



CASE STUDY



CASE STUDY: Improving Mentor-Mentee Matching to Accelerate Knowledge Transfer and Leadership Development

How the United States Naval Command Shored Up Its Leadership Pipeline With a Thinking-Based Mentoring Program



OBJECTIVE:

To successfully match mentors and mentees in order to build trust, accelerate knowledge transfer and develop new leaders in the wake of retirements.

In 1990, the U.S. Naval Command launched a formal mentoring program at its Philadelphia site as part of a comprehensive human capital strategy. The program, complete with a graduation ceremony, was designed to develop future leaders, provide overall career mentoring and fill the potential gaps in expertise and leadership created by the retirement of valued employees. When the program was launched, 120 participants immediately enrolled.



CHALLENGES:

Trust and communication barriers hampering the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship.

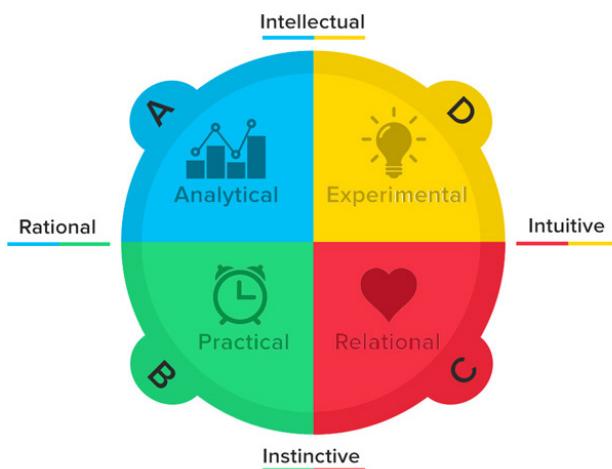
While the program was popular, only half of the mentor-mentee pairs had been successful match-ups. Those working on the program quickly saw the need for a trustworthy system for appropriately matching mentor with mentee that would allow open communication outside the chain of command. They were also searching for a matching mechanism that would foster the quickest way for mentors to pass along crucial workplace knowledge gleaned from experience.



SOLUTION:

Using the HBDI® to match mentors and mentees with similar thinking preferences and providing a Whole Brain® Toolkit for ongoing action planning, personal development and discussion as well as long-range career strategy development.

After evaluating several options, the U.S. Naval Command selected the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI®), Herrmann International's 120-question assessment, as the primary mechanism for matching mentors and mentees in the program. The HBDI® defines and describes an individual's degree of preference for thinking in each of the four quadrants of the brain, as depicted by the Whole Brain® Model. Herrmann International had been a partner with the U.S. Naval Command since 1982, and the company's Whole Brain® Thinking methodology had already been successfully applied to previous U.S. Naval Command projects.



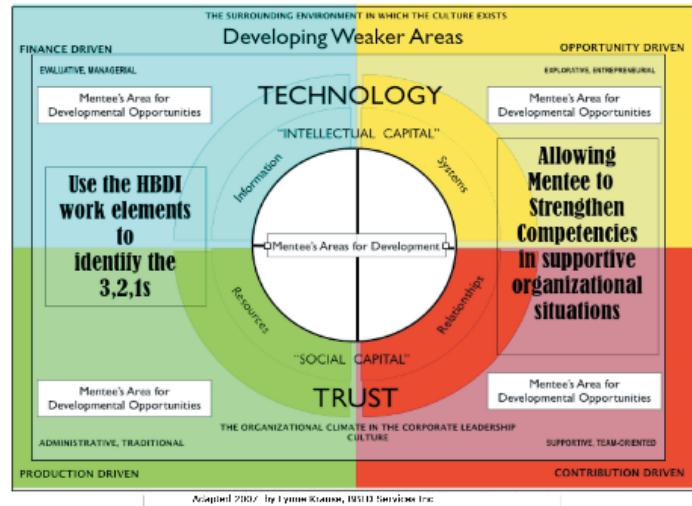
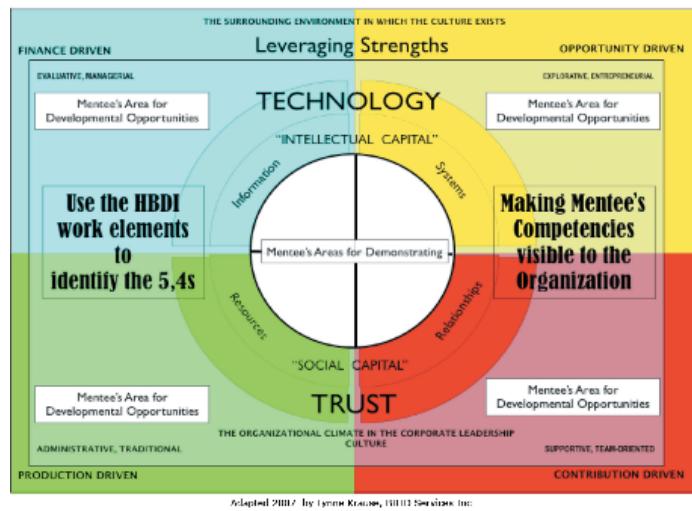
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Lynne Krause of BBTD Services, who works with the U.S. Naval Command and is a certified HBDI® Practitioner, began administering the HBDI® to all participants early in their involvement in the program. Since getting mentees up to speed in the fastest manner possible was a major objective of the program, they were matched with mentors whose thinking preferences closely aligned with their own. The concept of matching according to thinking preference similarities was used on the rationale that these similarities would allow for quick bonding and easier communication and coaching. Consideration was also given to ensure greater opportunity for strengthening lesser-preferred quadrants by carefully examining profiles and potential outcomes.

To help mentees recognize and own the target outcomes, Krause linked key competencies and thinking preferences along two paths: (1) strengthening and developing weaker skill areas, and (2) leveraging strengths through continued practice and development. She also developed a Whole Brain® Toolkit to support the mentees' ongoing action planning, learning, personal development and long-term career strategy planning. In addition to the two pathway tools for developing key competencies, this toolkit include:

- HBDI® Assessment: Used to get acquainted, establish norms for the working relationship, communication methods, setting meeting times and agenda

- Individual Action Plan: Used with mentee to work on problems, challenges, or personal issues
- Library of Articles: For sharing personal thoughts and experiences; connecting theme of article to the workplace, using a whole-brained discussion format
- Thought Leadership Development® Worksheet: Mentee provides the answers to the question statements and the mentor helps with the who, what and how related to them (for long-range goal achievement)
- A Whole Brain® Inventory of Competencies for Effective Leaders: Using mentee's data, mentor assists in work alignment and training possibilities (for long-term career strategy development)
- HBDI® Work Elements Exercise: Using mentee's data, mentor assists in work alignment possibilities (for long-term career strategy development)
- Online learning: Via Herrmann International's HBDI® Interactive online program, provides more individualized information on the mentee's HBDI® Profile and Whole Brain® applications to the workplace, leadership and teams. Mentor can discuss the mentee's responses to different topic areas.



RESULTS:

A 99% success rate among mentor/mentee pairs (up from 50%), along with better communication, faster bonding and increased trust.

The use of the HBDI® and Whole Brain® Toolkit enabled mentor and mentee to quickly establish a common language early in the mentoring process. In fact, in many cases mentors and mentees were on a parallel path for leveraging their preferred thinking styles, and expanding their less preferred quadrants. These factors helped to facilitate trust and open communication outside the chain of command.

Mid- and end-of-year evaluations allowed HBDI® matches to be monitored through- out the course of the program. Responses to HBDI® matching techniques have been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, the compatibility between mentor and mentee is such that many continue meeting well beyond formal participation. Out of 800 matches made, only five participants declared a mismatch, a 99% success rate. Long-term studies and analyses indicate that over one-third of early participants in the U.S. Naval Command's employee mentoring program have risen to higher-level managerial positions.

Krause says that the approach of matching mentors and mentees based on thinking preference has also led to better communication, faster bonding and increased trust, which she attributes to the longer lasting and more mutually beneficial mentoring relationships.

The U.S. Naval Command's innovative mentoring program was deemed a great success both quantitatively and qualitatively. In fact, mentoring program administrators across federal sectors in other locations throughout the United States and Japan have been trained on using HBDI® matching techniques for their programs. Krause has implemented additional programs within the Navy as well, including at NAVSISA (100% success rate) and NAVSUP headquarters (only one rematch, due to a mentor leaving, reinforcing how powerful the thinking preference matching technique is as a way to create successful mentor pairs.

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