

Josephine Simeone was People & Culture director at Aon Pacific, managing a workforce of just under 3,000 employees. Previous to that, she worked as an HR director at LexisNexis. Having often reached for mentoring to unlock purpose in multinational enterprises, we sat down for a virtual chat to discuss her experience with mentoring and how it can help organizations promote connectivity in remote work.

Do you agree with the perception that employees at larger corporations are more likely to feel disconnected and insignificant?

Irrespective of the business' size, if there isn't a well-defined organizational purpose and employees can't see how their work is meaningfully contributing to that purpose, they will ultimately feel disconnected.

Mentoring can be a really useful tool for organizations to promote purpose and facilitate connectivity. Have any of the organizations you've worked for implemented mentoring?

At Aon we created a tool kit to enable anyone to find a mentor or become a mentee. It was a flexible and democratized form of mentoring. In my prior work at LexisNexis however, we implemented a far more formalized, centrally-managed and highly structured mentoring programme. There was an active role around matching mentors with mentees and being clear about their objectives.

Which mentoring programme was more effective, in your opinion?

I found the structured mentoring programme at LexisNexis to be more effective. Well-matched mentoring relationships set it up for success. The use of the mentoring toolkit at Aon was more suitable for employees that were already experienced with mentoring.

What do you think could have been improved at LexisNexis?

We matched mentors with mentees based on their objectives and profiles. But it doesn't always come down to what they've written down. The softer elements in their personalities were equally important.

On a corporate level, how did mentoring impact the business?

It broke down team silos and promoted an awareness and appreciation for different perspectives across the business. A marketer tends to view the world through a different lens compared to a data analyst. But connecting them can create understanding for how different positions contribute to the business' purpose and why investment might be diverted into one part of the business versus another.

I think that an interdisciplinary approach in an organization can also spark a lot of innovation.

Hugely! People also realized that they could progress in their careers laterally as well as 'ladder-ly'.

Now that most of us are working remotely, we can expect some habits to stick. What does a post-covid workplace look like to you?

I think that leadership will become more human and influential than hierarchical. There will be greater emphasis on holistic well-being and more organizations will devise solutions to cater to this. I also think that team democracy will continue, whereby people have choice and flexibility to ensure that their personal and professional lives can fit together.

How do you think mentoring can help us adapt to this post-covid workplace?

Organizations shine when humans do. A mentor can help you recognize your strengths, help you take informed and calculated risks, and can provide objective feedback on your career journey.

In some aspects, mentoring is easier now that we can do it virtually. It is the time for organizations to exploit the 'screen' of opportunity and help boost employee well-being.

No truer statement has been said!