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## Building Bridges: Creating a Mentoring Program focused on Training and Retaining New Employees at General Mills' Customer Service Center

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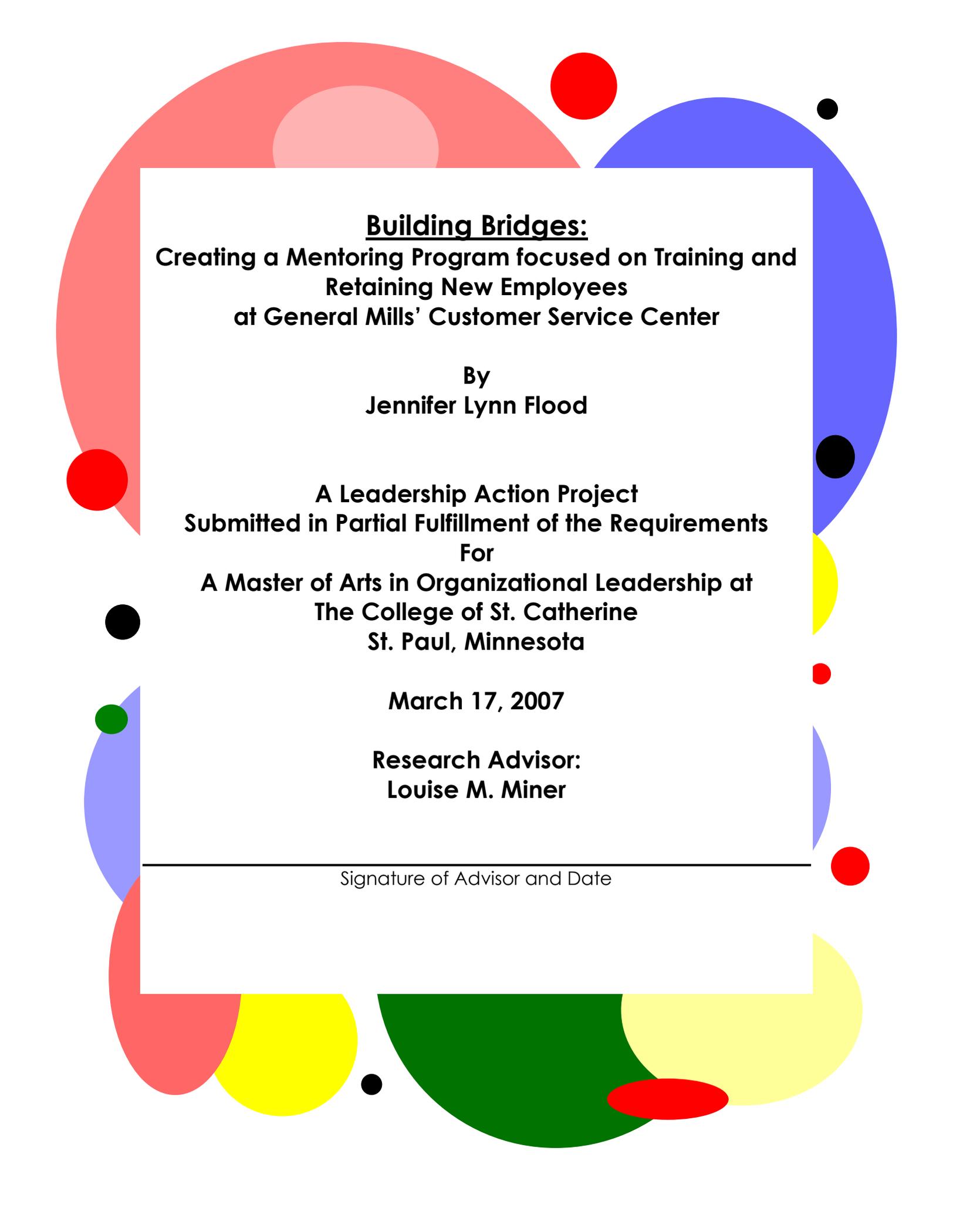
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**Building Bridges:**  
**Creating a Mentoring Program focused on Training and  
Retaining New Employees  
at General Mills' Customer Service Center**

**By  
Jennifer Lynn Flood**

**A Leadership Action Project  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For  
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**Research Advisor:  
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Signature of Advisor and Date

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## I. Overview

Mentoring nurtures growth, encourages learning, and brings people together. In my Leadership Action Project that follows, I relate my personal and research purposes for pursuing a study of mentoring. Through a review of current mentoring literature, conducting appreciative inquiry interviews, and creating a mentoring advisory committee, I have increased knowledge and organizational support to implement a mentoring program at General Mills' Customer Service Center. Upon the conclusion of my research I answered the question, **“What are the qualities of a successful mentoring program for new employees at the General Mills Customer Service Center?”** I addressed issues of validity by employing the techniques of triangulation, respondent validation, and intervention. After answering my research question, I completed a recommendation to create a mentoring program at the General Mills Customer Service Center including a potential mentoring handbook.

## **II. Purpose of the Proposed Research**

### **Personal Purposes:**

Teaching has always appealed to me. It captures my imagination and creativity as well as opens doors of new insight to others. In high school, I served as a peer educator and “teacher” in many leadership capacities. A favorite was coordinating a state-wide mentoring program which focused on three-way mentoring—an elementary school student, a high school student, and a community leader. In college, I became involved with the National Youth Leadership Council and traveled the country helping high school students and educators develop service learning curriculum together through true youth-adult partnerships. That spirit for education and leadership stayed with me as I made my professional move to General Mills.

At General Mills, I consider myself a team leader. However, I discovered that my career interest was not to lead a team, but rather to be in the classroom, training new employees. In 2005, I transition into a training role on the CSC training team. The new hires at the Customer Service Center (CSC) of General Mills are mainly recent college graduates. Not only do they need to learn the technical aspects of their new job, but they need someone to help them assimilate to the working world. I have always enjoyed this role, but I can't do everything for them to be comfortable. Eventually the torch must be handed off to their new teams and managers. Some managers do an outstanding job of welcoming new team members and helping them through their learning process, and others do not. The CSC Training Team has continually heard feedback from new employees that they

like the company, but their job is very overwhelming at first. They wish they had one person to go to with all their questions, and they wouldn't feel like they were "bugging" them. Through my Leadership Action Project, I created a proposal to develop a mentoring program at the CSC to address these employee and company needs. I have committed to my manager and team that my focus for the upcoming fiscal year will be the creation of a mentoring program that fills the gap from training to "real work" for our new employees. I have passion and motivation for the topic. Accomplishing the task of developing a successful mentoring program will help me advance my career in the training and support area of General Mills. Additionally, it will help me build internal networks and reach out to members of the CSC that I might not have the opportunity to work with on a daily basis.

**Practical Purposes:**

A need exists for a mentoring program at the CSC. Numerous new employees have mentioned that a mentor-type relationship would have helped them assimilate to General Mills' culture more quickly and made them feel more comfortable in our continually changing environment. Additionally, senior managers are looking for a way to reduce turnover and prevent employees from leaving the company and/or the CSC. Initially, my goal was to develop a mentoring program to bridge the gap between the new employees' training program and feeling comfortable in their new positions. Added benefits may include building collaboration between teams, breaking down generational barriers, or adding more "fun" to the workplace. Looking forward, this program

could fit in well with some of the new recruiting initiatives and possibly lead to expansion of a “You've Been Here Awhile” mentoring program with the broader company. I'm excited about the possibility for organizational growth and my own personal growth.

**Research Purposes:**

In researching, I looked at which success factors have already been established for effective mentoring programs—specifically those that cater to new employees. Through my research, I created a proposal for a mentoring program which will address some of the organizational issues the CSC is facing. However, it is important that the needs can in fact be fulfilled through mentoring. Therefore, the majority of my research was best completed in interviews. These interviews included potential mentors reflecting on their new hire experiences as well as how they have informally mentored new employees. I also included interviews of recent new hires to understand their experiences as new employees and what co-workers may have done to help them in their learning and transition process. I also utilized the CSC climate survey that was taken just a few months ago. The survey revealed which current organizational needs could be met through mentoring such as connecting to younger generations, learning newer and faster ways of working, or sharing past experiences.

### III. Analysis of Conceptual Context

#### What is Mentoring?

The term “mentor” can be traced back to Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. When Odysseus parted for the Trojan War, he entrusted his friend, Mentor, with role of guider, teacher, protector, and guardian to his son Telemachus. Due to the length of Odysseus's travels, Mentor and Telemachus developed a deeply personal relationship in which Mentor shared wisdom, assisted in Telemachus's career, and became a second parent (Shea, 1997). Today, mentoring has many varied definitions depending on the program or need that the mentoring is trying to fill. There are peer mentors, career mentors, and diversity mentors, as well as, coaches, sponsors, role models and counselors. Each of these roles seeks to fulfill a specific purpose or goal. While coaches, sponsors, role models and counselors often provide help, their help is typically delivered through more of a one-way relationship. Mentoring is much more dynamic.

“Mentoring is like constructing footbridges. The mentor is the engineer, designing and constructing different bridges as people and conditions change. Sometimes mentors will need to construct wide, solid bridges with handrails and very limited risk to help mentees move towards new experiences. At other times their partners will be ready and only need a little encouragement to use a narrow suspension bridge

Gordon F. Shea (1997) defines mentoring as, “a fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy, and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person” (p. 3). Shea's definition points out that investment is necessary for a mentoring relationship to flourish. Mentoring occurs when knowledge and skills are transferred.

In their book The Elements of Mentoring, (2004) Johnson and Ridley state that, "Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé)" (p. XV). Mentoring is complex, as Johnson and Ridley revealed. Their definition concurs with Shea's recognition that a more skilled employee should work with a less skilled employee; however, Johnson and Ridley broaden the relationship from more than just an educational experience to a personal connection.

A third definition from Kathy Lacey (2000) sees mentoring as more of a two-way relationship: "Mentoring is like constructing a footbridge. The mentor is the engineer, designing and constructing different bridges as people and conditions change. Sometimes mentors will need to construct wide, solid bridges with handrails and very limited risk to help mentees move toward new experiences. At other times their partners will be ready and only need a little encouragement to use a narrow suspension bridge swaying in gale-force winds—with planks missing and little or no handrails" (p. 1).

I believe the vivid bridge imagery of Lacey's definition resonates best with my vision for mentoring at General Mills' Customer Service Center (CSC). CSC employees serve as the company bridge between Sales, Supply Chain, and our Customers. Due to the dynamic nature of a CSC employee's position, they become the cornerstone of company relationships. Employees must quickly learn how to build relationships, hence, building bridges. I envision the CSC mentoring program to be a collaborative bridge building experience where the mentor uses

his or her building experience to assist the mentee (new hire) in constructing a bridge that meets the mentee's needs in order to cross the bridge quickly and comfortably.

Mentoring is a useful tool for developing people and creating a great team. It is about nurturing growth and recognizing the potential in all employees through collaborative work. What goes around comes around, and mentoring is a way to give back to others and the industry (Burnett, 2005).

### **Current Organizational Needs**

In the current age of business, speed and innovation are key. Competition is tight, and retaining good employees is essential to remain ahead of competitors. Due to recruiting and training costs, it is very costly to lose an employee. It costs an estimated \$10,000 to recruit and train just one employee and takes approximately six months to gain his or her full productivity as a contributing employee (Rollag, Parise & Cross, 2005). The \$10,000 figure is an industry estimate, however, after doing some personal calculations, I feel confident that it is an accurate estimate for the CSC as well.

Of all workers in the United States, 25% have been with their company less

If an employee stays for 1.5 years, the likelihood of him/her leaving the company declines rapidly (Rollag, Parise &

than one year and 33% less than two years. That means that a significant portion of our workforce is new to their companies. It is important for companies to get new employees up to speed quickly. Once new employees are recruited and trained, their contributions will not meet

those of their peers for a period of six to nine months. During this time, organizations

are unable to perform at full capacity because each new employee has not reached his or her full potential. The learning curve of new employees can equate to 1-2.5% of yearly revenues. Any reduction in the time it takes for new employees to become acclimated to the culture, policy, and procedure adds valuable efficiency and profit to the organization.

If an employee stays for 1.5 years, the likelihood of him or her leaving the company declines rapidly (Rollag, Parise & Cross, 2005). Therefore, it is even more important to hang onto the productive employees in whom the company has made an investment to recruit and train.

Today's workplace embodies diversity. In looking at business publications, diversity is the topic discussed most frequently. Companies have addressed ethnic, racial, and gender for several years through informational meetings and seminars. The General Mills CSC founded a Diversity Council in 2002. The Diversity Council was formed to help facilitate General Mills' strong commitment to diversity in the workforce. The council works to implement policies that will help the CSC maintain a healthy work environment. Each summer, the Diversity Council sponsors a heritage food festival where employees bring in ethnic or heritage foods to share with others and learn more about the background behind the food. All food festivals have been extremely successful. Last spring, the Diversity Council raised awareness of generational differences in the workplace by creating and posting large signs in the break areas about each generation, their personal experiences, and some specific work characteristics. This year, they conducted an optional

Myers-Briggs sessions for employees to learn more about their own behavior and style.

The initiatives of mentoring and diversity must walk hand in hand so that each effort can be enriched by the other's existence. Also, the knowledge gained by implementing diversity initiatives may offer valuable lessons in the mentoring program creation.

General Mills is proud to have been named one of the nation's best places to work by Fortune Magazine, Working Mother, Business Ethics and many others (Personal Communication with Human Resource Assistant, Holly Payne, November 7, 2006) which speaks to our focus on building a diverse workforce. When examined closely, almost every diverse group has a mentoring network available at General Mills. The Black Champions Network, the Asian American Network and Betty's Family for GLBT workers and friends are all available to employees.

One growing dimension of diversity is the multigenerational workforce. At the CSC, all four generations work side-by-side in teams and are represented at all levels of the organization. The average General Mills employee stays for at least 10 years at the Customer Service Center, with many employees reaching over 20 years with General Mills. Of the 330 CSC employees, 30 percent have been hired in the last five years with little previous work experience (Personal Communication with Human Resource Assistant, Holly Payne, November 7, 2006). The CSC has become a large multigenerational workplace where generational complexity needs to be addressed.

The four main generations (Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y/Millennials) request different support from their employer and are motivated differently. For example, Traditionalists tend to work "by the book". They use more formal communications, while Millennials tend to be more fast, casual and direct in their communication style and work to deadlines and goals, not necessarily schedules. Traditionalists believe that work and family should be kept separate, Baby Boomers put work first, Generation X value work life balance and Millennials like to blend work and personal life. The ways these generations are recognized also differ. Millennials prefer public praise and opportunities to broaden their skills, Generation X value compensation and time off, Baby Boomers appreciate public acknowledgement and career advancement, and Traditionalists like sincere personal acknowledgement. Team building and cooperative working environments can be difficult when so many diverse needs must be met (Bernstein, 2006).

When employees retire, they leave with a substantial amount of knowledge (Burnett, 2006). Transferring this knowledge is crucial for organizational effectiveness. New ideas are always welcomed and valued; however, it is important to understand why the current policy was established and the various implications of change. Only time and experience will provide that knowledge or at minimum, the transfer of that experience.

### **Needs of New Workers**

The emerging worker of late Generation X or early Generation Y has different needs than those currently employed in organizations. Based on my experience as

a new hire Training Specialist at the CSC, I have seen a need for belonging and identification with a group. The most common new hire question is no longer about the benefits programs or

The most common new hire question is no longer about the benefits programs or the types of work they will be doing; rather it is, "Who do I eat lunch with?"

the type of work they will be doing; rather it is, "Who do I eat lunch with?"

Employees want to feel welcome and accepted. Within hours of arriving, new employees need to feel like a valued part of the team, even if their contributions may not be fully realized for awhile (Lowe, 2006).

New employees bring vast amounts of knowledge and information, particularly regarding technology, that they want to share. They want to be recognized for their past accomplishments and encouraged through their new learning curve. Their questions should be encouraged and clearly answered. However, workers fresh from graduation are coming to the workplace unprepared for their first jobs; it is up to the industry, not the school, to acclimate them to the business world (Burnett, 2005). Their visions of workplaces come from media; the movie "Office Space" and rerun episodes of "FRIENDS" create unrealistic expectations of a work environment.

The emerging workers were born the same year as the Mac and PC. Technology is part of everything they do. They grew up riding to school activities in mini vans. They don't remember a world without Diet Coke. New workers only know that Southerners can be President, and the U.S. and Russia have been partners in space. They live in a world of choice—where we've always been able

to choose our long distance provider, women have had the right to choose, and rap was a music of choice. They've always known that at 21 they can choose Bud Light or Miller. Anyone who interacts with these twenty-somethings must understand that the world is very different from their point of view. In the lifetime of the new worker, change has been the only constant (Beloit College, 2006).

#### **IV. Research Question and Methodology**

In conducting my mentoring research, I addressed the following question, **“What are the qualities of a successful mentoring program for new employees at the General Mills Customer Service Center?”** Part of my process has been to uncover success factors in regard to training and retaining new hires and to propose a mentoring program for new employees at the CSC.

Throughout my research process, I consulted a self-created advisory committee at General Mills. This advisory committee included my manger, the Human Resource Manager, the recruiting manager, two potential mentors, and a recent new hire. The purpose of the advisory committee was to ensure that my end result is actionable within the Customer Service Center environment. I utilized their expertise when making decisions regarding the mentoring program.

I employed several research methods. First, I identified journal articles and books that focus on elements of successful mentoring programs. The books and journal articles included on my Works Consulted page provided preliminary research opportunities.

My largest research technique was to conduct appreciative inquiry interviews with seven current CSC employees (three potential mentors and four recent new hires). The purpose of the interview was to extract elements of successful transition into the CSC organization. I used their personal best transition stories as a basis for the process and structure of the CSC mentoring program.

For the appreciative inquiry interviews, the three potential mentors were selected from employees who have been with the organization for over five years,

are proficient at their work, and have a knack for connecting with younger employees. The four recent new hires were selected from those who have been at the CSC for less than one year and are considered to have made smooth transitions from training. I asked my General Mills advisory committee for suggestions for interviewees. From those names given, I determined who will be interviewed based on organizational diversity and gender as well as interviewees' availability for interviewing. The interviewees' names are confidential unless they choose to have their identity known. I utilized the appreciative inquiry interview techniques explained in The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry by Sue Hammond (1998).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) provides insight to help an organization change. AI does not look for change in our traditional way by trying to find a problem or what's wrong or broken. Instead, AI seeks to understand what works in an organization and how to build off of the high moments of achievement in order to make change happen. In my AI interviews, I asked participants to share a time of success as a new hire or when they assisted in a new hire's success. Who helped them reach their goal? What experiences did they have? What did their informal "mentor" do to assist, or what did they do as the mentor?

I used coding and compiling to categorize similar experiences and techniques across mentoring experiences. The categories were utilized as a foundation for my mentoring program development recommendation.

Each year, employees at the Customer Service Center complete a climate survey. The climate survey offers employees an opportunity to assess the current state of the CSC and identify areas of need. I utilized the results of this climate

survey to assess the current CSC needs and if a mentoring program could fulfill these needs. I employed the use of coding and compiling to reveal the patterns reflected in the survey data.

## V. Validity

As a researcher, my initial bias toward mentoring must be addressed. I believe that mentoring process enhances any organization and enriches the lives of those involved. Additionally, I needed to consider any reactivity that may occur during my interviews. In order to keep my bias in check and address the issue of respondent reactivity, I employed the following methods while researching which are described in Maxwell's (2005) *Qualitative Research Design-An Interactive Approach*.

**Triangulation**—I looked for successful mentoring techniques in three different areas: literature, interviews, and the climate survey. This allowed me to assess the need for a mentoring program based on a recently taken organizational climate survey as well as from human experiences. In the literature review and interviews, I checked my information from at least two other sources looking for commonalities. In the interviews, the two other sources will be the multiple interviewees. The climate survey served a third point of information to support findings in literature and from my interviews.

**Respondent Validation**—Each interviewee had an opportunity to review the key data collected and review my preliminary findings. This was their opportunity to confirm my findings from their interview and respond if I may have interpreted their comments incorrectly. I corrected any data that the interviewees found did not support their true feelings or experiences.

**Intervention**—All but one interview took place off of the General Mills campus. I addressed my interviewees as a graduate student doing research and not as a

Training Specialist from General Mills. Even though all participants know me in my training role, by taking them away from work and ensuring their confidentiality, I intended to maximize honesty in their responses.

## VI. Summary of Findings

While detailing the findings of my research, I will focus on the following key areas: a review of mentor success factor **literature**, **interview data** including the definition of mentoring and key findings, and analysis of details in the CSC **climate survey**.

### A. Summary of Literature Review

#### What Needs do Mentoring Programs Meet?

Mentoring teaches employees things that aren't found in any book or any training program (Marchetti, 2005). The culture of an organization can't be put in a training manual. The way in which we interact with other organizational departments is learned through experience. The heart and soul of the organization can't be replicated except through human interaction. By setting up new hires for success, mentors help transition them smoothly into their new jobs, increase their understanding of the organization, and develop their self confidence (Miller, 2006).

The heart and soul of the organization can't be replicated except through human interaction.

As new employees encounter their first large issue, whether it is a missing truck of Hamburger Helper or an allergen recall on brownies, they often lack the perspective to separate large issues from smaller issues or urgent matters from those that are insignificant. A mentor can provide the experience on how and when to react to certain situations (Altman, 2005).

Reducing turnover is another key benefit to mentoring programs (Lacey, 2000). Connections are a major reason people stay with an organization, and

mentoring programs are about people connecting with people (Miller, 2006). The relationships built through mentoring maintain the cycle of knowledge from employee to employee. Mentoring creates an environment of continual learning and growth in both the mentee as well as the mentor.

The benefits to the new employee are usually easy to assess. However, when organizations take a look at the return on their investment of a mentoring program, often the benefits to the mentor fall short or are addressed in terms of social or personal benefits. Triple Creek Associates (2007) agreed that mentoring is “perceived as the hardest HR program to measure.” In their study that measured the benefits of mentoring to the mentee, the mentor and the organization, they found that both mentors and mentees were 20% less likely to leave the organization than non-mentoring employees. Additionally, those involved in mentoring were 20% more likely to experience a change in salary grade, and five times more likely to be promoted.

Mentoring can also increase the skills of particular groups and utilize the knowledge of senior staff to keep them motivated. Senior staff experience and wisdom is shared with new employees to increase the overall expertise of the organization. Often times it also improves morale through the building of a relationship accepting culture (Lacey, 2000).

### **Best Practices in Development of Mentoring Programs**

The best mentoring programs must have a clearly defined purpose or goal. A mentoring program could have a goal to teach employees certain skills. A different program may focus on making employees feel welcome and a part of the team. A

third program concentration may involve reducing turnover. Programs should be designed to meet one specific need. Trying to solve all the organizational needs in one program almost guarantees that none of the needs will be met (Lacey, 2000).

The expectations of the mentor and mentee must be clearly defined. Adequate training on those expectations must be provided as well as an outline of the intended outcomes (Miller, 2006). The mentor should be welcoming and take a personal interest in the new hire. Experience and knowledge must be shared in a constructive manner while recognizing the skills and abilities of the mentee. Mentors need to be supportive and listen through sensitive issues, but not rescue the mentee from difficult situations (Edmundson, 1999 and Shea, 1997). The mentee must be receptive to feedback and coaching as well as taking risks and seeking out new challenges in the workplace. Mentees need to take responsibility for their work and not rely on the mentor for all the answers (Lacey, 2000).

Due to the commitment and requirements for success, mentoring programs should be voluntary. Nominations for mentors should be taken, or employees may volunteer for the role (Miller, 2006). A “no fault” escape clause should be provided for any mentoring relationship so that if the relationship isn't developing as either party had hoped, they each have a way to end the relationship on good terms. The program must be formal enough so that all participants have structured activities to start the relationship, but must be flexible enough to meet the needs of individual mentor/mentee relationships (Miller, 2006).

A program must be open to broader ideas and definitions of mentoring in order to benefit the entire organization. Many programs assume that only senior

leaders are capable of being mentors which drastically diminishes the number of people available to be mentors. Mentoring should be seen as a developmental opportunity for the entire workforce, regardless of whether they are the mentee or the mentor (Triple Creek Associates, 2007). Benefits include networking, reflection, and increased satisfaction in their position.

Finally, yet most importantly, the organization must provide a support structure for mentoring. Kathy Lacey (2000) states, "Structured mentoring relationships will only be successful if the organization understands the mentoring process and is committed to the concept of long-term professional growth (p. 22)." Mentoring must be supported at all levels of the organization and become a part of the culture. Resources need to be given to promote and maintain the mentoring program. Without a well structured foundation, the bridge of mentoring may crumble.

## **B. Summary of Interview Findings**

During the interview process, I allowed the interviewees to self-define mentoring. This allowed the interviewee to use their own frame of reference instead of imposing my definitions. Additionally, I was able to observe the interviewees own feelings about the relationships they have developed and the language they use to describe those relationships. Throughout the interviews, two main definitions emerged.

The first definition related a more

As one interviewee stated, "Mentoring is allowing someone to use your knowledge and experience to learn about a certain area."

formal relationship where the mentor advises the mentee on board organizational issues and long range future plans. As one interviewee stated, "Mentoring is allowing someone to use your knowledge and experience to learn about a certain area." This type of mentoring fulfills an intrinsic need that the mentee is missing.

The second, more common, definition included an informal relationship that happens naturally. A mentor is someone that you trust and are very comfortable with, almost to the point of a good friendship. The mentee can ask any questions (even those that they may perceive as "dumb") without worrying about their mentor telling a manager. A mentorship involves the mix of helping the mentee by answering questions as well as explaining new concepts.

Upon completing the seven interviews of CSC employees, several themes became clear from the interview question responses. The themes include qualities of successful mentors, qualities of successful new employees, helpful advice, and the largest theme—helpful learning and acclimating techniques. As I review each of these themes, it is interesting to note that very little conflicting data emerged. Although interviewees may have had different perspectives, the issues and comments surrounding the issues were similar. The coding of the responses can be found in the Appendix. When coding the responses, I counted each time a topic emerged; therefore, there are topics with responses greater than the number of interviewees.

## Qualities of Successful Mentors

The most commonly mentioned quality of a successful mentor at the CSC was that the person not only “volunteers” to help out the new employee, but that

“We really clicked because of her personality. She’s easy going...when I messed up she’d help me and we’d usually end up laughing

they enjoy the process and want to help new employees succeed. The concept of the mentor volunteering is congruent with literature findings mentioned earlier. It was found almost equally important that the mentor be located in close

proximity to the new employee and that the mentor must have customer specific knowledge or knowledge specifically about the daily tasks of the new employee.

The actual experience of the mentor was the third highest response, closely followed by the mentor being trust-worthy, respected, and credible. All of these factors contribute to the mentor’s ability to guide the new employee to the correct processes and procedure. The next most common responses were similar, stating that the new employee sees the mentor as a potential friend otherwise, or that “their personalities click”. The mentor takes time to explain concepts, but does so in a fun, light hearted manner. As one recent new employee stated while describing their mentor relationship, “We really clicked because of her personality. She’s easy going...when I messed up she’d help me and we’d usually end up laughing about what had happened.” A complete list of successful mentor qualities is listed in Appendix B.

Mentoring new hires is slightly different than information found in the literature review. The literature review focused on treating mentees differently based on their

generational needs. Although at a high level these needs still ring true, the desire of new employees to be accepted is less focused on their generation, and more about being new to the organization.

### **Qualities of Successful New Employees/Mentee**

The qualities of successful new employees produced a much shorter list than qualities of successful mentors. I believe this is true because I did not begin my interviews looking for successful qualities of new employees—these ideas emerged while discussing mentoring experiences. New employees and potential mentors both agree that it is important for new employees to be engaged in learning. That learning must include the technical aspects as well as learning the culture of the organization, the soft skills of working with customers, as well as being aware of how to operate in the professional environment. Additionally, it is imperative for new employees to ask questions and let others know when help is needed. The desire to perform well and initiating feedback are also keys in a new employee's success. New employees tend to be technologically savvy, yet unsure about how their skills will fit into the General Mills environment. A complete list of qualities of successful new employees is listed in Appendix C.

### **Helpful Advice for New Employees**

Interviewees had a difficult time expounding exact advice that is helpful and encouraging. As one person stated, "I look at the [new] person and use what works for them. I encourage them that it will all come together. Sometimes in training it is overwhelming and letting them know that they won't get it right away—it takes time, but they will get it." These statements resonated in all of the interviewees

experiences. Encouragement was simply stated as, "You're getting it." Positive feedback and statements that give confidence are also keys for encouraging new employees. As one newer employee stated, "I just kept thinking...don't suck." A more long term employee stated that while working with new employees, "You can tell they are wondering,



Don't feel bad if you don't get it right away—this job takes time and if you put in the effort, you will be rewarded.

'Wow, I have a four year degree and I don't get this...what am I doing here?'" This is why it is important to encourage new employees. Mentors need to reassure them, particularly through tough times, that it's important to stay positive, put each issue into perspective, and not to let what happens ruin your day. Since a new employee might not have the perspective to know which issues are large or small, in order to "put things into perspective," a mentor can help by advising during these times. A complete list of helpful advice is listed in Appendix D.

### **Helpful Learning and Acclimating Techniques**

Each interviewee had the most to contribute when discussing helpful learning and acclimating techniques for new employees to the CSC environment. The most common responses all fit into similar categories. It is important that new employees are given clear, specific, step-by-step directions to any process and that whoever is explaining the process includes the *big picture* and *why* each step in the process is necessary. This process helps to connect the dots between training and the "real world."

Although I dedicated an entire section to helpful advice, it is also a key learning technique. Multiple interviewees commented on the importance of

creating a positive environment where there is little criticism during the new employee's learning curve. Not only do new employees need to learn the processes, but they need to build confidence and have someone patiently answer their questions.

There were many comments in relationship to the new employee's environment; however, there were other very concrete recommendations. All of the information "coming at"

a new employee can be very overwhelming, therefore, a mentor can be helpful by assisting the new employee

In building your relationship, it is important that:

- Each partner takes some initiative and risk
- The partnership exists in a positive, caring environment
- The participants mutually set agreed-upon goals
- Partners deal effectively with unmet

with their organizational skills—both organizing their email and all of the paper that can consume their desk. Help can also be simply introducing the new employee to all of their teammates and others that he/she will work with in the building. Even helping a new employee with speakerphone, the fax machine, or where to find a pencil is comforting to a new employee. With all of these techniques, it is key for the mentor to spend time with the new employee, but also for the new employee to be able to stop by or pop over the cube and say, "Hey, do you have a minute?"

Consistency was mentioned frequently, but took on several forms. First, consistency in the process from one new hire to another is important. Many new employees found that while they were having an excellent experience with someone on their team who was assigned to help them with the transition, other new hires found someone informally, or were left on their own to figure things out.

The interviewees requested that a consistent process be established for welcoming new employees to a team. Additionally, they identified the inconsistency that can occur when a question of process is asked. There is a common adage at the CSC that if you ask three people a question, you will get three different answers. This should not be the case when the question is tied to company policy. A complete list of helpful learning and acclimating activities is listed in Appendix E.

### **Other Insightful Gems of Wisdom**

During the interviews, there were other insightful “gems of wisdom” that emerged from our conversations. Although not directly related to mentoring, the tie to new employee integration causes me to see them as relevant and must be stated.

**Managers must set an example.** Several interviewees expressed the importance for managers to set expectations—not just on the day to day tactical outcomes, but in the soft things or the behaviors. Managers must set the tone for how we want people to act. Managers can’t take for granted that new employees know how to do that. Sometimes even stating the obvious is helpful so that all employees have a standard to follow. One interviewee even called it “getting consistency from manager to manager.” One respondent stated that, “People need a personal touch from senior leadership—not just when they are new, but always. Getting gifts like the Christmas gift is nice to see them and shake their hand, but doughnuts at a staff meeting, getting to know the team might have gone much farther.” Another interviewee focused on the different style of management being confusing to new employees. “Sometimes [new employees]

see the manager in one style and maybe that manager isn't in the office very much because they travel or use comp time to come in late or leave early. A manager without structure can create an environment without structure. If a manager isn't here all the time, it's important to understand why they aren't there and that it's not okay for employees to follow suit by not being there."

**The isolation and the great divide.** As one respondent stated, "There is definitely a divide between Bakery/Foodservice and Retail or even just upstairs and downstairs. I'm scared of ATS's [the trade role that works upstairs]. There's definitely a divide and it's natural because you do different things. It would be nice if we were encouraged to shadow each other for half a day." Another commented, "It's all a part of the isolation factor that goes on between teams." A third stated, "You only know those that sit down your row." All these statements support the fact that our organization must look for ways to bring people together.

**Consistency.** As stated in the section on manager's setting an example, consistency is needed in many areas of the CSC. Some comments focused on the divide as well as providing consistency to new employees, "There is a disconnect between the mentor role now and new hires. People change, expectations change, and we no longer know what the new hires are being told in recruiting and in hiring. The greater CSC must be kept up top speed on that so that we can provide consistent information to new hires." Consistency is needed on all levels—from what current employees are told about the hiring and recruiting process to how managers create a relationship with the new employee to answers from support team members.

For those that work with new employees regularly, there was a desire to have lunch meetings to discuss best practices. If an employee does X, what would you do to respond? What is acceptable behavior of a new employee and what is not? How does someone in a mentor role react to behavior that is deemed inappropriate? Newer employees could be included in the best practice session to see how they would have liked different scenarios to be handles. It was clear from the interviewees that unless topics are discussed, no one knows the best way to handle them and by sharing information all those in mentor roles can improve. By creating these lunch sessions, a level of consistency can be created among those that informally mentor.

**Final mentoring words.** There were a few definitions of mentoring that hit at the heart of what my research was trying to uncover. “A mentorship would be a two way street—not that the mentor is learning from the mentee, but they want to help out the new person and the new person wants help.” “Mentoring does not stop. You always keep learning and can be a mentor and a mentee at the same time.”

### **C. Summary of Climate Survey Findings**

Due to the sensitivity of the climate survey data being released outside of General Mills, I am only permitted to make general statements as to the results in relation to the experience of a new employee.

Overall, the CSC ranks high in empowering its employees. In ranking productivity and development opportunities, the CSC could see improvement in being open to new ideas. Innovation needs even more improvement. The Senior

Leadership Team took these results and focused them into two areas: increasing **employee commitment** and **maximizing employee development**. Although not specifically mentioned by the Senior Leadership Team, I noticed in the raw data that the CSC also needs to improve how it energizes employees to go the extra mile, providing opportunities for development and growth.

#### **D. Findings Summary**

To answer my research question, **what are the qualities of a successful mentoring program and General Mills' Customer Service Center?** My findings conclude the answer is:

- A clearly defined goal
- Mentors willing to help and assist new employees
- New employees focused on learning and being successful
- Resources to assist both mentors and mentees
- An environment of support and consistency for all employees

## **VII. Analysis of Results**

From the interviews I conducted and climate survey results, it is clear that there are bridges to be built at the CSC. A mentoring program would meet many of the needs identified in the climate survey as well as ideas mentioned during my interviews.

A mentoring program could increase employee commitment by connecting new employees to the CSC culture. The identified need for an initial "out of training" mentor for new employees at the CSC must be met. This role could provide a needed consistency for new employees across positions and management styles. The mentor role may provide an opportunity for maximizing employee development by expanding the responsibility of the current level 11 and 12 positions that typically work with new employees. Employees want to have a purpose and feel that their job is more than making sure Cheerios are on the store shelves. Assisting a new employee in their learning curve adds to one's personal purpose.

My literature research indicated that a mentor usually provided a different perspective for a mentee and assisted them in reaching future positions; however, this was not congruent with my interview research. Three of the four newer employees stated that they liked and/or wanted their mentor to be on the same team as them and possibly working with the same customer. They desired as much similarity with their mentor as possible. Due to the higher experience of their mentor, different perspectives would be apparent; however, the new hire simply wants

someone to help them through the day-to-day tasks initially and was not looking for a career mentor right away.

Both my literature and interview findings supported the notion of a mentor's need to be a volunteer. Any employee should not be forced to be a mentor. The mentor must have a desire, some even call it a need, to help others. The nurturing and educating spirit of a mentor can only be present if they volunteer for the position.

Repeatedly the concepts of a mentor being caring and understanding surfaced. Along with the caring qualities is the essence of a teacher with the ability to clarify process and procedure.

Surprisingly, diversity of age, race, or gender did not enter into any of my interview research. The new employees and mentors were focused most on assimilation to culture and position.

Appreciating diversity comes later after the new hire is comfortable in their position. As an organization, the CSC is not racially diverse.

Although I made an effort for my interviewees

to be diverse in the areas of age and gender, they were all of similar ethnic background, which is common at the CSC. Once acclimated to the environment, there are many programs and opportunities outside the CSC for employees to take part in ethnic and diverse events. A new employee often learns of these programs through the person that they usually identify as their mentor.

With clearly defined goals and roles for the mentor and mentee to share knowledge, build relationships, and become part of the CSC culture, the program's

As mentioned by the Triple Creek Associates, mentoring offers as many benefits to the mentors and the mentees. In an organization where it is increasingly important to retain employees and keep them focused and motivated, the more opportunities to be mentors, the better! One interviewee commented, “[Mentoring] really solidifies my knowledge.” Through the sharing of learning, trust and relationships can be built.

Mentoring can provide consistency for new employees post-training and overall at the CSC by continuing the structured environment that starts in training. The program's success could be measured with clearly defined goals and roles for the mentor and mentee to share knowledge, build relationships, and become part of the CSC culture. It would be essential for the mentors and mentees to have initial training on the goal and their roles as well as have organizational support for their learning process.

## VIII. Recommendation

If the General Mills' Customer Service Center wants to achieve less turnover, increase employee satisfaction in their positions, and provide faster acclimation for new employees, I propose the following mentoring program outline to build the bridges of knowledge, relationships, and community culture:

- 1. Building a Foundation**—The goal of the CSC mentoring program would be to build relationships, share knowledge and create a community of learning. This foundational goal must be supported by the entire organization as a way to reduce the internal divide and bring all teams closer together while providing opportunity for all employees to grow in their position.
- 2. Building a Relationship**—The first step in building relationships is selecting mentors in the CSC community. A selection process would be developed where mentors not only volunteer, but must be qualified to help a new employee transition from training to their position. All new employees would be assigned a mentor in their team, a “go-to” person. This person would assist the new employee in all learning and acclimating activities. The mentee could utilize the knowledge and experience of the mentor to answer both tactical daily tasks and more strategic organizational questions. The mentor would introduce the new employee to as many people in the organization as possible. They may occasionally have lunch together. They will be there to support each other in the learning process

as the mentee is learning their position and the mentor is developing their coaching skills.

**3. Building a Community**—Building a community involves making mentoring

Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.  
-John Wesley

“one of the things we do around here.” It must become integrated into the culture, supported by all members of the CSC. Creating the community needs the assistance of two things: training and

knowledge, and mentoring roundtables.

- **Training and Knowledge**—New employees are provided with large amounts of information. Current employees have vast amounts of knowledge. Bringing these people together is a natural way to keep the knowledge, policy and procedure information circulating through the environment. Training on the roles and responsibilities of both mentor and mentee would also be essential.
- **Mentoring Roundtables**—Those that mentor new employees could benefit from mentoring roundtables where best practices in coaching and in relating to new employees could be discussed. Additionally, having sessions with the recent “class” of new hires and their mentors would bring together the divide that occurs between teams, floors, and customer divisions. In these large roundtables, current organizational issues, as well as general “getting to know others” activities would be included. On-going feedback as to the structure

and design of the mentoring program could be discussed in these sessions or separate feedback sessions.

I believe that the above components are critical for a successful mentoring program at the CSC. Success would be defined by the results of mentoring program participant feedback. Additionally, results could be measured by a reduction in turnover, by greater employee satisfaction with their position (measured in the climate survey) and organizational support for the continuation of the program.

In addition to the components I recommend above, Appendix F outlines an initial step toward a complete mentoring handbook that could be used in the mentoring program process. The handbook includes sections focused on the outcomes of the mentoring program, the roles and responsibilities of each party as well as individual and partnering activities.

Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." Employees want a higher sense of purpose. Organizations desire a higher level of productivity. Mentoring brings the two together and builds a bridge.

## IX. Summary

Starting at a new organization is a difficult process. I believe that by creating a mentoring program, the transition will be smoother and faster for those entering the Customer Service Center at General Mills. A mentoring program will allow mentors the opportunity to increase their skills and bridge the gap that often occurs between new and existing employees. The mentoring program will serve not only the mentee and organizational needs, but the developmental needs of mentors as well.

Throughout my research process, journal articles and books provided multiple perspectives on how to implement a mentoring program. My appreciative inquiry participant responses served as the foundation for developing a mentoring program proposal for General Mills' Customer Service Center after validation that a mentoring program will meet organizational needs uncovered in a recent climate survey. Throughout this process, I consulted a self-created advisory committee for interviewee recommendations and organizational support. These interviews provided insight into research recommendations, program development, and possible program activities.

The goal of my research was to answer the question: **“What are the qualities of a successful mentoring program for new employees at the General Mills Customer Service Center?”** I have learned that the mentoring relationship can be varied and complex. However, the cornerstone of all successful mentoring programs includes the following:

- A clearly defined goal
- Mentors willing to help and assist new employees
- New employees focused on learning and being successful
- Resources to assist both mentors and mentees
- An environment of support and consistency for all employees

The benefits of a mentoring program include faster new employee acclimation and more committed employees by providing a higher sense of purpose and relationship building throughout the organization. Increased retention is another benefit as employees involved in mentor relationships are 20% less likely to leave the organization. Finally, mentoring creates an environment of continual learning and growth in both the mentee as well as the mentor.

Maya Angelou once said, "I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Mentoring is about building relationships and evoking positive feelings. It may not matter what an organization **says** to a new employee, it may not matter what the organization **does** for the employee in terms of benefits or opportunity, the new employee is most impressed by the way he or she **feels** when working at the organization. Making a difference to the organization and its employees is the reason for mentoring and building bridges.

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## Appendix A: IRB Form

### CSC REQUEST FOR THE APPROVAL FOR THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH 2006-2007 APPLICATION FORM

#### APPLICATION DATA

Date of application: *January 1, 2007-December 31, 2007*

Indicate type of review:  Exempt  Expedited  Full

For all exempt reviews, indicate which of the following categories apply:

- 1. Normal Educational Practices
- 2. Educational Tests
- 3. Survey/Interview Procedures
- 4. Observation
- 5. Secondary Use of Data
- 6. Evaluation of Federal Research/Programs
- 7. Taste Tests

#### APPLICANT DATA

Investigator name(s): *Jennifer Lynn Flood*

(Please list all co-investigators)

Project Title: *Creating a Mentoring Program focused on Training and Retaining  
New Employees*

Advisor: *Louise M. Miner*

Department: *Masters of Organizational Leadership*

Dates of Project: *January 2007-May 2007*

Has this research been reviewed by another IRB?  Yes  No

(If yes, please provide a copy of the letter of approval, or indicate the status of your application)

Will this research be reviewed by another IRB?  Yes  No

(If yes, please indicate your plans for review)

## ABSTRACT

**In a paragraph or two, carefully describe your research project. Include your research question and, step by step, detail the procedures you will follow. Also, if it applies to your project, you must attach a copy of your thesis proposal, your protocol, your questionnaire, etc.**

My research question is, **“What are the qualities of a successful mentoring program for new employees at the General Mills Customer Service Center?”** Throughout my research process, I’ll consult a self-created advisory committee at General Mills through my research process. This advisory committee will include my manager, the Human Resource Manager, the recruiting manager, a potential mentor and a recent new hire.

I will identify journal articles and books that focus on elements of successful mentoring programs. I will utilize the results of the CSC climate survey to assess the current CSC needs and if a mentoring program could fulfill these needs. I will employ the use of coding and compiling to reveal the patterns during the survey.

My final research technique will be to conduct appreciative inquiry interviews with six current CSC employees (three potential mentors and three recent new hires). The three potential mentors will be selected from employees who have been with the organization for over five years, are proficient at their work, and have a knack for connecting with younger employees. The three recent new hires will be selected from those who have been at the CSC for less than one year and are considered to have made smooth transitions from training. I will be asking my General Mills advisory committee for suggestions for interviewees; however, I will ultimately determine who will be interviewed and keep those names confidential. In my Appreciative Inquiry interviews, I will ask participants to share a time of success as a new hire or when they assisted in a new hire's success. Who helped them reach their goal? What experiences did they have? What did their informal “mentor” do to assist or what did they do as the mentor?

## SUBJECTS AND RECRUITMENT

**Age Range of Subjects: Over 18 years old  
Number: 2-3 Male 4-5 Female 6-8 Total**

**Describe how you will recruit your subjects: be specific. Attach a copy of any advertisement, flyer, letter, or statement that you will use to recruit subjects.**

*All subjects will be selected by me, the researcher. The three potential mentors will be selected from employees who have been with the organization for over five years, are proficient at their work, and have a knack for connecting with younger employees. The three recent new hires will be selected from those who have been at the Customer Service Center for less than one year and are considered to have made smooth transitions from training. I will be interviewing*

one male and 2 females from each these groups which represents the current distribution of genders at the CSC.

**Will the subjects be offered inducements for participation? If yes, explain.**

No.

**Please clearly identify any special populations or classes of subjects that you will include and provide a rationale for using them.**

## **RISKS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

**Check all that apply. Does the research involve:**

- Use of private records (medical or educational records)
- Possible invasion of privacy of the subjects and/or their family
- Manipulation of psychological or social variables
- Probing for personal or sensitive information in surveys or interviews
- Use of deception
- Presentation of materials which subjects might consider offensive, threatening or degrading
- Risk of physical injury to subjects
- Other risks

**If any of these are checked, describe the precautions taken to minimize the risks.**

**List any anticipated direct benefits to your subjects. If none, state that here and in the consent form.**

*Participants will receive the benefit of being able to tell their story of transition from training to their current experience at the CSC and those who helped them along the way.*

*There will be no direct benefits professionally since their involvement will be confidential.*

**Justify the statement that the potential benefits of this research study outweigh any probable risks.**

*The only risk is that a mentoring program will not fulfill the needs of the CSC or benefit new employees in their transition to the post-training environment. Any knowledge gained through my research will benefit the training and recruiting programs to enhance new hire experiences.*

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

### **How will you maintain confidentiality of the information obtained from your subjects?**

*Once participants are selected, I will maintain confidentiality, by not sharing the identity of the interview participants with anyone. Each participant will be assigned a numeric code for data analysis.*

### **Where will the data be kept, how long will it be kept, and who will have access to it?**

*My interview data will be kept for six months post-action project presentation. It will be kept at my home in an unmarked envelope in a file cabinet.*

### **Will data identifying subjects be made available to anyone other than you or your advisor? Who?**

*The subjects' identity will not be available to anyone except my advisor. It is important to ensure that interviewees provide honest responses.*

### **Will the data become a part of the medical or school record? If yes, explain.**

*No.*

## INFORMED CONSENT

### **How will you gain consent? State what you will say to the subjects to explain your research. Attach consent form or text of oral statement. (Note: if you propose to work with children ages 7-18 and you are gaining consent from their parents, you must also develop and attach an age-appropriate assent form.)**

*I will contact the potential interviewees via email and follow-up with a voice message. I will use the text at the beginning of the consent form to detail their role in the research process.*

### **When will you obtain consent (that day?, several days before the project?, a week before?)?**

*Consent will be obtained at least one week prior to the appreciative inquiry interview.*

**How will you assess that the subject understands what he/she has been asked to do?**

*Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions prior to the interview and before signing the consent form.*

**ASSURANCES AND SIGNATURES**

**The signatures below certify that:**

- The information furnished concerning the procedures to be taken for the protection of human subjects is correct.
- The investigator, to the best of his/her knowledge, is complying with Federal regulations governing human subjects in research.
- The investigator will seek and obtain prior written approval from the Committee for any substantive modification in the proposal, including, but not limited to changes in cooperating investigators, procedures and subject population.
- The investigator will promptly report in writing to the Committee any unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events that occur in the course of the study.
- The investigator will promptly report in writing to the Committee and to the subjects any significant findings which develop during the course of the study which may affect the risks and benefits to the subjects who participate in the study.
- The research will not be initiated until the Committee provides written approval.
- The term of approval will be for one year. To extend the study beyond that term, a new application must be submitted.
- The research, once approved, is subject to continuing review and approval by the Committee.
- The researcher will comply with all requests from the IRB to report on the status of the study and will maintain records of the research according to IRB guidelines.
- If these conditions are not met, approval of this research may be suspended.

**Note: Approval of your final proposal indicates that your advisor and instructor have signed off on the IRB at the departmental level. Therefore you do not need the following signatures on this form unless you need to send it on to the college review board.**

**As primary investigator, I understand and will follow the above conditions.**

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

**As Advisor or Sponsor, I assume responsibility for ensuring that the investigator complies with College and federal regulations regarding the use of Human Subjects in research.**

---

Signature of Advisor or Sponsor

Date

(Student investigators must have an advisor. Staff and non-CSC applicants must have a departmental sponsor)

**As Department Chair, I acknowledge that this research is in keeping with the standards set by our department and assure that the investigator has met all departmental requirements for review and approval of this research.**

---

Signature of Department Chair

Date

## IRB Consent Form Checklist

Excerpted from Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects as published in the Federal Register Tuesday, June 18, 1991 and including 45 CFR 46.116:

No investigator may involve a human being as a subject in research covered by these criteria unless the investigator has obtained the legally effective informed consent of the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. An investigator shall seek such consent only under circumstances that provide the prospective subject or the representative sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate and that minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence. The information that the researcher prepares in a consent form must use language that is understandable to the subject or the representative. No informed consent may include any language which indicates that the subject has waived or implies waiver of any legal rights, releases or appears to release the investigator, the sponsor or the institution or its agents from liability for negligence.

Follow the format in the sample consent form and use the following checklist to ensure that all elements of informed consent are included:

- A statement that the study involves research.
- For student research, a statement that the study is being undertaken by students under the supervision of a faculty member. The name of the department should be indicated as well as the name of the faculty member.
- An explanation of the purposes of the research.
- The duration of the subject's participation.
- The number of subjects involved in the research.
- A step by step description of the procedures to be used.
- A description of the expected or foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject.
- A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research.
- A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject.
- A description of the measures that the researcher will follow to assure confidentiality of records that identify each subject by name and/or identification number.
- An explanation of how to contact the researcher and the sponsor for questions about the study.
- If physical contact is involved, an explanation of whom to contact regarding the research, the subject's rights, and research-related injury.
- A statement that the subject is free to choose to participate in the study, and that by refusing to participate, the subject will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which the subject may otherwise be entitled.
- A statement that clearly indicates that the subject may discontinue participation at any time, even after the consent form is signed, without any loss of benefits.
- A statement indicating that the subject will be offered a copy of the form to keep.
- A line for the signature of the subject followed by the date (do not make an "x" to show where to sign)
- A line for the signature of the investigator followed by the date of the signing

## **Consent Form for Participation in an Interview about Successful Mentoring Experiences**

### **Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating positive mentoring experiences. This study is being conducted by Jennifer Flood, a graduate student at the College of St. Catherine under the supervision of Louise M. Miner, a faculty member in the Department of Organizational Leadership. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you have been identified as either a potential mentor or a recent new hire that has made a successful transition from training to your position. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to understand the characteristics and processes that create a successful transition from training to the customer service center positions. These characteristics and processes will be applied in the creation of a mentoring program. Approximately 6-8 people are expected to participate in this research.

### **Procedures:**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one hour interview where I will ask you to recount an experience when someone positively influenced your career transition from training. You may also recount a story of when you assisted another in his or her career transition. How was it successful? What made it successful? What could have made it even better? The interviews will be conducted off General Mill campus to maintain your confidentiality. The interview will be recorded (with your permission) to allow me to review our interview for further detail.

### **Risks and Benefits of being in the study:**

The study has minimal risks. It will take approximately one hour of your personal time. There are no direct benefits of your participation except your knowledge of having a formative influence on the mentoring program development.

### **Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented.

I will keep the research results in an unidentifiable envelope in a file cabinet at my home. Only I and my academic advisor will have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by March 31, 2007. I will destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you. All research data will be destroyed six months after I present my final findings.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with General Mills or the College of St. Catherine in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

**New Information:**

If during course of this research study I learn about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, I will inform you of these findings.

**Contacts and questions:**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Jennifer Flood, at 763/764-8152 or at home, 763/557-6809. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Louise M. Miner at 651/698-7385 will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact the faculty advisor.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

---

I consent to participate in the study.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

## Appendix B: Successful Mentor Qualities

Successful Mentor Qualities

Theme/Topic	# of occurrences
Volunteers to help and likes to help new AOSs	15
Each team needs a "go-to" person, has team/customer knowledge, close proximity and sits by new AOS	13
Has vast experience	10
Trust, respect, credibility	9
Clicks personally with new AOS and could see them as friends	6
Patiently answers questions thoroughly	4
Relaxed attitude, easy-going, laughs, sense of humor	4
Gives confidence/doesn't make new AOS feel stupid and can ask them "dumb" questions	4
Comfortable and makes new AOS feel welcome	3
Encourage/cheerleader/positive attitude/approachable	3
Does a good job	2
Pushes new AOS to be on their own	2
Closer in age	2
Role model/want to be like them	2
Provides new perspective/different team/different ideas	2
Helps learn current job	2
Has title of "mentor" or "role model"	2
Need for them lessens with time	1
Kind/caring	1
Doesn't do performance evaluation	1
Dedicates time to help	1
Does similar job to new AOS	1

## Appendix C: Qualities of Successful New Employees

### Successful Qualities of New AOS

Theme/Topic	# of occurrences
Engaged in process/learning (and culture, soft skills, to be professional)	6
Asks for help/questions	4
Wants to do well	3
Wants feedback	2
Technologically/system savvy	2
Nervous/unsure	2
Needs help/repetition	2
Is encouraging to others	1

## Appendix D: Helpful Advice for New Employees

### Helpful Advice

Theme/Topic	# of occurrences
You're getting it	4
Positive feedback	3
Don't feel bad if you don't get it right away	3
Be confident	3
Say they are the "go-to" person	2
Stay focused (on goal or current job) and work through it	2
Ask questions	1
Stay positive	1
Put each issue into perspective	1
Things will go wrong, don't let it ruin your day	1

## Appendix E: Helpful Learning and Acclimating Techniques

### Helpful Learning/Acclimating Techniques

Theme/Topic	# of occurrences
Giving a clear, specific, step by step process to follow (understanding more than the button to push) a day in the life routine.	8
Time sitting with new AOS	7
Letting new AOS "drive" the process	7
Explain WHY and the big picture to process	6
Patiently, thoroughly answer questions	5
Build confidence and encourages new AOS	5
Advice on appearance, attitude, soft skills, culture	5
Introduce new person to the team	4
Connecting the dots from training to real world	4
Keeps door open for more questions	4
Finding office supplies/services at MGO/fax/speakerphone	3
Create positive environment/no put downs/no criticism	3
New AOS getting feedback on progress	3
Helps in organization skills (email, paper, desk)	3
Consistency in answers from different people	3
Scheduled/dedicated time with new AOS	2
Immediate answer	2
Reinforce training	2
Asking questions multiple times without being criticized	2
Repetition of activities and processes	2
Ask new AOS questions as they do the process	2
Follow-up with new AOS on issues you assisted	2
Learning corporate culture	1
Learn system of previous AOS before trying new things/processes	1
Let new AOS correct their own mistakes	1
Many people to help	1
Build relationships	1
Relate to past experience/doing similar things as new AOS	1
Multi-tasking skills	1
Personal touch from management or SLT	1
Point out resources/tools/people	1
Lunch about broader topics	1

**Appendix F:  
Building Bridges—A Mentoring Program Handbook**