**Project#2: MENTOR Affiliate CEO Roundtable**

**Project Abstract**

**Project Goal**

In April 2022, the first MENTOR CEO Roundtable was hosted by MENTOR New York. This full-day retreat allowed the 23 affiliate CEOs to convene as peers for leadership development and discussion of national leadership challenges faced by the mentoring movement. The meeting will happen twice a year, once in person and another virtually, to maximize attendance, participation, and long-term engagement.

**DEL Outcomes**

3 and 4

**Competency Areas of Focus**

Leadership in Context

Ethics: Values and Decision Making

Organizational Dynamics

Leadership Development

Complexity and Sustainability

**Project Overview**

This project builds on my work in Project #1 as Chair of MAAC. It focuses on how I influenced a group of executive leaders to establish a MENTOR CEO Roundtable for the Affiliate Network. This project focuses on DEL program outcomes 3 and 4. Its focus areas are leadership in context, ethics, leadership development, and complexity and sustainability.

According to Badaracco (2013), "The knowledge companies need to succeed today often resides in other companies and organizations, and these organizations are typically players in competitive markets and are engaged in their efforts to succeed through creative recombination" (p.92). Therefore, the organization's culture must be open to a process of feedback, accountability, and learning to give rise to emerging systems and innovations (van Acker & Bouckaert, 2018). For this to occur, leaders must be ready to take the information and do something with it. They need the time to reflect, converse and explore the data (Stacy, 2012). When we look at leaders who innovate, they possess essential discovery skills that lead to innovations, including constantly scanning the environment, networking, and connecting the dots (Dyer et al., 2009). For MENTOR to take advantage of its CEO talent across the country, it must create a safe space to allow CEOs to reflect, learn and share to identify the emerging models. These emerging models can then be replicated to continue taking the mentoring movement to scale and reaching more young people through different engagement points that may or may not be happening across the country. The CEO Roundtable presented this opportunity to exist in the affiliate network.

**Project In Action**

As Chair of the MENTOR Affiliate Advisory Committee, we began to incorporate Affiliate CEOs in formal feedback loops through quarterly leadership cohort meetings. Each Cohort comprised 4-5 CEOs who shared similar sizes, demographics, or regions in the United States. This was an opportunity for MAAC members to share any information or findings made at meetings and to engage their thinking and skills in solving some of the more pressing problems faced by young people, communities, and the mentoring movement. The more these cohort groups met, the need to maximize the local CEO talent and find ways for stronger partnerships between leaders. To that end, I suggested establishing the CEO Roundtable meetings focused on affiliate CEOs coming together to discuss their personal leadership development, leadership challenges, and success to bring about an opportunity for reflection and collective leadership development.

The first CEO Roundtable was hosted in New York City, and 18 out of 23 CEOs attended in person, while the balance joined virtually. To ensure that we avoided the pitfall of providing information or organizational doctrine, we created the opportunity for the CEOs to focus on their leadership identity and strengths. Allowing for deliberation and ideation on how we can maximize the talent in the network provided the conversation to focus on the possibilities of our work versus the status quo we had become accustomed to experiencing.

The first meeting focused on each CEO completing the strength finders assessment tool to examine their strengths and where the leadership strengths lived in our collective group. By using a visual diagram of our collective strength as affiliate executive leaders in this network, we engaged in deep analysis that began to shape the conversation of maximizing participation in committees and national initiatives built on our strengths and expertise, which would allow for diversifying the engagement of local leaders in national initiatives. The recombination of talents and resources can improve our affiliate network executive leadership talent and reconfigure committee structures that would yield more significant outcomes in the future.

**Conclusion**

From a leadership development perspective, the CEO Roundtable moved the organization from creating a formula-driven leadership exchange to one that allowed for more conversations, questions, reflection, and discussion necessary for personal growth and innovative ideas and solutions. The meeting was a success, with positive feedback and suggestions from participating CEOs for the next in-person meeting, which will be hosted in the spring of 2023.

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