to avoid confusion and enhance program effectiveness.
- b) **Steps of the mentoring program:** Key stages include recruitment, training, pairing, relationship initiation, ongoing support, and program closure. Each stage contributes to the program's success and format is extremely relevant:
- c) **Format of the mentoring sessions:** The options offered should be agreeable for both parts (in person or online and bilateral or in group), so the situation does not represent a burden on participants.
- d) **Consideration of mentoring dynamics:** Mentoring relationships unfold in four phases: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Programs can prepare participants for these transitions by conducting some feedback sessions with both of them.
- e) **Provision of mentoring resources:** Mentoring programs require resources like financial, cultural, logistical, and motivational support. The company can mainly motivate their workers to participate in such programs by including mentoring tasks in their in-job tasks and responsibilities, so it is not seen as an additional burden, but as part of the job that it is being

rewarded. Logistically, spaces within the company should be at disposal of mentors and events to recognize this work could be held from time to time.

- f) **Ongoing evaluation:** Systematic evaluations are crucial for assessing outcomes and improving program processes. Continuous data collection before, during, and after participation ensures programs remain effective and adaptable over time. This process must be adapted to each company capabilities and internal procedures, as it should be practical and straight to the point to determine what should be improved.

## Case Study about IBM


<p><b>Country and Region:</b> Headquarters in USA, New York</p> <p><b>Sector:</b> Technology, IT services</p> <p><b>Size and scope:</b> Large enterprise with over 350,000 employees globally</p> <p><b>Website link:</b> <a href="https://www.ibm.com/uk-en">https://www.ibm.com/uk-en</a></p>

### About the company:

IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) is a multinational technology and consulting company headquartered in Armonk, New York. Known as one of the world's largest IT companies, IBM offers a broad array of hardware, software, and services in IT.

### The challenge:

IBM recognized the need to bridge the generational knowledge gap between its seasoned leaders and the younger, digitally native workforce, especially in understanding and leveraging new digital tools and platforms.

## The solution:

IBM implemented a reverse mentoring program where younger employees mentor senior executives, focusing on areas such as social media, digital marketing, and emerging technologies:

- Younger mentors: Junior employees trained in digital competencies paired with senior staff.
- Training sessions: Structured meetings where younger employees guide their older counterparts through new digital platforms and trends.
- Feedback mechanisms: Regular assessments and adaptations based on feedback from participants.

## The impact:

The program has had multiple positive outcomes:

- Enhanced digital fluency among senior employees, leading to more effective use of digital tools company wide.
- Cultural shift: Fostering a culture of continuous learning and inclusivity.
- Increased collaboration: Strengthening intergenerational relationships within the company.

# Content Evaluation

## 1. Why is mentoring important?

- a) It provides assistive technologies.
- b) It is a way of helping people learn and develop.
- c) It reduces working hours on core tasks.
- d) You can earn more by being a mentor.

**2. Which of the following roles is typical for a mentee?**

- a) Providing career guidance.
- b) Help setting goals.
- c) Being open to constructive feedback.
- d) Acting as role models.

**3. How can organizations improve mentoring practices?**

- a) By seeking greater productivity from participants.
- b) By providing adequate and sufficient mentoring resources.
- c) By organizing several common training programs.
- d) By improving team morale and motivation.

**4. What role does not qualify as a mentee?**

- a) Teacher.
- b) Planner.
- c) Investigator.
- d) Student.

**5. Why is it important for companies to promote reverse mentoring?**

- a) Employees have to work less hours.
- b) Employers do not longer have to worry about replacements.
- c) It positively impacts workplace engagement.

d) Competitors do the same, it's not worth being left behind.

**6. What of the next steps is NOT part of a mentoring program?**

- a) Recruitment and training.
- b) Program closure.
- c) Pairing and relationship initiation.
- d) Ongoing support and resource supervision.

**7. What mistakes can be made in a mentoring program?**

- a) It is more concerned with potential and so is most often used for looking for talent.
- b) It focuses too much on leadership
- c) It is evaluated unregularly or not at all.
- d) The mentors and mentees cannot get along with each other

**8. What is not so helpful for older workers at work?**

- a) Online learning management systems.
- b) Mentor-mentee training.
- c) Using intuitive digital workplace software.
- d) Seeing the role of mentor as an additional and unrewarded task to their job responsibilities.

**9. What is a key aspect in mentoring practice?**

- a) Focus on Millennials retention.
- b) Setting up clear objectives for both parts.
- c) Using free resources online.

d) Concentrating only on mentors.

**10. Mentoring is better than reverse mentoring, because:**

a) Millennials cannot be trusted.

b) This statement is not correct.

c) It costs the company less.

d) It is not worth breaking with tradition.