Mentorship Programs for Employee Connection & Engagement

A Comprehensive Guide for HR and L&D

together
from absorb

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Everyone needs a work bestie. Like Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly from The Office or Leslie Knope and Ron Swanson from Parks and Recreation, our real-life work besties make the job more fun. They help you tackle office politics or a big, scary project. Share those much-needed goofball moments. When stress is high, deadlines pile up, or priorities shift overnight, these relationships are like an emotional support blanket for the workplace.

If you know this from personal experience, make sure to tell your work bestie how much you appreciate them.

And the research backs it up as well—teams that like each other work better together and achieve more. In a KPMG survey, 78% of full-time professionals believe work friendships provide mental health benefits. The majority also cited a positive impact on engagement, satisfaction, connection, and job performance.

Build mentorship programs that work. This practical playbook will show you how to create lasting support networks for employees and strengthen the workplace community.

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What is Mentoring For Employee Engagement & Connection?

Mentoring for employee engagement is when employees support each other's growth through regular check-ins, collaborative goal setting, working together on projects, and social events.

Mentorship programs for employee engagement and connection are generally designed to

Help employees find more friends, role models, and familiar faces at work

Enhance belonging and connection across the company

Encourage professional growth and networking at all experience levels

Increase motivation and loyalty by making employees feel valued and recognized

Promote collaboration and trust across teams

Provide ongoing support to help employees overcome challenges

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How Are They Different From Other Types of Mentorship Programs?

You may think all mentoring programs are pretty much the same—pair people up, schedule meetings, and there you go. But mentorship comes in many forms, each designed with different objectives in mind.

Common Use Cases for Mentoring Programs Include

01   **Onboarding Mentorship**
Help new hires get up to speed, feel welcomed, have a training buddy

02   **Leadership Development**
Help current or emerging leaders develop their leadership skills

03   **Diversity & ERG Mentoring**
Support underrepresented employees and drive inclusion

04   **Project-based Mentoring**
Give guidance on specific initiatives or skills

05   **Employee Connection Mentorship**
Build engagement and belonging in the organization

Connection Over Competency

Here's What Sets Employee Connection and Engagement Programs Apart

Multiple Formats

Accommodate different styles and schedules with one-on-one pairings, coffee chats, group cohorts, peer mentoring, or quick "flash mentoring" sessions.

Intentional Matching

Use data to pair mentors and mentees based on shared interests, goals, and compatibility.

Belonging-Focused Programs

Design activities to go beyond work tasks—include community-building programs like ERGs, volunteer groups, curated discussions, and informal events (ice cream social, anyone?).

Different Success Metrics

Instead of measuring promotions or skills, your KPIs here are things like interaction and participation rates, satisfaction scores, sense of belonging, sense of confidence, and retention.

Ongoing Support

A one-off is fine as a test. But continuous or long-running programs give participants time to build deeper relationships.

Why Mentorship is Key to Employee Connection

You may think you don't need a formal mentorship program to build employee connection—people are used to making friends, right? But leaving it up to chance comes with real challenges:

01

Unequal Access

Informal networking favors extroverts and those who are already well-connected.
A company mentorship program makes it easier for new hires, remote/hybrid workers, and underrepresented employees to connect with the larger organization.

02

Superficial Connections

Casual workplace friendships rarely go deep enough to build real trust or provide meaningful support.
Mentorship creates space for deeper conversations that strengthen both personal and professional growth.

03

No Accountability

You can't improve what you don't track. A structured program, with measured results, lets you see what's working, who's participating, and how it's contributing to your culture and retention goals.

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Making the Case for Employee Connection & Engagement Programs

There's proof that 1. Employees want more connection at work and 2. Engagement-centered mentorship programs can have real benefits for your company.

For example:

More than half of workers

54%
Feel strongly motivated to persevere through career adversity when they have a mentor or sponsor

(source: SHRM)

81%
Of full-time professionals believe it is important to have close work friendships

(source: KPMG)

25%
Of professionals say they at least sometimes feel isolated and alone. This is more common among hybrid workers, women, and hispanic workers

(source: KPMG)

42%
Of professionals say technologies help employees connect with each other to share ideas, socialize and build relationships to form stronger close work friendships

(source: KPMG)

$9.6
Trillion in productivity would be added to the economy if the global workforce was fully engaged

(source: Gallup)

What Are Some Examples of Successful Employee Engagement Mentorship Programs?

What does an employee connection mentorship program look like in practice?
Here are a few examples from major companies.

CATERPILLAR

Caterpillar has built employee connection through ERGs for over 20 years. The construction equipment manufacturer runs 14 employee resource groups and thousands of members from all identities, backgrounds, and experience levels.

The Caterpillar Latino Connection (CLC) ERG offers Spanish language courses to employees. And the "Young Professionals of Caterpillar" (YP) group has chapters organizing personal development and networking events for employees in 17 countries.

Booz | Allen | Hamilton

Booz Allen Hamilton merges connection with career growth through multiple programs, like Technical Experience Groups (TXGs), where people network and share skills. Career managers act as built-in mentors who guide professional development.

The firm also sponsors employees to attend and present at industry conferences. This way, growth happens through people, not just coursework.

AUTODESK.

Autodesk runs a global 1:1 mentorship program that matches employees across organizations and geographies. The program lasts 6-12 months and uses a matching algorithm based on participant profiles, so employees can find mentors or mentees regardless of tenure or title.

The programs are employee driven, and participants say they say it's a safe space to ask for advice, give and receive feedback, and learn from colleagues outside their immediate teams.

Participants also reported:

✓ Significant career growth   ✓ More clarity on career progression   ✓ Improved leadership skills

Case Study
How Teladoc Uses Evergreen Mentorship to Connect a Global Remote Workforce

Working remotely has its perks, but finding your people across time zones and departments? It's not always easy. Without hallway conversations or shared lunch breaks, remote employees miss out on the organic connections that spark collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and lasting professional relationships.

This was the reality for Teladoc Health. With 6,000 employees working remotely across the globe, they needed a way to recreate those spontaneous "coffee break moments" – where employees naturally discover mentors and build community. Add in a rapid succession of mergers and acquisitions, and suddenly, the struggle was real. Teladoc needed a structured way for employees to connect.

Teladoc partnered with Together to create MELD (Mentor, Engage, Learn, and Develop), an "evergreen" mentorship program where employees can join anytime their career needs shift. There are no fixed start or end dates—MELD lets participants customize their experience, from quick informational chats to long-term developmental relationships.

After a successful pilot in their women's resource group, Teladoc opened the program company-wide. The platform supports both traditional mentorship and peer connections, meeting employees wherever they are in their development journey.

The impact was clear

3.97/4
Average feedback from mentees

★★★★

95%
Of mentees say "it's a good fit"

3.90/4
Average feedback from mentors

★★★★

94%
Of mentors say "it's a good fit"

Through this program, employees are building meaningful relationships that wouldn't exist otherwise—across departments, and sometimes even across continents. Word got around, and now MELD is one of the most favored initiatives in Teladoc's L&D portfolio.

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Steps to Building a Mentorship Program For Employee Connection & Engagement

Ready to help employees strengthen relationships and find guidance across your organization? Here are the essential steps to build a mentorship program that drives genuine connection and engagement.

Define Your Engagement Goals

Step 1

Start by defining your mentorship program's goals for engagement. Identify how you want employees to connect—whether across departments, levels, interests, or locations. Align these with both employee needs and your company's culture objectives.

Clear, well-structured goals create a strong foundation for your participants to gain the relationships and support they need to feel connected and engaged.

The SMART-ER Framework for Mentorship Goals

Specific
Target particular leadership competencies

Time-bound
Establish clear timelines

Measurable
Include quantifiable outcomes

Evaluated
Build in assessment checkpoints

Achievable
Set realistic expectations

Readjusted
Allow for program evolution

Relevant
Align with business objectives

Identify Your Participants

Decide who should participate in your connection and engagement mentorship program—both the mentors who will help build relationships and the mentees seeking to expand their network.

Mentor Selection Criteria

Experience
Specific tenure (e.g. one year or more) and solid knowledge of your company's structure and culture

Availability
Time and genuine interest in supporting others' development

Representation
Diverse perspectives across functions, levels, and backgrounds

Development
Willingness to receive training on being an effective mentor

Soft skills
Emotional intelligence and strong communication abilities

Mentee Selection Criteria

Connection needs
Employees who will benefit from expanding their network across departments or locations

Openness
Growth mindset and willingness to build new relationships

Diversity
Wide representation to foster cross-functional and cross-level connections

Commitment
Dedication to actively participate in the program

Engagement
Desire to feel more connected to the broader organization

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Your Program Structure

You have options, use them to your advantage. Choose the mentorship format or formats that support connection and engagement across your organization:

1-on-1 mentorship

Pair employees across departments, levels, or locations for personalized relationship building and knowledge sharing.

Peer connections

Match employees at similar levels to build friendships, share experiences, and create support networks across teams.

Group mentoring

Connect multiple employees with one or more mentors for shared learning and broader network building—ideal for fostering community.

Reverse mentoring

Newer employees share fresh perspectives, emerging skills, and current trends with senior leaders for a refreshing twist on hierarchies.

Cross-functional matching

Intentionally connect people from different departments to encourage collaboration and broaden organizational understanding.

Virtual or hybrid

Any format works remotely using video calls, chat platforms, or virtual collaboration tools like Butter—essential for connecting distributed teams regardless of location.

Program Duration:
Cohort-based or Evergreen

Run defined 12-18 month cohorts that create shared experiences over time, or use an evergreen model where employees join anytime and stay as long as needed— the key is to support long-term, meaningful connection.

Meeting Frequency

Monthly 60-90 minute meetings work well for most pairs, with flexibility for pairs to adjust based on their needs and schedules.

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Program Activities

Connection-focused conversations

Regular 1-on-1 discussions with guided prompts around career goals, challenges, or shared interests

Skill-building activities

Group workshops, lunch-and-learns, or collaborative projects that bring multiple pairs together

Social events

Think virtual coffee chats, career story lightning talks, skill swaps, walk-and-talks, or other informal gatherings

Open forum discussions

Panel discussions or group check-ins where participants share experiences and learn from each other

Consider your company's needs: Are employees siloed by department? Do remote workers feel isolated? Does leadership seem disconnected from frontline teams? Your program structure should address your specific connection gaps.

Create Your Matching Process

Strong matches create meaningful connections, while poor matches waste everyone's time. Your matching strategy should consider:

01

Goals and expectations

What does each person hope to gain from the relationship?

01

Shared interests

Look beyond job functions to hobbies, communication styles, or career backgrounds

03

Cross-functional opportunities

Pair people from different departments or locations to broaden networks

As your program grows, consider mentoring software to scale matching efficiently, so you're not spending hours looking at a spreadsheet. Platforms like Together can create matches based on skills or departments, but also shared interests and goals. Automated matching lets you customize specific pairings when needed, while saving a ton of time overall.

Provide Structure and Resources

Even motivated participants need guidance to build strong relationships. Equip mentors and mentees with resources that spark meaningful conversations and keep sessions productive.
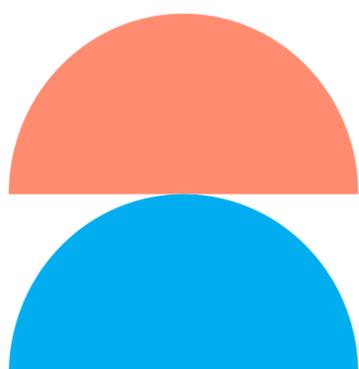
Conversation Guides

Give pairs frameworks for productive discussions using:

Monthly check-in templates

Goal-setting worksheets

Feedback and reflection tools

Discussion prompts on relevant topics

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Training and Development

Find out what topics your people care about most. A few ideas to get you started:

Train mentors on how to give effective feedback, ask powerful questions, and navigate difficult conversations

Train mentees on being coachable, setting clear expectations, and maximizing learning opportunities

Teach universal skills, including communication techniques, goal setting, and relationship management

Mentoring platforms like Together provide sample agendas on topics like problem-solving and career development. Plus email templates, participant handbooks, and personalized connection questions for each match.

This structure helps participants show up ready to focus on genuine connection, rather than logistics

Launch and Support

Step 6

Before a full rollout, pilot your program with 20-30 pairs to identify issues and refine the experience. Once you know your logistics and you've worked out any kinks, launch company-wide.

But your work doesn't end at launch. Provide ongoing support through:

- **Quarterly pulse surveys** to gather feedback
- **Optional group sessions** for shared learning
- **Resource updates** to keep content relevant
- **Troubleshooting support** when participants need help

Regular touchpoints keep participants engaged and help you continuously improve the program.

Proven Best Practices from Successful Mentoring Programs

After analyzing hundreds of mentorship programs, certain patterns emerge among the great ones. Here are a few elements the most successful mentorship programs tend to share.

Executive Sponsorship that Actually Sponsors

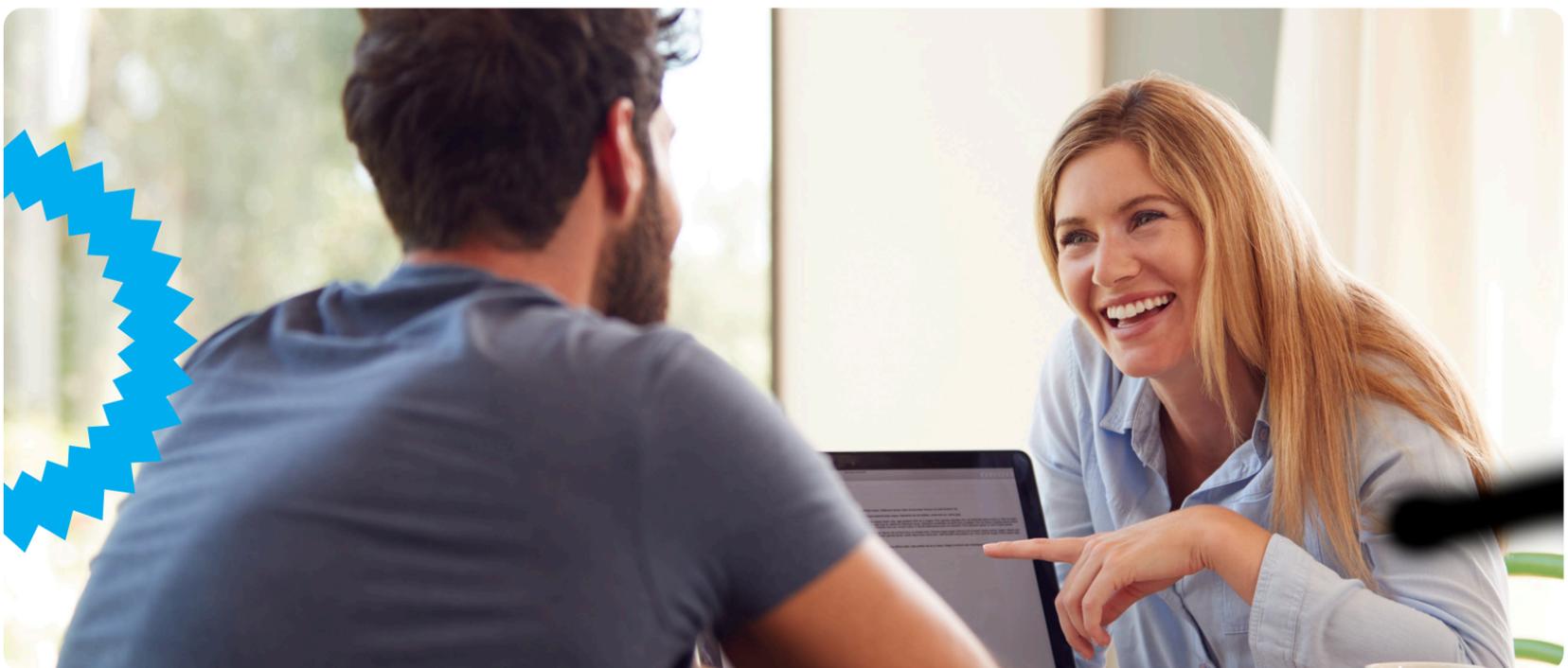The best mentorship programs have sponsors who don't just endorse—they participate.

True sponsorship includes:

Regular communication about program importance

Integration with performance reviews and promotion decisions

Executives serving as mentors

Adequate resource allocation

Cultural Integration, Not Just an Add-on Program

Mentorship works best when it feels like a natural part of how your organization operates, not another HR initiative to manage.

In addition to new employee onboarding mentorship, consider adding mentorship opportunities related to:

New employee onboarding
Include mentorship as part of the new hire experience

Leadership competency models
Explicitly include "develops others" as a leadership expectation

Performance management
Incorporate mentoring goals into individual development plans

Career pathing
Make mentoring participation visible in promotion criteria

Technology as an enabler

Here's where we need to be honest about the role of technology in mentorship. Software doesn't create great mentoring relationships—people do. But the right technology can absolutely enable and enhance those relationships.

What Technology Should Do ✓

Simplify logistics
Easy scheduling, communication, and resource sharing

Enhance matching
Data-driven pairing based on meaningful criteria

Track progress
Goal setting, milestone tracking, and outcome measurement

Provide resources
Centralized library of content and tools

Enable scale
Support hundreds or thousands of pairs efficiently

What Technology Shouldn't Do ✗

Replace human connection
The relationship is still the core of mentorship

Overcomplicate simple interactions
Don't add friction to natural conversations

Become the focus
Technology should be invisible, enabling the relationship

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Measurement That Matters

You'll want to track leading indicators (things that predict future success) like:

- ✅ Relationship Quality
- ✅ Goal Completion
- ✅ Engagement

Also track lagging indicators (things that measure ultimate impact) like:

- ✅ Promotions
- ✅ Retention
- ✅ Performance Improvements

The Together advantage

Metrics don't have to be overwhelming. Our platform automatically tracks both types of metrics, providing real-time insights into program health and long-term impact measurement.

Flexibility within structure

Provide clear frameworks while allowing relationships to develop organically.

Structured

Program timeline, goal-setting templates, resource libraries

Flexible

Meeting frequency, conversation topics, communication styles, additional activities

Continuous Learning and Iteration

Great programs evolve over time. They gather feedback, analyze data, and make improvements continuously rather than waiting for annual reviews.

Iteration tactics to test out:

- Quarterly feedback collection
- Short surveys to identify issues early
- Focus groups
- Deep-dive sessions with participants to understand experiences
- Data analysis
- Regular review of engagement and outcome metrics
- Best practice sharing
- Highlight successful relationship strategies
- Program updates
- Regular refinements based on feedback and results

Case Study
How The Access Group Uses Buddy Mentorship to Connect Employees Across Acquisitions

Every new hire has been there—you discover the shared drive full of go-to resources, three months in. A buddy system keeps those casual "where do I find that?" conversations happening, even without an office. For remote and hybrid workers, it's the difference between feeling lost and having a guide.

That's exactly what The Access Group needed. As a global software company completing multiple acquisitions each year, they were bringing new employees into an 8,000-person organization—and those new hires needed more than a handbook to find their footing.

The Access Group partnered with Together to scale their buddy program, matching newly acquired employees with established colleagues. Together's intelligent system created 20 pairings in 30 minutes based on shared interests and goals.

The impact was clear

3.93/4 ★★★★
Average feedback from mentees

3.93/4 ★★★★
Average feedback from mentors

New employees consistently say their buddy helped them get up to speed faster and feel connected to The Access Group's culture. Many buddies have even re-volunteered for the program.

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The Role of Technology in Modern Mentorship

Do you really need mentorship software?

If you want to run a program at scale, with consistent quality, measurable outcomes, and manageable administrative overhead—then yes, the right technology is nonnegotiable. Here's why.

The Scale Challenge

A program with 100 mentor-mentee pairs generates 1,200+ meetings per year, 200+ goal-setting processes, and hundreds of coordination requests. Managing this manually isn't just inefficient—it's a setup for failure.

What Great Mentorship Technology Does

Intelligent Matching

Together's algorithm analyzes dozens of factors including leadership style preferences, career goals, communication preferences, and industry expertise to create optimal pairings

Relationship Management

Great mentorship software acts like a CRM for mentoring relationships:

- **Goal setting and tracking:** Structured frameworks for establishing and monitoring development objectives
- **Communication tools:** Secure messaging, video calls, and document sharing
- **Resource libraries:** Curated content tailored to specific development needs
- **Progress monitoring:** Dashboards that show relationship health and milestone achievement

Program Administration

For L&D teams, the right platform provides:

- **Real-time analytics:** Understanding program engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes
- **Automated workflows:** Reminder emails, check-in surveys, and milestone notifications
- **Reporting capabilities:** Executive dashboards and detailed program analysis
- **Integration options:** Connection with HRIS, LMS, and other enterprise systems

The Together Platform Advantage

Here's where we're going to be direct about why mentorship software matters—and specifically why Together has become the platform of choice for organizations serious about onboarding mentorship.

Comprehensive program management

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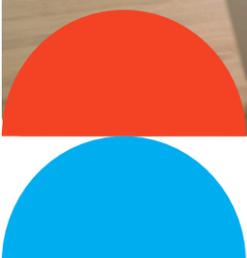
Enterprise-grade integrations

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.

How to Measure the Success and ROI of your Mentorship Programs

How do you prove that your mentorship program is actually working?

Effective measurement happens at multiple levels, from individual relationship health to organizational business impact.

The Multi-Level Measurement Framework

Effective measurement happens at multiple levels, from individual relationship health to organizational business impact. Here's the framework that actually works:

Level 1

Reaction and satisfaction

- Participant satisfaction scores and Net Promoter Score
- Completion rates and engagement metrics

Level 2

Learning and skill development

- Pre/post engagement assessments
- 360-degree feedback improvements
- Employee satisfaction rates

Level 3

Behavior change and application

- Relationship behavior observations
- Employee performance ratings
- Self-reported confidence increases

Level 4

Business results and impact

- Internal promotion rates
- Retention improvements
- Team performance metrics

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Track metrics across three categories:

Relationship health metrics

- Meeting frequency and engagement quality
- Goal progress and satisfaction scores

Program impact metrics

- Connection rates (percentage of employees who expanded their network across departments or levels)
- Retention rates (difference between participants and non-participants)
- Employee engagement scores (comparing participants to non-participants)
- Cross-functional collaboration (increase in projects or interactions across teams

Business outcome metrics

- Team performance improvements
- Cost savings from reduced recruitment and turnover

Calculating Financial ROI

Here's the formula that makes CFOs pay attention:

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**

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Let's talk about the mentorship program killers—those seemingly small decisions that can make or break your initiative. After analyzing hundreds of programs, we've seen certain failure patterns emerge repeatedly.

Pitfall #1: The "Set It and Forget It" Mentality

You launch, and then you assume relationships will manage themselves. Don't fall into this tempting trap. Without ongoing support, engagement fades and participants disengage.

The Fix

Build ongoing support into your design:
- Monthly pulse surveys to identify issues early
- Quarterly group sessions for troubleshooting
- Clear escalation paths when relationships need help

Pitfall #2: Poor Matching = Program Failure

Random or superficial matching kills participant enthusiasm. Mismatched pairs won't build meaningful connections. They're more likely to drop-off and report negative experiences.

The Fix

Invest in thoughtful matching with:
- Comprehensive intake surveys that capture goals, interests, and preferences
- Multiple matching criteria weighted by importance
- Trial periods that allow for re-matching if needed

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Pitfall #3: Unclear Expectations and Goals

Vague objectives lead to vague outcomes. Without clear direction, participants don't know what success looks like or how to make the most of their connection.

The Fix

Provide clear structure while maintaining flexibility:

- Offer goal-setting workshops focused on relationship building and engagement
- Provide template conversation guides and connection activities
- Set explicit time commitments and meeting expectations

Pitfall #4: Inadequate Mentor Training

Being a strong performer doesn't automatically make someone a good mentor. Untrained mentors struggle to facilitate meaningful conversations and build genuine connections.

The Fix

Comprehensive mentor development includes:

- Training on active listening, asking questions, and building rapport
- Workshops on different mentoring styles and relationship-building techniques
- Ongoing development opportunities for mentors

Pitfall #5: Diversity and Inclusion Oversights

Programs can inadvertently perpetuate existing inequalities or exclude certain groups. Without intentional design, connection programs may reinforce silos rather than break them down.

The Fix

Intentional inclusive design:

- Actively recruit diverse mentor pools across levels, departments, and backgrounds
- Provide cultural competence training for all participants
- Analyze participation and outcomes by demographic groups

Pitfall #6: Executive Support That's Only Surface-Deep

Leaders who endorse programs publicly but don't provide real resources or participation.

Without visible leadership commitment, employees won't prioritize the program or see its value.

The Fix

Genuine leadership commitment means executives:

- Participate as program mentors
- Sell the program and its connection to company values
- Support integration with broader engagement and culture initiatives

Your Next Steps

If you've made it this far, congratulations! You're ready to build a mentorship program that drives real connection and engagement.

Going from theory to practice can feel overwhelming, but the key is to start now and refine as you go. Don't wait for the perfect plan—just start with a solid foundation and improve over time.

Here's how to make this happen:

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
- Establish feedback loops and success metrics

Days 61-90

Launch Preparation
- Recruit and train initial mentors
- Complete matching and conduct kickoff sessions
- Begin relationship meetings and program execution
- Develop communication and marketing materials

And we have liftoff! Your program is launched.

Remember to check back in with your program and participants after the initial launch, and collect metrics along the way. Then review, make improvements, keep going. You've got this.

Ready to transform your new hire onboarding?

Remember, the best onboarding mentorship programs combine three elements:

|		
Clear Strategic Vision	Committed Participants	The Right Technology to Support Them

You've got the vision. You understand the why. You can identify the participants—every organization has new employees who need help being brought into the fold.
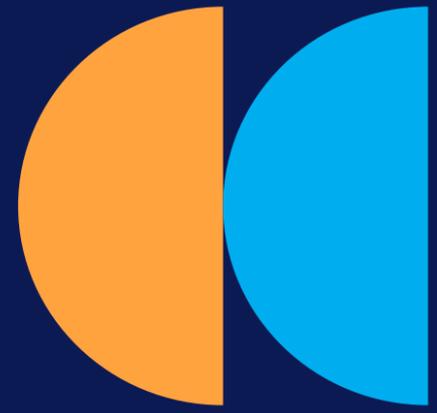
The technology? That's where Together comes in!

Book a Demo to see how our platform can help you build the engagement and connection mentorship program your organization needs.

togetherplatform.com/book-a-demo
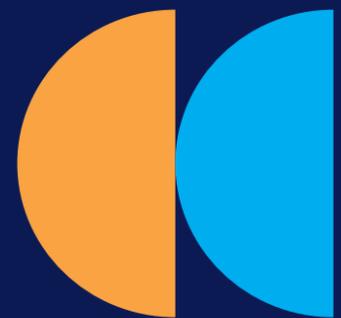
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About Together

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%
Improved Employee Skills

95%
A More Connected Company

100%
Improved Inclusion and Support

79%
Improved Retention

Some of our customers include

Crayon

Kellogg's

Heineken®

Discovery

Teladoc® HEALTH

NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION

Book Demo

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