

A Study of Implementing Peer Mentoring Program and VAK into Hospitality and Tourism Industry: The Case of The Starbucks in Taiwan

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Abstract

Education and training in the hospitality industry is very important. Starbucks, a world-renowned company, uses peer mentoring in talent development. Peer mentoring training is an invaluable way to improve employee competencies and the ability to mentor peers through the fundamentals. Peer tutoring training must provide opportunities to practice tutoring skills, such as paying attention to important information, teaching different learning styles, and providing clear and timely feedback in a safe environment. This study aims to explore the following three questions through document analysis, case study and in-depth interviews: How do Starbucks store managers monitor and promote the Starbucks peer mentoring program? How do Starbucks Peer Mentors implement and mentor the Starbucks Peer Mentor Program through VAK Learning Preferences? How can new Starbucks employees learn quickly through the Starbucks Peer Mentoring Program and VAK Learning Preferences? And build a framework for the introduction of a peer-to-peer mentoring program for the hospitality industry. The results of the study pointed out that in the framework of peer guidance training and VAK learning preferences, it is the first element of preparation to understand students' VAK learning behavior patterns, prepare demonstrations for students with different learning behavior patterns, give practice opportunities, or the second VAK learning patterns, Finally, give learners long-term companionship and guidance. For the hospitality and tourism industry that needs to quickly train manpower and reduce the discomfort of the new partner's adaptation period, this study provides a framework for training models.

Keywords: Human resources, VAK, peer mentoring program

1. Introduction

In the context of new employee education and training, various challenges often arise, such as a lack of preliminary assessment and understanding of the trainees' conditions. Insufficient preliminary assessment and understanding of the trainees' cultural levels and the potential mismatch between their educational backgrounds and job positions result in a disconnect between the training content and the training needs of new employees. Moreover, the training program lacks adequate monitoring and timely and effective tracking of the implementation process, leading to a failure to provide timely feedback and address the issues and situations that arise during the training, ultimately resulting in the training not achieving the intended outcomes (Hong, 2023). Previous research in human resources has mostly focused on the relationship between education and training, turnover rates, and employee satisfaction, with limited attention given to tailoring education and training to different trainees. Therefore, this study investigates the case of Starbucks to explore these dynamics.

Starbucks, the largest coffee chain brand in Asia, has established over 500 stores in Taiwan over the past 20 years. How does Starbucks

effectively develop its human resources to support its rapid expansion? According to the interviews conducted, Starbucks utilizes a peer mentoring program based on the VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) learning model to train new employees during their human resource training. Peer mentoring programs are a valuable approach for guiding peers, fostering competencies, and providing guidance on fundamental knowledge. The VAK model offers different perspectives to understand and explain individuals' preferred or dominant thinking and learning styles and strengths. By gaining a deeper understanding of the trainees' backgrounds and learning preferences, Starbucks creates a supportive and trusting learning environment during the training process.

This study employs methods such as literature analysis, case studies, and in-depth interviews to investigate the operational mechanisms of the peer mentoring model, the coordination of VAK learning preference training, and the assessment of benefits and other success factors within the peer training system. A peer mentoring model was constructed through literature analysis, and store managers, new employees, and peer mentors were identified as interview subjects. The findings indicate that the peer coaching mode consists of

preparation, demonstration, exercise, and follow-up. By utilizing the company training manual as the primary standard and the employee VAK learning behavior model as the auxiliary standard, along with thorough monitoring and timely and effective tracking of the implementation process, Starbucks can cultivate consistently high-quality employees amid rapid development.

This study serves as a case validation of adapting training methods and implementing continuous monitoring and tracking based on employee characteristics in human resource development and training. Based on this research, a training model for peer learning preferences among catering industry employees is provided, offering more relevant training and applications for the service industry. Subsequent research can evaluate the impact of the peer mentoring model on employee capabilities and performance by comparing the performance of employees who have undergone peer coaching training with those who have not received such training. In terms of sustainability, the feasibility and long-term effectiveness of the training model can be examined to ensure continuous employee development and organizational success. Additionally, exploring the feasibility and effectiveness of this training model in different service industries and determining its applicability in diverse contexts can also be explored.

2. Literature Review

2.1 VAK Learning Style

VAK is a model from NLP, means visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is an applied psychology developed for more than 40 years. NLP mainly divides the brain's channels for receiving external information into three categories: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The VAK model is commonly used as a theory foundation in learning studies (Barbe & Milone Jr., 1981). Everyone has a different preference for these three models. Richard Bandler and John Grinder constructed three learning preference modes of VAK (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). Through the test, the students could know whether their dominant learning style was using visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. Everyone learns in different ways. Some people need to see things (visual style), some need to hear (auditory style), and some need to do something with the things to learn them (kinesthetic style). Sometimes not knowing the learning styles may cause anxiety (Gholami & Bagheri, 2013). The visual learning mode prefers to use text to assist learning and memory, so copying notes will be the main tool for learning. The auditory learning mode uses sound memory, so repeatedly playing sound messages is helpful for learning and memory. The tactile learning mode is to learn and memorize through practical operations or exercises. Therefore, it is the learning focus of haptic learning

preferences to give continuous repeated practice operation opportunities. Everyone has a vast range of learning styles and so it is more helpful to think of having a strength in auditory learning rather than being an auditory learner (May, 2002).

2.2 VAK of Validity and Usefulness

Teachers need to adapt their teaching style to be inclusive of all learning styles as it will increase effective learning, student flexibility, and allow them to adapt their learning styles to different situations and demands (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009). The VAK model is implemented in learning environment because of its applicability and compatibility to the principles of interactive learning systems design, straight forward, and its results are easily understood (Mohd et al., 2019). After learners understand their own learning advantages, they can learn new skills more effectively with the VAK model they are good at. Learning styles are also reported to be helpful in the following contexts: academic achievement (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000), clinical training in medical schools (McManus et al., 1998), career development (Bates, 1994) and police training (Brizer, 2003). Furthermore, in Othman and Amiruddin's studies, learning style approaches are found to some extent to improve students' motivation (2010). Övez, F. T. D., & Uyançör, S. M. (2016) The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between teachers' teaching style and students' learning style and students' academic achievements if they match with one another learning style. Although the validity of learning styles has not been scientifically supported, they are reported to be useful in many situations. Therefore, we should be careful and critical when drawing on learning styles for course design (Li et al., 2016). Therefore, lecturers need to prepare a few types of material on a same topic and conduct their classes in various ways to ensure that they may assist student to understand what the lecturers are trying to deliver in their learning way (Chetty et al., 2019).

2.3 Peer Mentoring

There are seven ways that mentoring can be beneficial for your company: 1. Develop new managers, 2. Retain your high potential talent, 3. Foster diversity and inclusion, 4. Strengthen company culture, 5. Improve employee engagement, 6. Recruit new talent, 7. Increase knowledge sharing (Sophia, 2021). Peer mentoring is a learning strategy that combines "peer learning" and "mentoring". Peer mentoring describes a relationship where a more experienced student helps a less experienced student improve overall academic performance and provides advice, support, and knowledge to the mentee (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). There are three relevant advantages of utilizing a peer mentoring approach: cost, availability of a relatively larger number of potential mentors, and increased

likelihood of mentees following mentors' advice due to sharing a common perspective (Collier, 2017). Peer mentoring is a form of mentoring that encourages a give-and-take dynamic, where both people offer advice and learn from each other (Sean Peek, 2023). A learning coach helps students identify learning strengths and styles and achieve their potential. The seniors also achieve the effect of imparting knowledge to each other in the process of imparting knowledge in person when peer mentoring. peer mentors identify with five roles of a peer mentor: connecting link, peer leader, learning coach, student advocate, and trusted friend (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). There are two important steps in peer mentoring: finding the right mentor and working with them to create a balanced relationship (Sean Peek, 2023). Creating a peer mentoring program in three simple steps: 1. Start with Simple Programs: Start with a simple program like Book Buddies. 2. High Achievers as Mentors: People love to be asked to share their knowledge with others, so the idea of using high achievers as peer mentors is a wonderful idea! 3. Create a Safe Space: Utilizing peer mentors can bridge the space parents and teachers may not always fill (Carey Thomas,2018).

3. Method

This study uses document analysis, case study and in-depth interview. Through the document analysis, we will understand the peer mentoring model, advantages, and the application framework in the field of education. Peer mentoring

relationships are based on mutual assistance by two or three or more people. To achieve the goals agreed by the organization, the introductory training relationships conducted by the new employees are taught by the seniors. Through regular meetings, phone calls, messages, or various forms of communication. The VAK, three preference patterns of learning behavior can also be learned in literature analysis methods. The visual style people see the world with their eyes and are good at using visual methods to learn, such as writing, drawing sheets, mind maps, and taking notes. The auditory style people use their ears to listen to the world, and they are good at learning by listening, such as using audiobooks and audio learning. The kinesthetic style people feel the world with the heart and is good at learning from operation. Combining the learning preference model with the peer mentoring model and using this as a framework for training new employees and peer mentors, Figure 1.

Through the case study method, we conducted in-depth interviews with 5 Starbucks employees, including a store manager, two peer mentors, and two new recruits, to understand which instruction manuals and tools Starbucks store managers use, the peer mentoring model between Starbucks peer mentors and new employees and how new employees learn their own learning behavior preferences. Finally, through in-depth analysis to verify the peer guidance and learning preference behavior model and construct a human resource training model for the catering industry as a model.

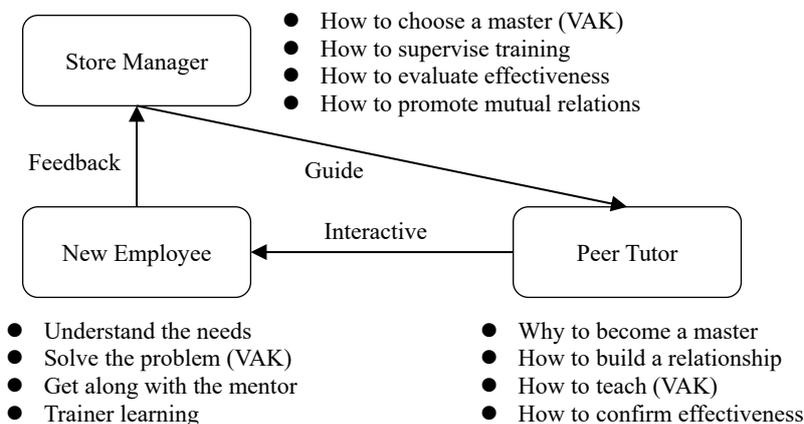


Figure 1: Peer Mentoring and VAK Learning Preference Research Framework

4. Finding

Based on the document analysis of peer mentoring and VAK learning preference models, the following case study and in-depth interview architecture diagrams were constructed. The research

hypothesis is shown in Figure 2. The interviewees were divided into store managers, instructors, and new employees. Explore the relationship between guidance, interaction, and feedback through learning preferences.

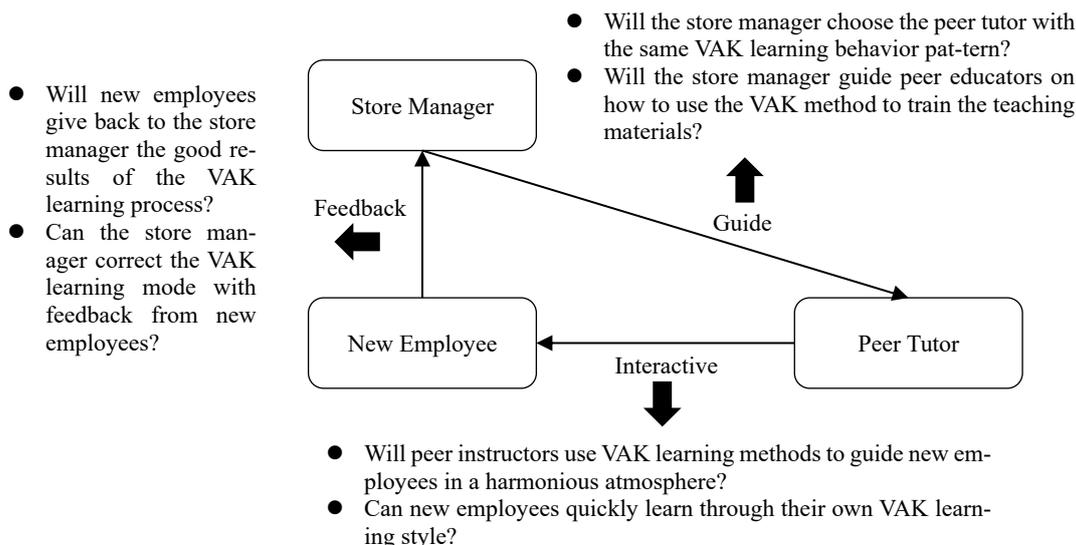


Figure 2: Peer Mentoring and VAK Learning Preference Research Hypothesis

According to the participation observation and in-depth interviews, the four learning stages are summarized as: preparation, demonstration, practice, and tracking. The results of the five studies are as follows:

(1) Preparation: relax and understand each other :

The main goal of the preparation phase is to create a relaxed atmosphere for each other, and by chatting, like the topic of Starbucks and coffee, the teachers and students can draw closer to each other. At the same time, inform students where they can get more information about class, so that students can self-education in addition to class.

The first lesson will let the students relax and share their thoughts and experiences with Starbucks. (J1-1)

Preparation is to let the students relax and let him know where to find more knowledge, such as the drink resource manual, EIP website. (J1-2)

(2) Demonstration: The manual is the teaching and acceptance criteria :

Although the students' learning preferences are different, the teachers are not the same, but the teaching manual is the standard specification for class. The teacher must follow the instruction manual to teach the order. Finally, the student must be assessed according to the questions listed in the instruction manual.

There will be a guidebook to guide me how to teach. (J2-1)

The guidebook will teach me how to guide students to answer questions. I think the test is very important to me. I will also prepare for the class early. (J2-2)

To avoid different teaching methods for each teacher; I think the guidebook is very important. (J2-3)

(3) Demonstration: follow VAK different learning modes :

The teacher knows the student's learning preference pattern in advance and allows the student to learn in his or her preferred learning model during the teaching process. Students can learn more easily in a familiar way of learning and achieve learning goals faster.

The guidebook is only a principle, and most of them are taught according to the way students learn. (J3-1)

Just like my students, both are visual, so leave time for them to take notes. (J3-2)

One of the students is visually and kinesthetic, so in addition to letting him take notes, he must practice more. (J3-3)

The demonstration will be divided into two demonstrations for the first time, and the second time will explain in detail, and according to your own learning model, you can deepen your attention. (J3-4)

Like some students are also hearing, then do not force him to take notes, because he did not see, hahaha...(J3-5)

For the kinesthetic student, try to get him to contact, instead of relying solely on the explanation of the course, otherwise he is easy to forget. (J3-6)

When my teacher taught me, I would copy another note. I had this habit myself, but my teacher also reminded me to take notes. (O3-1)

When I copy the notes, I will copy the key points. When I go home, I will sort out the notes and use different color pens to strengthen my memory. (O3-2)

(4) Exercise: All employees observe together :

In the process of practice, the store manager, peer teacher, and all work partners are observers of new employees. If you find that there is something wrong or you can have a better way of doing things, everyone can ask the teacher to observe and guide.

Pink will deliberately adjust the class to go to work with the students to observe his learning situation, and then discuss the situation with me. (J4-1)

The store manager will observe the new partners and then tell us what to pay attention to, such as being late, the materials are not first-in-first-out. (I4-1)

I remember the first time I opened the store myself. It took me an entire hour to finish the pastry, but then I slowly asked other early partners to make progress and let me improve a lot. (O4-1)

I think that in addition to the teacher, the assistance of senior partners is also very important, because sometimes I worry if the teacher has said it, but I have not paid attention to it. (O4-2)

(5) Tracking: teaching and learning, feedback and praise :

Tracking is a long-term observation behavior, which is a learning process for students or teachers or senior partners or even store managers. In the peer-to-peer mode, the best thing is that this is not a person's learning, this is a group of people's learning. In addition to the improvement of the ability, it can strengthen everyone's centripetal force for the company.

Any situation should be given back to the students at any time and remember to confirm their absorption status and response. (J5-1)

Each student will have different reactions to feedback, and we will remind ourselves that coordination is not possible. (J5-2)

About half an hour per class, I feel that I have learned a lot during the teaching process, because it is equal to reviewing again, and training myself how to explain, because I would not speak much, hahaha. (J5-3)

I hope that my teacher can correct me immediately, I will be very grateful to him, and I also told him. (O5-1)

5. Conclusion

According to the research, successful peer mentoring relationships will have the following developments: 1. Identify needs and goals; 2. Find professionally emulated features; 3. Openly communicate each other's needs; 4. Start routine meetings. Finding the right mentor and establishing a balanced and open relationship are important keys to peer mentoring. The mode of peer mentoring mode is Preparation, Demonstration, Exercise, and Tracking. The VAK principles must be adhered to each stage: (1) Preparation: Fully understand students' VAK learning behavior patterns. There must be a consensus on learning behaviors, and model learning should be followed. (2) Demonstration: Through the study manual as a guideline, the visual learning style employees should take notes and read the instruction manual; the auditory learning

style employees should record and watch videos; the kinesthetic learning style employees should practice skills more and more. (3) Exercise: Regardless of the learning mode, all partners must pay attention to the new employees, and inform the instructor to observe the situation. The instructor will give a second VAK learning mode to new employees. (4) Tracking: In the process of tracking, it is a long-term process of peer mentoring. All people are learning in the process. They learn how to guide and learn how to modify teaching skills. They make the company better together. Through the peer mentoring model, the partners' centripetal force towards the company can be enhanced, and the revolutionary emotions between each other can be enhanced. With the company training manual as the main criterion, the staff VAK learning behavior model is the auxiliary criterion, allowing Starbucks to train consistent quality under the fast exhibition employees.

The hospitality and tourism industry can use this research to combine peer mentoring and the VAK learning model framework, and use the standards set by the company manual to develop the four modes of preparation, demonstration, exercise and tracking for store managers, peer tutor, and new employees to develop guidance, interaction, and feedback behavior. This study can be used as a reference for subsequent case studies on human resources training in the hospitality and tourism industry.

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