

G-SEARCH CASE STUDY

Digicon Technologies Limited

INVESTOR: SEAF

SECTOR: Business Services

REGION: South Asia (Bangladesh)

GENDER-SMART TECHNICAL

ASSISTANCE: Mentoring managers

SAMPLE SURVEYED: 10 middle managers and 21 junior employees

Introduction

Digicon Technologies Limited (hereafter called Digicon) is a leading outsourcing company in Bangladesh with over 1,000 employees (39% women). Founded in 2010, the company offers business processing operations (BPO) and technology solutions ranging from sales and back-office administration services to training, website, and mobile app development. Digicon serves diverse industries, including healthcare, banking, and financial services.

Gender-smart technical assistance (TA) activity: Mentoring middle managers to strengthen leadership skills

As mandated by the investment from SEAF, Digicon used the **Gender Equality Scorecard (GES)** to assess women’s economic empowerment within the business. Based on these results, Digicon leadership identified a need for greater representation of women in its senior ranks. Furthermore, to help middle management achieve their career development goals and address the high rate of turnover in the BPO sector, Digicon’s leadership, with SEAF’s support, determined a mentorship program as the right-fit approach. Leadership selected ten middle managers to receive one-on-one mentoring from senior managers (ratio of 2:1 or 3:1) in two cohorts. The two cohorts consisted of five middle managers who received mentorship from September to October 2021 and December 2021 to January 2022. Participating middle managers met with their mentors regularly to discuss business challenges and strengthen delegation, communication, and problem-solving skills.

CONSORTIUM MEMBERS



Methodology

The [William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan](#) (WDI) measured the business and social outcomes of the mentoring program in October 2021 and February 2022 respectively, as part of the [G-SEARCH](#) research. The sample consisted of all ten middle managers (50% male and female) who received mentoring and 21 junior employees (52% male; 48% female) who reported to these middle managers (note junior employees did not receive any training/mentorship). WDI administered one separate survey to each group via WhatsApp that included questions on the period before (baseline) and after (endline) the program. To learn more about the methodology and access the surveys, please [click here](#).



▶ [Click here to listen to a respondent share her experience on the mentoring program.](#)

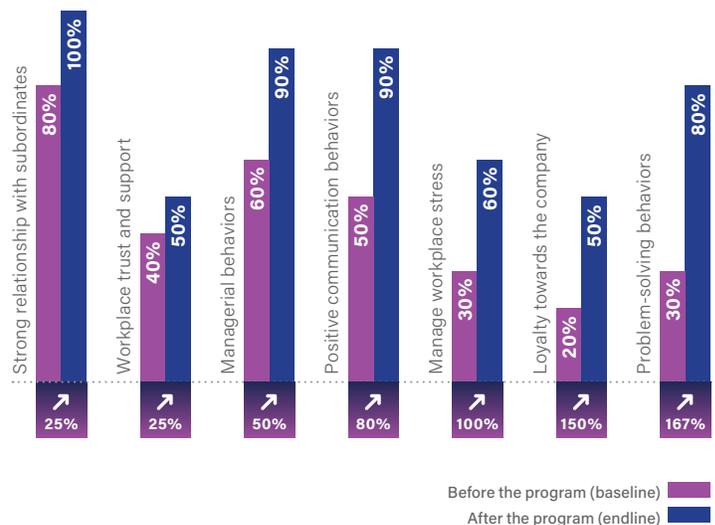
“Gender equality, workforce diversification, work life balance — there are so many issues to solve. We felt comfortable to reach out to SEAF for technical assistance on these topics. In our case, we had an open channel of communication and support between the investor and the company which was critical to success.” —DIGICON

Results: Social outcomes for middle managers

The mentoring program contributed to many positive outcomes for middle managers (Figure 1). These included the following increases in their improved skills and behaviors post-program:

- 167% increase in respondents who *always* engaged in problem-solving behaviors
- 150% increase in respondents who *strongly agreed* about their loyalty to Digicon
- 100% increase in respondents who *fully* managed their stress effectively
- 80% increase in respondents who *always* engaged in positive communication behaviors
- 50% increase in respondents who *always* engaged in managerial behaviors
- 25% increase in respondents who *never or rarely* experienced a lack of trust and support at the workplace during challenging moments
- 25% increase in respondents who *agreed or strongly agreed* that they had strong relationships with their subordinates

Figure 1: Percentage of middle managers with favorable responses to leadership constructs before and after the program; Growth in respondents with favorable responses



Results: Social outcomes for junior employees

Junior employees shared that they experienced many indirect outcomes from the improved behaviors of their supervisors (Figure 2). These included the following increases in their improved skills and behaviors post-program:



Figure 2: Percentage of junior employees with favorable responses before and after the program; Growth in respondents with favorable responses



Results: Business outcomes

- Digicon leadership highlighted their commitment to gender equality through a formal mentorship program.

- They confirmed increased staff productivity (corroborated by the finding that 80% of middle managers *strongly agreed* they were engaged in the job post-mentorship versus 30% before the program; a 167% growth).
- Digicon leadership shared that the TA had contributed to:
 - increased creativity among managers to address challenges;
 - improved gender perceptions in the workplace; and
 - higher employee retention (no quantitative data available).
- Given that this research was conducted six weeks after each cohort received the mentorship, it was too early to determine the financial benefits of the TA, such as improvements in net margin and the return on investment.

Strengthening future iterations of the program

40% of middle managers in the study requested more one-on-one time with their mentors in future program iterations. However, leadership shared that those senior managers serving as mentors had significant time constraints given the demanding nature of the BPO industry. Scheduling mentorship sessions were time-consuming, and senior managers were torn between business engagements and providing the necessary attention to mentees.

Conclusion

The mentoring program had several positive outcomes for middle managers and indirectly for junior employees. While there were no quantifiable business and financial outcomes of the program due to the timing of the research, Digicon leadership confirmed increased retention, staff productivity, creativity among managers, and improved gender perception in the workplace. They also believed that enhanced skills and behaviors among employees would improve future interactions with clients and hopefully increase sales and net margins. But to confirm this, leadership saw the need for further research to develop a rigorous evidence base.

Digicon will continue the mentorship program but use a new format where middle managers will mentor junior employees to practice their newfound skills.

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