A Common Challenge: Training Frontline Supervisors to be Effective Coaches and Mentors
Introducing your session facilitator

Galiana Fajardo
Senior Associate, Portfolio

community housing partnership

GOODWILL of Silicon Valley
Session Goals

**Learn**

- Align on importance of the topic to social enterprises’ double bottom lines
- Introduce REDF’s work to date

**Discuss**

- Discuss initial takeaways
- Distinguish between promising practices and takeaways that need further validation

**Decide**

- Formulate next steps for furthering the field’s understanding of the topic
- Decide on what resources or deliverables created would be most valuable to you, the practitioner
Effective coaching impacts both business and programmatic outcomes

The social enterprise experience

Learn technical industry skills

Work on soft skills (e.g. punctuality, communication)

Transition to outside employer

Effective coach-supervisor

Better technical performance (i.e. learns to do the job better)

Better development of soft skills (e.g. catch and address areas for improvement)

Easier transition to outside employer

- Higher productivity
- Higher degree of employable skills

- Easier to find a job
- Potential implications for wage progression
As usual, coaching in a social enterprise adds complexities

A supervisor at a **traditional business** is expected to…

- Minimize turnover
- Increase productivity and operational efficiency
- Manage overall business performance

A supervisor at a **social enterprise** is expected to…

- Increase readiness for the next job and increase positive transitions
- Help workers maintain contact with services and persist through the “dosage” period
- Increase job readiness of individual
REDF’s work to date

**Initial data set gathering**

- **Project begins**
  - Project began Fall ‘15 with SIF1 Portfolio

- **Director surveys conducted**
  - Administered to social enterprise director or equivalent
  - Survey disseminated through SIF1 SEs and SE4Jobs network
  - \(n=12; \text{represents } 11 \text{ SEs}\)

- **Supervisor focus groups conducted**
  - Focus groups conducted at 3 social enterprises

- **Initial takeaways synthesized**

- **Tactical next step planning begins**

**Today’s ask:** we want to hear your input on next steps to make this work valuable to your social enterprise
Introducing the takeaways

• We have generated some initial takeaways from the survey and focus groups

• They are intentionally framed in a somewhat provocative manner to illicit your reaction as the practitioner

• As we talk through them, begin to categorize which ones you think:
  – **Resonate**: there are practices related to this we should pilot
  – **Are common sense**: everybody already does this
  – **Need further validation**: this is interesting and I need further evidence to either agree or disagree
  – **Are proven false**: I disagree or I’ve tried this before and it failed

• Themes may fall under more than one category
#1 Supervisors are recognized and appreciated for their role in the social enterprise, but aren’t held accountable for worker outcomes

- Across the board, social enterprise leaders view supervisors as the primary source of feedback to the worker, but no one tracks clients outcomes by supervisor.

- Though 75% of SEs view mentorship as a core part of supervisors’ job responsibility, not one links supervisor compensation or incentives to outcomes.

- There is a disconnect between the level of impact SE Directors see supervisors as having on job readiness (4 of 5) and how much of the actual responsibility is placed with supervisors (3 of 5).
#1a Supervisors are evaluated, but primarily on work performance, creating the impression of business over mission

- Supervisors typically evaluated on individual performance or metrics tied to business performance (rather than worker persistence in enterprise, % of crew with positive exits, etc.)

#1b Supervisor compensation and incentive structure is not commensurate with the value we think they can have

- ~75% of social enterprises utilize an hourly pay structure for supervisors
- Pay structure is more similar to a program participant’s than the salaried positions for other administrative staff
Initial Takeaways from survey & focus groups

#2 Most organizations lack a true culture of coaching and mentorship

• Though professional development opportunities are offered, few actually utilize them

• Professional development generally entails a training session – there is little follow-up and no integration of material into day-to-day operations

#3 Supervisors are well positioned to deliver real time, on the job feedback. We should invest heavily in training them to effectively deliver it

• Many supervisors, promoted up through the ranks, learn solely from examples set by their past supervisors

• 83% of SEs say coaching/mentorship training is offered, but generally only about half of supervisors take advantage of it
#4 Supervisors have deep empathy with their workers, often because of personal experience with barriers. This motivation is a strength we should help them leverage to become more effective coaches

- Though a small % of supervisors are promoted through the program, a substantial portion face or have faced similar workforce barriers

- Demographics of supervisors often look similar to their crews, though supervisors tend to be older, more experienced, and have finished their GEDs (as in, someone with a colorful background who has “turned their life around”)
Mentors play significant role in training and assessing job readiness of workers

Mentorship program developed over time and is now a part of organizational DNA

Resources and investment put toward the program include:
- Mentor training available to all parts of organization – supervisors and professional staff alike
- Development of tools and assessments for mentors
- Staff position to oversee program
- Buy-in from all parts of organization

Supervisors often grow through the organization, giving them deep empathy and savviness to do the job well

Creates a career pathway for motivated program participants, beyond hourly minimum wage positions

Supervisors equipped with the right resources to coach others (e.g. motivational interviewing, time management trainings) and have motivated SSF staff to turn to for support
Discussion: What other practices is your SE implementing?

• We know there are many promising practices currently being implemented in the portfolio

• We encourage you to share with the group:
  – How is supervisor professional development at your enterprise structured?
  – How are you implementing this?
  – What investments have you made?
  – What success have you had? What challenges have you faced?
  – How have you integrated this into your organization’s culture?
Discussion: Next steps and promising practices to pursue

Please discuss the following in small groups:

• Which initial takeaways:
  – Resonate and are promising to pilot?
  – Are common sense?
  – Need further validation?
  – Are proven false?

• Is there interest in a working group?

• What would be most useful as a final deliverable from REDF? Some ideas include:
  – Expanding and publishing the data set
  – Creating a best practices collection
  – Developing a curriculum
  – Offering TA around “making the case” to leadership that this is a valuable investment?
  – Other things?
Thank you

For additional information, please consider the following REDF resources:

• Project team: Galiana Fajardo
• Terri Feeley (REDF employee supports and workforce consultant)
• SE Director survey results, QxQ