# Career Development Mentorship Programs

A Comprehensive Guide
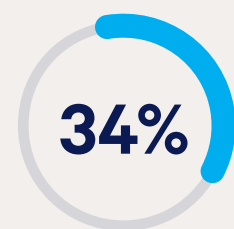for HR and L&D

together
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# The Career Growth Gap
## How Mentorship Bridges What Employees Want and Companies Need

Employees want to grow and learn; you know this, we know this, the stats confirm it. Your colleagues in HR and L&D said it was the top predicted factor influencing turnover[1] and a report from ADP says 34% of employees who can't find growth opportunities at their company are actively seeking out other roles.[2]

> **34% of employees who can't find growth opportunities at their company are actively seeking out other roles**
>
> **34%**

Employees aren't just looking for a steady, stable income anymore—they're looking for growth, purpose, and the feeling that their career is on an upward trajectory. People want to feel invested in.

For HR and L&D, that creates both a challenge and an opportunity. How do you create development experiences that are personalized but also scalable across departments, all without adding yet another high-lift program to your already full plate?

That's where mentorship comes in. A career development mentorship program can help you use the resources you already have: the wealth of experience and knowledge of your people.

**In this guide, we'll explore what a career development mentorship program looks like, why they work, and how to build one that sticks—all while keeping things simple, human, and sustainable.**

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[1] Together. n.d. "Enterprise L&D in 2025: Predictions and Trends." Together.
https://www.togetherplatform.com/resources/enterprise-learning-and-development-2025-predictions-and-trends.

[2] ADP Research. n.d. "People at Work 2025: A Global Workforce View." ADP Research.
https://www.adpresearch.com/research/people-at-work-2025-a-global-workforce-view/.

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# What is a Career Development Mentorship Program?

A career development mentorship program is a structured initiative that connects mentees and mentors specifically to support career growth and exploration. Rather than a "grab a coffee with someone you admire" kind of mentorship, this is an intentional and measurable program with more tangible outcomes.

These kinds of programs are designed with clear goals, processes, and outcomes in mind. They're meant to help employees develop skills, clarify career paths, and build both competence and confidence.

## Common Types of Mentorship Models for Career Development

### Traditional one-on-one mentoring

The classic format: one experienced colleague acting as mentor and a more junior mentee, meeting regularly to discuss goals, challenges, and growth.

### Peer mentorship

Pairs employees at similar levels to learn from one another's experiences. Perfect for reducing hierarchy barriers and cross-functional skill-building.

### Group mentorship

One mentor supports a small group of mentees. This setup combines the benefits of one-on-one mentoring and peer mentoring.

### Reverse mentorship

The tables turn—junior employees mentor senior staff, often around emerging skills, technology, or cultural awareness.

# How Mentorship Becomes the Core of Career Development

If clearer career development is the destination, mentorship is the vehicle that gets people there faster.

## Why career development mentorship is so effective

**01**

### It's personal

Mentorship provides individualized attention that training courses can't replicate.

**02**

### It's relational

Employees learn new skills while gaining confidence, advocacy, and a sense of belonging through human connection.

**03**

### It's practical

Mentors help mentees apply learning directly to their day-to-day work, bridging the gap between education and execution.

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# How Career Development Mentorship Programs Benefit the Individual, the Team, and the Organization

While the primary focus of career development mentorship is meant to be personalization and support for individuals, it has far-reaching benefits to teams and your entire organization.

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## Benefits to the Individual

Mentorship gives employees something traditional training can't—personalized growth and human connection.

### Clarity and direction

Employees can explore new roles or skill paths with guidance from someone who's been there.

### Confidence and capability

Constructive feedback and encouragement helps mentees take ownership of their growth.

### Networking and visibility

Mentorship opens doors to relationships across departments and leadership levels.

### Belonging and engagement

When employees feel supported, they're more invested in their work and their company.

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## Benefits to Teams

When mentorship becomes part of team culture, it boosts collaboration, resilience, and shared learning.

### Knowledge transfer

Senior employees share insights that would otherwise stay siloed.

### Increased innovation

Teams benefit from meeting of the minds and mentees bring fresh skills and perspectives to projects.

### Improved communication

The human connection of mentorship helps employees practice empathy, active listening, and constructive feedback that spills into their everyday work.

### Succession readiness

Mentors help prepare budding leaders to manage people, making transitions far smoother and less disruptive.

# Benefits to the Organization

Taking it a step further, the ripple effects of mentorship support the very heart of your organization's talent strategy.

## Higher retention

Employees who see a path forward stay longer. Mentorship helps reduce turnover and preserves company knowledge.

## Stronger leadership pipelines

Mentorship naturally builds future leaders by giving mentors experience guiding others and shaping mentees into leaders themselves.

## Better DEI outcomes

Structured mentorship makes sure growth opportunities are equitable and accessible, especially for underrepresented employees.

## Culture-building

Mentorship helps build connections across departments and functions, fostering understanding, breaking silos, and reinforcing shared values.

## Improved performance

Employees who feel supported in their learning, growth, and success are more engaged, productive, and creative—supporting measurable business outcomes.

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**Organizations with high levels of engaged, happy employees see**

**14%** Higher Productivity

**23%** Higher Profitability[3]

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[3] "How to Improve Employee Engagement in the Workplace." n.d. Gallup.com. Accessed November 3, 2025.
https://www.gallup.com/workplace/285674/improve-employee-engagement-workplace.aspx.

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# Career Development Mentorship in Practice

So, let's break down what career development mentorship actually looks like in practice with an example.

## Gabriella – Junior Software Developer

Gabriella is a junior software developer and has been with a mid-sized tech company since she graduated three years ago. She has mastered her current responsibilities and wants to take on new challenges and move her career forward.

Instead of letting curiosity turn into frustration and disengagement, she matches with a mentor—Matt, a senior developer with diverse skillsets and experience.

Here's how participating in a career development mentorship program helps Gabriella:

> Together, Gabriella and Matt identify the skills she's interested in exploring—like system design, technical leadership, and sprint planning.

⌄

> They map out a development plan and potential career paths with clear, achievable milestones.

⌄

> Matt supports Gabriella through skill development and how to apply learnings to her work— providing feedback and guidance along the way.

⌄

> Through this process, Gabriella discovers she has a knack for planning and leadership.
> She and Matt hone her development plan and career path to reflect her new focus.

By the end of their mentoring relationship, Gabriella comes away with new skills, confidence, and direction. She's ready to take on stretch assignments and continue achieving goals she set with Matt.

# Building Your Career Development Mentorship Program

You don't need to completely reinvent your learning and development strategy. Think about how you can layer mentorship into what you already do.

## Define Your Program Goals

What is the core goal of your program? What outcomes do you want to see?

- Are you trying to improve retention and engagement?
- Build a strong leadership pipeline?
- Support career mobility?

**Get specific by using the SMART-ER goal setting framework.**

### The SMART-ER Framework for Mentorship Goals

**01 Specific**
Target specific outcomes you want to achieve

**02 Measurable**
Include quantifiable outcomes

**03 Achievable**
Set realistic expectations

**04 Relevant**
Align with business objectives

**01 Time-bound**
Establish clear timelines

**02 Evaluated**
Build in assessment checkpoints

**03 Readjusted**
Allow for program evolution

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## Identify Your Participants

Now it's time to define who would be the best fit for this program—both for mentees and mentors.

### Mentor Selection Criteria
Look for:

Specific in-demand skills or experience

Emotional intelligence and communication skills

Availability and general interest in development

Diverse perspectives that represent your organization's values

Willingness to receive training on becoming an effective mentor

### Mentee Selection Process
Look for:

High potential employees ready for advancement

Early-career employees ready to learn and grow

Clear career aspirations aligned with company needs

Commitment to program requirements

Diverse representation across functions, levels, and backgrounds

## Design Your Program Structure

Your company size, industry, employee demographics, culture, etc. all determine what mentorship model and program structure will work best for you.

### One-on-one mentorship

- Career mapping and progression
- Leadership preparation
- Skill-building

### Peer mentorship

- Engagement and culture-building
- Knowledge-sharing
- Career mobility

### Group mentorship

- Internal networking and community
- Leadership preparation
- High potential programs

### Reverse mentorship

- Staying ahead of new technology and best practices
- Culture-building

### How long should your program last?

At Together, we've found that 12–18 months provides enough time for meaningful relationship development and skill building. Shorter programs feel rushed; longer ones risk losing momentum.

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## Create Your Matching Process

Matching mentors and mentees in a career development mentorship program needs to involve more than just job titles. Here are some criteria to consider:

### Skills and experience

Pair your mentees with someone who has the skills and experience that align with their aspirations.

### Personality

Consider pairing employees that have similar communication styles, interests, and mindsets.

### Goals and expectations

Understand what both parties are looking to get from the relationship and what defines successful mentorship.

Mentorship software can make this process a breeze by automating matching based on weighted criteria, tracking pair outcomes to improve future matching, and removing any unconscious bias from the process.

## Provide Structure and Resources

Mentoring relationships need support from HR and L&D to be effective long term. Here are a few ways you can support and train your participants:

**01** Provide learning resources on giving and receiving constructive feedback, emotional intelligence, owning growth, etc.

**02** Make sure participants have things like goal-setting frameworks, meeting agenda templates, feedback tools, conversation prompts, etc.

**03** Create a document that clearly outlines participant expectations such as meeting frequency, best practices for mentoring, etc.

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# Launch and Support

You're ready to launch, but don't bite off more than you can chew. Start with a small pilot program with 20-30 participants. This will give you space to test what works and measure performance before scaling it across the organization.

**Provide ongoing support through:**

- ⊘ Quarterly pulse surveys
- ⊘ Resource updates
- ⊘ Optional group sessions
- ⊘ Troubleshooting support

As you go through the first run of your program, you'll get a firm handle on the logistics of administering a mentorship program, ensuring a smooth experience when you scale to a larger group or the rest of the company.

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# Case Study: Driving Employee Development and Diversity with Mentorship Software
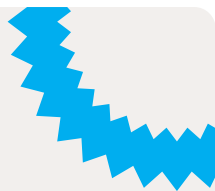
| Company | Industry | Company Size |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| Lightspeed | Software | 1k-5k Employees |

Lightspeed Commerce Inc. (Lightspeed) is the one-stop commerce platform that empowers merchants to give the best experiences across all interactions. They sought to start mentorship programs to support their team from within, specifically tailored to two key groups:

### Women in Product & Technology (P&T)

Focused on providing professional development to women at all levels.

### Changemakers

Designed for high-performing individuals to help drive innovation and create positive change across the company.

## Lightspeed's Mentorship Goals

**01** Support internal employee growth

**02** Improve collaboration across departments

**03** Increase women's representation at multiple organizational levels

## Together's Mentorship Solutions

- **Automated mentor-mentee matching:** Automated matching based on customizable criteria lightened the administrative load on Lightspeed's learning and development team.
- **Seamless integrations:** Together integrated with Lightspeed's existing HR ecosystem with features like calendar syncing, single sign-on (SSO), and automated data imports.
- **Personalized mentoring experiences:** Supported by AI-generated agendas, Together tailored discussions based on participants' skills, experiences, and goals.
- **Recognition and milestones**: To celebrate participant achievements, Lightspeed used Together's Badges & Certificates feature.

## The Outcomes

**3.93**/4
Mentor Feedback Score

**3.95**/4
Mentee Feedback Score

**50%+** participants have logged **100+ minutes** of mentoring sessions

One participant logged **750+ session** minutes, combining time both as mentor and mentee

# Best Practices for Long Term Success

Going back to the importance of a foundational structure, here are a few best practices to implement in your career development mentorship program:

**Match with purpose**
Match pairs based on development goals, interests, and personalities, not just job titles.

**Make expectations clear**
Both parties should know how often to meet, what success looks like, and how to access and use available resources.

**Keep communication flowing**
Regular check-ins and surveys help you identify issues with the program or individual matches early on.

**Balance structure with flexibility**
Provide guidance but let relationships evolve naturally.

**Recognize contributions**
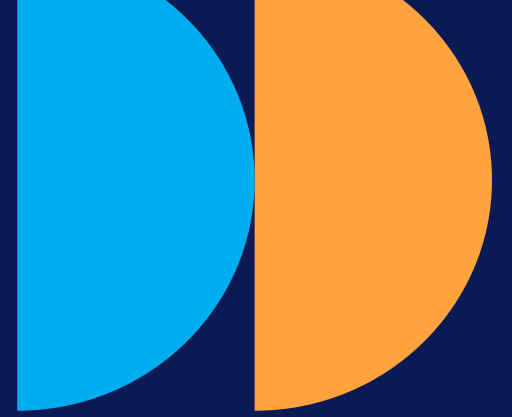Celebrate mentors and mentees who make a difference and achieve their goals.

**Build in diversity to your design**
Representation matters and so do diverse perspectives. Ensure your program is accessible to everyone.

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# The Role of Technology

Now you've put together all the components, let's add technology into the mix.

## Do You Really Need Mentorship Technology?

In short, yes. But let's explore why.

### Consistency
Provides a cohesive, consistent experience for all participants and administrators.

### Accessibility
Combines mentorship and associated resources in one user-friendly place for quick, easy access.

### Measurability
See participation rates, goal progress reports, feedback, resource access rates, and more.

### Scalability & Sustainability
Automated workflows, analytics, integrations, etc. take the burden off your team—allowing for growth.

# What to Look for in a Mentorship Platform

## Relationship Management

### Smart matching
Uses skills, goals, experience, and preferences to pair people.

### Flexible program formats
Supports different mentorship models, cohort sizes/durations, etc.

### Conversation and meeting resources
Gives participants prompts, agenda templates, and other resources.

### Goal-setting tools
Helps participants define, update, and track goals.

### Progress tracking
Shows how relationships and skills are developing.

### Integrated communications
Streamlines scheduling, messaging, secure video calls, and reminders.

## Administrative Management

### Automated enrolment
Removes manual setup and onboarding for new participants.

### Scalable program configuration
Lets you run multiple programs or cohorts at once.

### Engagement dashboards
Shows real-time data on participation, meeting frequency, and session feedback.

### Outcome reporting
Tracks mobility, skill growth, and long-term impact.

### Automated workflows
Nudges, reminder emails, feedback requests, and more.

### Integrations
Works with tech you already have like HRIS, LMS, and communication tools.

# The Together Platform Advantage

Together has been the platform of choice for hundreds of companies for a reason.

## Comprehensive program management

Together manages multiple program types, relationship structures, content types, and complex organizational hierarchies in one platform.

## Enterprise-grade integrations

Seamless integration with HRIS systems like Workday, SuccessFactors, and BambooHR, plus communication platforms like Microsoft Teams and Google Workspace.

## Advanced analytics

Predictive relationship analytics, cohort analysis, custom reporting, and ROI measurement tools that would be impossible to track manually.

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# Measuring Program Success

Measuring success is what helps you figure out what's working, what's not, and how the program is impacting the business—all while proving it's worth the investment.

## Career Development Mentorship Measurement Framework

### Engagement Metrics

- Meeting frequency
- Mentor and mentee satisfaction
- Participation across demographic groups

### Cultural Impact Metrics

- Engagement survey results
- Psychological safety and belonging scores
- DEI advancement, especially in leadership pathways

### Skill Development Metrics

- Competency growth tied to role expectations
- Self, peer, and manager assessments
- Goal achievement rates
- Readiness indicators for leadership or specialized roles

### Business Impact Metrics

- Retention rates of participants vs non-participants
- Time-to-competency changes
- Program efficiency
- Leadership pipeline strength
- Training and recruitment cost reduction

### Career Outcome Metrics

- Internal moves or promotions
- Lateral mobility
- Stretch assignment completion
- Project leadership opportunities
- Confidence ratings

# Calculating Program ROI

Let's explore what ROI calculation looks like with an example.

**ROI = (Program Benefits - Program Costs) / Program Costs × 100**

## Example ROI Calculation

Let's say you have 100 participants in your mentorship program:

**Retention improvement**
20% reduction in turnover saves $500,000
(assuming $50,000 average replacement cost)

**Productivity gains**
15% improvement in performance equals $750,000 in value

**Total benefits**
$1,250,000

**Program costs**
$200,000 (platform, staff time, materials)

**ROI:** (1,250,000 - 200,000) / 200,000 × 100 = **525% ROI**

## Case Study: How Compass Group Scaled Mentorship Across a Dispersed Workforce with Together

| Company | Industry | Company Size |
|---|---|---|
| Eurest and ESFM, Divisions of Compass Group | Food Services & Facilities | 10,000+ |

In fast-paced, geographically dispersed organizations like Eurest and ESFM—divisions of Compass Group, delivering food services and facilities solutions across the U.S.—creating a sense of connection and continuous growth for managers can be challenging.

Compass Group recognized that a mentorship program was their best tool for the job, but their previous attempts either lacked structure or were too rigid. One key piece of feedback was consistent across attempts: employees wanted different things from a mentorship experience. Compass Group needed a flexible mentorship solution to meet the needs of all their participants.

## Compass Group's Mentorship Goals

**01** Foster collaboration

**02** Support professional development

**03** Break down geographical silos

**04** Provide different mentorship experiences based on employee needs

## Together's Mentorship Solutions

- **Empowered flexible program delivery:** Compass Group designed two distinct but complementary programs—Connect Program for casual, lightweight peer support, and Grow Program for traditional, career-focused mentorship.

- **User-led matching:** Users defined their match criteria through customizable rules and profile fields like region, tenure, and skills.

- **Integrated scheduling:** Together integrated with Compass Group's Outlook and Teams environments for consistent scheduling and communication experiences.

- **Pre-built resources:** Resources like discussion guides, meeting agendas, and goal-setting templates helped reduce prep time and improve engagement.

- **Automated nudges and reminders:** Notifications and reminder emails kept sessions on track.

- **Robust reporting tools:** Together's reporting dashboards helped Compass Group track participation, satisfaction, and usage metrics.

## The Outcomes

**3.86**/4
Grow Program mentor feedback score

**3.91**/4
Grow Program mentee feedback score

**3.96**/4
Connect Program peer feedback score

Significant efficiency gains for admin team

Improved internal and leadership visibility

High participant satisfaction and repeat engagement

Dramatic growth in participation and engagement with "New Year, New Mentor" promotional campaign

**39%** increase in scheduled sessions

**60+** hours of future sessions booked

# Common Challenges and How to Avoid Them

Even the best-designed career development mentorship programs aren't immune to challenges.

Here's a look at some of the most common obstacles and how to navigate them:

## Challenge 1: Low Mentor or Mentee Engagement

### The Problem

Organizations launch programs and then assume that relationships will manage themselves.

### The Fix

- Send out regular surveys to help identify issues.
- Establish clear escalation paths when participants need help.
- Store support documents in an easily accessible place.
- Provide confidentiality guidelines to build trust.

## Challenge 2: Scaling Beyond a Pilot

### The Problem

What worked for 20-30 broke at 100+. Tracking, matching, and ongoing support are chaotic and hard to manage.

### The Fix

- Adopt tech from the get-go to keep matching, scheduling, feedback collection, and reporting in one place.
- Start gathering benchmarking data immediately.
- Play with a mix of different mentorship models to meet demand while not overwhelming mentors.

## Challenge 3: Poor Matches or High Rate of Re-matching

### The Problem

Matching based on superficial criteria like job title creates unfulfilling, mismatched pairs that lead to re-matching or disengagement.

### The Fix

- Use in-depth intake surveys to match based on goals, interests, and preferences.
- Check in with participants individually to identify issues early.
- Encourage early alignment by having pairs discuss experience, interests, goals, etc.

## Challenge 4: Limited Mentor Availability

### The Problem

The availability of mentors is outpaced by the number of mentees.

### The Fix

- Add in group mentoring formats to expand reach.
- Train and motivate potential mentors by reminding them how qualified they are.
- Use peer mentorship to support development goals.

## Challenge 5: Difficulty Measuring Impact

### The Problem

Success was not properly defined from the start, meaning success can't be proven.

### The Fix

- Align your metrics with company priorities and be specific! SMART-ER goals are your friend here.
- Qualitative measurement is important too—tell human stories alongside the numbers.
- Automate reporting as much as possible using platform dashboards.
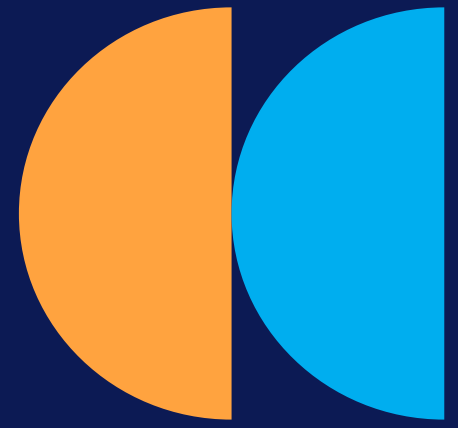
# Conclusion and Next Steps

Career development mentorship programs are an effective and human way to reach both learning and development and company goals—whether it's retention, career mobility, upskilling, or leadership succession.

There's a lot of information to process here, so here's a quick start plan to keep you on track for the first few months of your initiative.

**The 90-day quick start plan**

**Days 1-30**

### Foundation Setting
- Define program objectives using the SMART-ER framework
- Identify initial mentor and mentee populations
  (aim for 20–50 participants to start)
- Secure executive sponsorship and budget approval
- Choose your technology platform

**Days 31-60**

### Program Design
- Create selection criteria and matching process
- Design program structure and timeline
- Plan training and resource materials

**Days 61-90**

### Launch Preparation
- Recruit and train initial mentors
- Complete matching and conduct kickoff
- Begin relationship meetings and program execution

# About Together

Together, from Absorb, makes it easy to unlock the power of mentorship and coaching in your organization. Our platform removes the manual burden of running mentorship and coaching programs by automating matching, guiding and supporting matches with session agendas, delivering actionable insights through built-in reporting, and more.

Our impact speaks for itself. G2—the leading software review site based on verified user feedback—has consistently ranked Together as the top mentoring platform for enterprise organizations.

## Together Administrators Report...

| **94%** | **95%** | **100%** | **79%** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Improved Employee Skills | A More Connected Company | Improved Inclusion and Support | Improved Retention |

## Some of our customers include

| Crayon | Kellogg's | Heineken® |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Discovery | Teladoc® HEALTH | NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION |

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