



Mentoring Strategies and Techniques for Successful Operation of Agribusiness Enterprises

“Mentoring is a learning process where helpful, personal, and reciprocal relationships are built while focusing on the desired achievements and providing emotional support”, (A. T. Wong and Kalyani Premkumar, 2007).

During the process of mentoring relationships, the conversation between mentors and the mentees provides an avenue for the mentor to share his knowledge skills, and experience to equip the mentee with the needed capabilities to succeed. Mentoring has a way of changing the thinking pattern and the method of practice used by the mentee in doing things. Mentoring provides help for persons of

lower capabilities to acquire knowledge and skills needed to succeed through an established relationship with someone that has a higher level of knowledge, skills, and experience.

Mentoring is a form of relationship that is reciprocal in nature in which the mentor and the mentee agree to work collaboratively towards mutually defined goals they will develop the mentee’s skills, abilities, knowledge, and mindset. Research has shown that mentorship has a great influence on the success rates of MSMEs. Young Agripreneurs that have access to mentorship are able to overcome some teething challenges within the first two

years of operations and this has helped them to record more successes than other youths that are not exposed to mentoring. Other youths who continue to keep good relationships with their mentors beyond the first two years perform more excellently as they are able to acquire more skills, and knowledge and they are also able to increase their networks. Though mentoring has the same goal everywhere the strategies and approaches adopted may differ in different cases.

This issue focuses on providing Mentoring Strategies and Techniques for Successful Operation of Agribusiness Enterprises.

Mentorship plays an important role in the success rates of agribusiness enterprises. Firstly, mentorship provides access to timely counsel and business advice to the mentee.

This saves the business from folding up in the first two years. It also prevents the enterprise from falling into some critical error. Secondly, mentorship makes available experiences that a mentor had gathered over the years to the mentee and most time it comes without costs. Thirdly, mentees learn new approaches and new techniques during the mentorship period. Fourthly, mentees gain some level of networking through referrals during the period of mentorship. Also, many times mentees gain access to markets through their mentors and this really solves a big problem for agribusiness enterprises.

Mentorship in agribusiness can take dynamic approaches. The following strategies have yielded good results in mentoring young Agripreneurs;

i. Group mentorship approach: This entails bringing young agripreneurs together in one location for mentoring. This could either be a physical gathering or a virtual meeting. These could be planned events that take place periodically. The mentor addresses particular areas of concern and there is always room for question and answer. The topic is selected based on

the pressing concerns of the beneficiaries.

ii. Peer to Peer mentorship approach: In this approach, youths are encouraged to learn from themselves. This could take a rotational farm visit approach and it could take be organized events in form of meetings and group discussions that are held on a selected platform. It could be a physical meeting or a virtual meeting. Through this approach knowledge and experience are shared amongst peers.

iii. Individual mentorship approach: this approach allows for trained youths to relate with identified mentors. This could take different forms; hand-selected youths could be attached to a particular mentor or different mentors may be made available to attend to a pool of trained youths. Each mentee has the liberty to choose their mentor.

Despite the contributions that mentorship has added to the growth of agribusiness, the contributions are still insignificant. Many startup businesses are still failing while many youths are not even taking advantage of the opportunities in mentorship. The bane of mentorship especially for young Agripreneurs could be

traced to the following reasons; a greater percentage of the owners of the MSMEs are not aware of mentorship and the opportunities in it. Some mentors are not willing to share enough information with startup enterprises because of fear and insecurity. The mentors are not accessible sometimes; this is due to very busy schedules which makes it difficult for the mentees to derive benefits.

Mentorship has provided a good platform for young Agripreneurs to relate with old farmers that have acquired long years of experience. Mentees have been able to acquire knowledge, learn from the experiences of mentors, gain access to markets and also gain access to good networking. Mentorship for young agripreneurs can be improved by creating awareness for mentorship among young agripreneurs, organizing professional mentorship programs for youths, and sharing successes gained through mentorship with the young Agripreneurs. If mentorship is improved among the young Agripreneurs it will be a booster to food security, employment generation, and solutions to the problem of hunger.

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