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**Leadership Development
Initiative (LDI) Curriculum**

The Mentoring Relationship: Optimizing Conversations

The Mentoring Relationship-Optimizing Conversations
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Overview

The concept of Trust-building in a relationship is discussed. A characteristic of effective leaders is trustworthiness. The capacity to trust oneself (and foster it in others) is crucial to successful leadership and advancement. Like any relationship, the successful Mentorship relationship requires trust to grow. When trust is high, mentoring partners can more authentically engage and carry on genuine conversations. This is where significant learning takes place.

There are 4 branches of trust-building: (1) Ownership, (2) Relationship, (3) Confidence and Competence, and (4) Accountability.

Ownership: engaging others to gain their participation and interest. 'The project' becomes 'our project', and as their levels of responsibility grows, new ideas, energy and outcomes will follow.

Relationship: frequent respectful conversations communicate connectivity and emotional intelligence. The continuum of communication fosters peer support and loyalty and enriches cultural understandings.

Confidence and Competence: traveling on the two-way street of listening and learning as well as recognizing and acknowledging strengths, builds on 'small wins' and skill development. Exposing your own areas of growth and risking being vulnerable allows the other to see you as human, and themselves, as a continuous learner.

Accountability: work together to negotiate shared expectations and time frames. Identifying targets and measurements of success builds faith in the process and enables others to act.

Genuine conversations are facilitated by identifying our tendency to make assumptions. Assumptions give meaning and structure to our day-to-day lives, but may also add confusion in relationships. It is important to go "assumption hunting" when it comes to the mentorship relationship. Each person identifies answers to the following questions:

What assumptions are you holding about your role as mentor or mentee?

What assumptions are *you* holding about your mentorship partner's role?

What assumptions are *they* holding about your role in the partnership?

The importance of addressing assumptions up front (such as cultural issues) is emphasized. Check any assumption we make about ourselves and others; it is difficult, but respectful and manifests true concern about the health and meaning of the relationship.

Objectives

After this presentation, participants will:

1. Describe the importance of developing trust-filled relationships
2. Optimize conversations to foster trust and growth
3. Identify how assumptions may be both a help and a hindrance in life

4. Know how to go 'assumption hunting' and why it is valuable

Important Teaching Points

- Remember to check your assumptions for validity by asking for feedback from others
- Regular activities to build trust keeps the relationship flowing and genuine
- Trust lubricates relationships. To build trust:
 - Convey consistent principles
 - Exchange information regularly
 - Make realistic commitments
 - Share what you know
 - Verify and clarify your understanding
 - Advocate for your team
 - Show compassion and empathy
- Focus on making skillful connections with people; it builds confidence and competence
- Use 'we' and 'us' language to enhance ownership
- Be clear about the difference between conversation and transactions.
- To optimize the mentor-mentee 'conversation', incorporate the following components: plan ahead, have a clear agenda, create a safe environment, offer honest, non-judgmental, empathetic listening, and strive for clear understanding and mutual trust.

Slides

Unfortunately, we do not have permission to share the slides that were developed by the presenters for this session. We recommend that you read the following resources to enhance your understanding and comfort with the material.

Resources / References

1. Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (2008). *The Leadership Challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
2. Zachary, L.J. (2011). *The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
3. Zachary, L.J. & Fischler, L.A. (2009). *The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.