



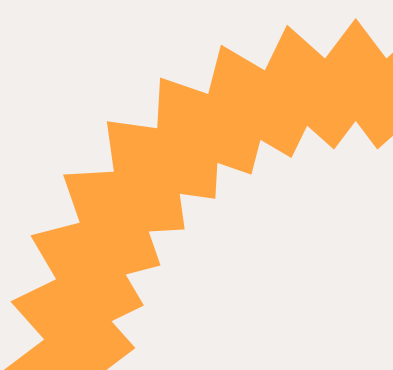
Onboarding Mentorship Programs

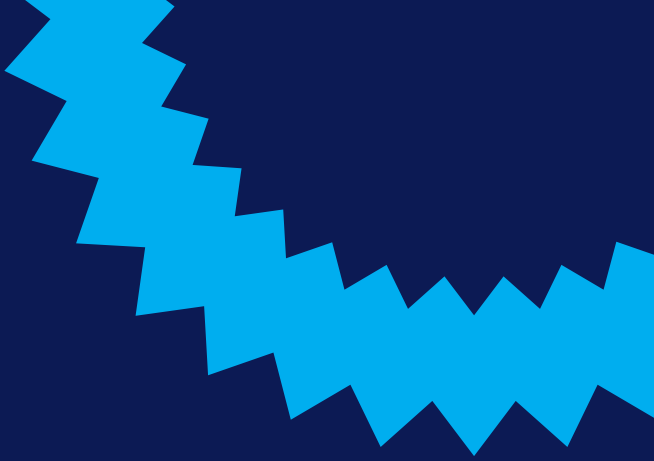
How to Plan, Launch, and Measure Your Buddy Program

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Introduction

Failed first impressions and underwhelming onboarding experiences

Here's a common (and confusing) contradiction: Companies put a ton of time and effort into recruiting, but once a candidate signs their offer letter, the new hire onboarding experience feels like an afterthought.

This experience gap isn't just jarring—it can have catastrophic implications. The fact that 40% of turnover occurs within an employee's first year on the job indicates just how serious this problem can be.¹ When new hires feel neglected, they don't hesitate to jump back into job-seeker mode.

Even if your company already has an onboarding program in place, can you say with certainty that it's really setting new hires up for success? Gallup finds that 70% of new hires still feel unprepared, even after the onboarding process.²

But before you start thinking your entire onboarding program needs an overhaul, the solution may be a lot simpler than you expect: Adding a mentorship element or “buddy system” to your existing onboarding can give new hires that extra attention and personalization they're craving.

Pairing new hires with more tenured employees can help get them up to speed and increase their sense of belonging and satisfaction. After their first week on the job, new hires with buddies were 23% more satisfied with their onboarding experience than those without buddies.³

This ebook is a practical guide for L&D and HR professionals who want to see new hires flourish by creating a thoughtful onboarding mentorship experience. Looking for a playbook that will help you build something that actually works? Look no further!

¹ Work Institute, “2025 Retention Report: Employee Retention Truths in Today's Workplace.”

² Gallup, “How to Improve the Employee Experience.”

³ Harvard Business Review, “Every New Employee Needs an Onboarding Buddy.”



Part 1

What is an onboarding mentorship program?

An onboarding mentorship program—also often referred to as an onboarding buddy program—is designed to make new employees feel welcomed by pairing them with a more tenured employee.

Onboarding Mentorship Programs Are Generally Designed To:



- Create opportunities for new hires to develop and become more competent in their roles faster.
- Acclimate new hires to the company culture.
- Answer new hires' questions about processes and procedures.
- Offer general support to the new hire that falls outside the scope of what their manager can provide during the first few weeks (or even months).

A Successful Buddy Program:



- Pairs each new hire with a useful, knowledgeable buddy for the duration of their onboarding phase.
- Allows new hires to confidently set clear goals with their buddy and get feedback along the way.
- Encourages buddies to share their own experiences and insights about the company, in addition to answering their questions.
- Gives new hires the opportunity to build relationships with experienced employees from different departments or teams.
- Comprehensively prepares new hires for the specific role they will be playing within the company.

A Buddy Program Is Not:



- A way to avoid having a structured onboarding process. A buddy program should supplement—not replace—an existing onboarding plan.
- A free pass for new hires to skip orientation or other important onboarding activities. Buddies are there to provide support, not do the work for their mentees.
- A social program purely for the sake of meeting people. Buddies should be carefully selected based on their usefulness and knowledge, not just their ability to make friends (although friendliness is important, too).

Part 2

Why onboarding mentorship is the key to employee success

The majority of companies already have some type of onboarding program in place. Yet only 12% of employees strongly agree that their organization does a great job onboarding new employees.⁴ So why the disconnect?

Typical onboarding places too much emphasis on admin tasks

Too many companies treat onboarding as an administrative task, focusing only on filling out paperwork and taking care of compliance. But this approach doesn't account for the human side of the new hire experience—the stress and uncertainty that come with immersing yourself in a brand-new environment.

And this is a major oversight: As we mentioned earlier, 40% of turnover occurs in the first year. Think about the impact this has in terms of recruiting costs, lost productivity, and dips in morale.



⁴ Gallup, "8 Practical Tips for Leaders for a Better Onboarding Process."

How personalized mentoring can make a major impact

According to Gallup, the most valuable part of the onboarding experience is the human element—meeting people, forming social ties, and learning from colleagues.

The key to helping new hires feel comfortable—and increasing their chances of sticking around—is to recognize what they’re going through and provide a point person who can help them navigate the ups and downs of their early days.

There are several key benefits to incorporating mentorship programs into onboarding:

- Getting new hires up to speed quickly, accelerating their learning
- Helping new hires meet the team and adjust to the company culture
- Outlining expectations and work norms, which sets new hires up for success
- Helping new hires see how their work connects to the company’s goals, increasing their commitment to the role
- Boosting feelings of inclusion and belonging among new hires, which can lead to engagement and retention

In a nutshell, mentoring new employees helps them settle in faster, contribute value sooner, and stay longer. It’s a win-win for engagement and growth.



Helping new hires retain more knowledge

Why does mentorship have such a positive impact on the new hire experience? Because it builds a personal connection that makes it easy for new hires to remember what they’ve learned.

- 01

Context matters
Mentors share wisdom in the context of specific situations
- 02

Emotional connection
People remember advice from people they respect and trust
- 03

Ongoing reinforcement
Unlike one-time training events, mentorship provides continuous reinforcement
- 04

Personalized relevance
Guidance is tailored to the individual’s specific challenges and goals

Microsoft makes the case for onboarding buddies

A case study from Microsoft published in Harvard Business Review found several compelling benefits to having an onboarding buddy program:

- 

Increased productivity
Of the new hires who met with their onboarding buddy at least once in their first 90 days, 56% said that their buddy helped them to quickly become productive in their role.
- 

Enhanced satisfaction
New hires who were paired with a buddy were 23% more satisfied with their onboarding experience after the first week and 36% more satisfied after the first 90 days on the job.
- 

Additional context
Onboarding buddies can provide the type of context you don’t get from an employee handbook like identifying key stakeholders and navigating different organizational structures.
- 

New leadership skills for mentors
The new hires aren’t the only ones who benefit—their mentors get the chance to develop their managerial and leadership skills, too.



Part 3

Building your onboarding mentorship program

Let's take a look at the essential steps that will help you build an onboarding mentorship program.

Define Your Onboarding Goals

Step 1

Start by defining your onboarding mentorship program's goals. Identify the key skills new hires need and align their development with both their interests and your company's objectives. Clear, well-structured goals create a strong foundation, ensuring mentees gain the guidance and support they need to grow and succeed.

The SMART-ER Framework for Mentorship Goals



- ✓ **Specific**
Target particular leadership competencies
- ✓ **Measurable**
Include quantifiable outcomes
- ✓ **Achievable**
Set realistic expectations
- ✓ **Relevant**
Align with business objectives
- ✓ **Time-bound**
Establish clear timelines
- ✓ **Evaluated**
Build in assessment checkpoints
- ✓ **Readjusted**
Allow for program evolution



Identify Your Participants

Step 2

Decide who should participate in your onboarding mentorship program, both the new hire mentees and the more tenured employee mentors.

Mentor Selection Criteria

Look for:



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

Emotional intelligence and communication skills

Availability and general interest in development

Diverse perspectives that represent your organization’s values

Willingness to receive training on being an effective mentor

Mentee Selection Process

Look for:



Junior employees who will benefit most from structured mentorship

Growth mindset and openness to feedback

Commitment to the program requirements

Diverse representation across functions, levels, and backgrounds



Design Your Program Structure

Step 3

There are several ways you can design your onboarding buddy program, such as:

01

Traditional 1-on-1.

Traditional mentorship pairs a senior employee with a junior one. The focus is on employee development and growth.

02

Group mentoring.

In a group mentoring experience, there may be one or more mentors and several mentees. Group mentoring is particularly good for new hires, as it allows them to develop their skills, connect with peers, and experience diverse perspectives.

03

Peer mentoring.

Matching your new employee with someone in a similar position who has more company experience is considered a form of peer mentoring. It can be ideal for new hires as they'll learn the ropes from someone who understands what they may be experiencing. Peer mentoring for new hires is also another way to build friendships among your employees.

04

Reverse mentoring.

We typically think of mentorship as a senior employee guiding a junior one—but reverse mentoring flips the script. In this model, newer hires share their knowledge with more experienced employees. This is especially valuable for managers and executives looking to stay current with evolving technologies. Younger employees, often more fluent in the latest digital tools, can help senior leaders adapt and innovate. A well-structured reverse mentoring program creates a two-way learning experience that benefits both parties.

05

Virtual.

Mentorship programs must adapt to fit remote and hybrid work environments. Any mentoring style can be tailored for a virtual setting using video calls, chat platforms, or collaborative tools. Remote mentoring also helps global organizations build meaningful connections, where employees can benefit from mentorship regardless of location.

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.



Create Your Matching Process

Step 4

The matching process is one of the most important factors in creating a great experience for mentors and mentees. You'll need to develop a strategy for matching pairs, considering:



Skills and experience

Connect new hires with mentors who possess the skills or experience the employee aspires to gain.



Similarities

Consider matching based on communication style, interests, or career background.



Participant expectations

Understand what both parties expect from the mentorship and how they envision a successful relationship. What are their ideas on how to build a successful mentorship?

To manage this effectively, especially as programs grow, consider using mentoring software to achieve the best possible results.

These platforms can build matches based on standard criteria like skills and departments—but also around shared interests, hobbies, or goals. Fully automated matching saves time, but you still have the option to personalize or customize specific matches when it makes sense.

Provide Structure and Resources

Step 5

Support the mentoring relationship by equipping mentors and mentees with valuable content and resources. Share articles, TED Talks, sample questions, or discussion prompts to spark meaningful conversations. This helps break the ice and also keeps each session engaging and productive.

Mentoring platforms like Together have template agendas on various topics like problem-solving, goal setting, and career development. Resources are available for all programs and include mentee, mentor, and colleague handbooks; email templates; program agendas; and personalized discussion points for every match.

Launch and Support

Step 6

Now you've got all the pieces in place, you're (almost) ready to launch your onboarding mentorship program. But before you roll it out, consider whether you might want to run some experiments first.

For example, you might decide on a soft launch where you pilot the program with a smaller group of participants to identify issues.

Once you feel confident that all the logistics are handled and any bugs have been addressed, you can fully roll out the program.

Remember that just because your program has launched, that doesn't mean your work is done. You will also want to provide regular touchpoints to support participants and collect feedback.

These might include:

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



The Complete Onboarding Buddy Program Checklist

Looking for a simple way to track all your onboarding buddy program to-dos? This checklist will help you keep track of all the most important tasks.

Before Launch

Define Program Goals



- What do you want to achieve? (e.g., increased retention, faster onboarding, improved cultural integration)
- Set SMART-ER goals to track progress

Identify Ideal Buddies



- Friendly, knowledgeable employees with strong communication skills
- Positive attitudes and a genuine desire to help others
- Consider personality traits: empathy, patience, adaptability

Recruit & Train Buddies



- Create a clear selection process.
- Provide comprehensive training:
 - Mentoring basics
 - Cultural sensitivity
 - Program expectations
 - Conflict resolution

Develop Pairing Criteria



- Match based on: role, interests, personality, skill sets
- Utilize surveys/personality assessments for deeper insights

Create Communication Channels



- Set up clear communication avenues for:
 - Buddies
 - New hires
 - Program coordinators
 - Stakeholders (e.g., managers, HR)



During Program

Schedule Regular Check-ins



Individual check-ins (weekly/bi-weekly):

- Gather feedback
- Address concerns
- Ensure program effectiveness
- Optional group check-ins for peer learning and support

Provide Resources & Support



Offer access to:

- Training materials
- Mentorship resources
- Company knowledge bases
- Program coordinators (guidance & support)
- Develop a system for escalating complex issues

Organize Buddy Events



Encourage connection and knowledge sharing through:

- Social gatherings
- Team-building activities
- Informal coffee chats
- Virtual options for remote employees

Recognize Buddy Contributions



Show appreciation through:

- Public recognition
- Rewards (e.g., gift cards, team lunches)
- Dedicated appreciation events

Consider peer-to-peer recognition programs

Monitor Program Data



Track key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Participation rates
- Feedback scores
- Buddy-new hire engagement
- Program impact metrics (retention, onboarding completion)

Utilize data visualization tools for clearer insights

Bonus



Best practices for onboarding buddy success

- Involve senior leaders for program promotion and participation.
- Create a feedback loop for program coordinators.
- Leverage technology platforms to streamline communication, scheduling, and data tracking.
- Integrate your buddy program with other talent development initiatives.



Part 4

Proven best practices from successful mentoring programs

There are a few elements the most successful mentorship programs tend to share. We break them down for you below.

Executive sponsorship that actually sponsors

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

Executives serving as mentors

Adequate resource allocation

Regular communication about program importance

Integration with performance reviews and promotion decisions



Cultural integration, not just add-on programs

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, considering adding mentorship opportunities related to:

Performance management

Incorporate mentoring goals into individual development plans



Leadership competency models

Explicitly include "develops others" as a leadership expectation



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

Measurement that matters

Track both leading indicators (things that predict future success, like relationship quality, goal completion, engagement) and lagging indicators (things that measure ultimate impact, like promotions, retention, performance improvements)

The Together advantage

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. 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: Creating a memorable onboarding experience through mentoring at Cooley

Cooley is a global law firm with 1,500 lawyers across 17 offices in the United States, Asia, and Europe. Cooley focuses on complicated litigation and legal work, so teams need to be the best and brightest to serve their clients.

To prepare their employees for such complex work, they needed a scalable way to onboard new employees and get them up to speed quickly. The best way to do this is by connecting new hires with more experienced individuals.

With Together, Cooley quickly paired up new employees with more senior associates for mentorship.

Each session included agendas to guide pairs through the mentoring process, taking the guesswork out of the logistics and allowing them to focus on genuine connection and career growth.

Cooley's mentorship programs have had an incredible impact across their organizations. **On a scale out of 4, the average rating mentors and mentees gave was 3.9.**



For new employees going through onboarding, it can be a daunting experience to join a new company. Having a buddy mentor to guide them through joining a large law firm made the transition more supportive and led to a shorter ramp-up time.

Case Study: The Access Group helps new colleagues make connections through integration

The Access Group, a business management software company, has over 8,000 employees worldwide. Its workforce spans offices in the UK, Europe, USA, and Asia-Pacific, along with operations centers in Romania and Malaysia.

Every year, The Access Group completes many acquisitions, ranging from smaller startups to larger organizations of up to 400 people. The company works hard to give acquired employees an excellent integration experience, but faced with a new culture and ways of working, these colleagues need help to find their feet and make connections in their first few weeks and months.

Although The Access Group had a mentorship, or “buddy,” program to support new hires, it relied on manual processes for matching employees that were difficult to scale.

The M&A team partnered with Together Software to:

- ✔ Make transitions smoother for employees who join through acquisition
- ✔ Strengthen connections and relationship-building
- ✔ Uphold the company’s commitment to an inclusive culture
- ✔ Reduce the time required to match new hires with their buddies

The Access Group estimates that they now

Save About **15** Hours a Month



with Together since they no longer manually match onboarding program participants. Plus, the average score from mentors is

3.93/₄
For Mentors



3.85/₄
For Mentees



signaling an overwhelmingly positive reception to this program.

“

The Together platform helps us run an effective and engaging buddy program that delivers a great experience for both acquired colleagues and the Access folk they’re matched with. There’s very little admin work required from us, which gives us time back to deal with employee queries that can’t be resolved by a buddy.”

Edward Collington
Acquisitions Adviser



Part 5

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 non-negotiable. 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.



Part 6

Measuring the success and ROI of your mentorship programs

How do you prove that your mentorship program is actually working? Keep these guidelines in mind.

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 leadership competency assessments
- 360-degree feedback improvements
- Goal achievement rates

Level 3

Behavior change and application

- Leadership behavior observations
- Manager effectiveness ratings
- Self-reported confidence increases

Level 4

Business results and impact

- Internal promotion rates
- Retention improvements
- Team performance metrics



Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Relationship health metrics

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



Program impact metrics

- Promotion rates (percentage of mentees promoted within 12-18 months)
- Retention rates (difference between participants and non-participants)
- Leadership pipeline strength



Business outcome metrics

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



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**



Part 7

Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

Let's talk about the mentorship program killers—those seemingly small decisions that can doom even well-intentioned initiatives. After analyzing hundreds of programs, we've seen certain failure patterns emerge repeatedly.

Pitfall #1: The “set it and forget it” mentality

The Problem



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

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

The Problem



Random or superficial matching kills participant enthusiasm

The Fix



Invest in thoughtful matching:

- Comprehensive intake surveys capturing goals and preferences
- Multiple matching criteria weighted by importance
- Trial periods allowing for re-matching if needed



Pitfall #3: Unclear expectations and goals

The Problem



Vague objectives lead to vague outcomes.

The Fix



Provide clear structure while maintaining flexibility:

- SMARTER goal-setting workshops
- Template conversation guides and development tools
- Explicit time commitments and meeting expectations

Pitfall #4: Inadequate mentor training

The Problem



Being a good leader doesn't automatically make someone a good mentor

The Fix



Comprehensive mentor development:

- Training on coaching skills and feedback delivery
- Workshops on different mentoring styles
- Ongoing development opportunities for mentors

Pitfall #5: Diversity & inclusion oversights

The Problem



Programs can inadvertently perpetuate existing inequalities

The Fix



Intentional inclusive design:

- Actively recruit diverse mentor pools
- Cultural competence training for all participants
- Regular analysis of outcomes by demographic groups

Pitfall #6: Executive support that's only surface deep

The Problem



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

The Fix



Genuine leadership commitment:

- Executive participation as program mentors
- Clear communication about program importance
- Integration with talent management processes



Conclusion: Your next steps

It's clear that you're invested in the idea of building an onboarding mentorship program. So how do you go from theory to actual practice?

Here's the trick: It's all about starting somewhere.

Don't worry about building the perfect program from day one—just lay the foundations for a good program and improve it over time.

Here's how you can make this happen.

The 90-day quick start plan



Ready to transform your new hire onboarding?

The best onboarding mentorship programs combine three elements: clear strategic vision, committed participants, and the right technology platform to support them.

You've got the vision (if you've read this far, you understand the why).

You can identify the participants (every organization has new employees who need help being brought into the fold).



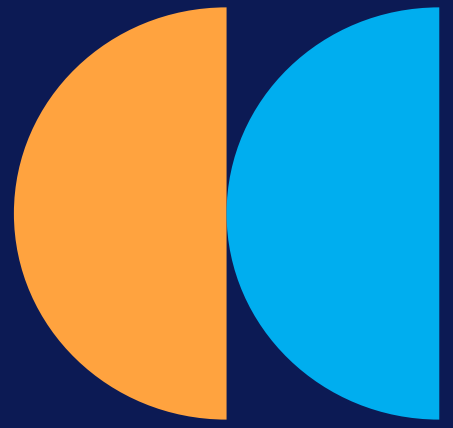
The technology? That's where Together comes in.

Book a Demo At

togetherplatform.com/book-a-demo

And see how our platform can help you build the onboarding mentorship program your organization needs.





About Together

Together's mentoring software empowers enterprise organizations to drive performance through relationships. Whether you're running traditional 1:1 mentoring programs, peer or group mentoring programs, or just want to connect employees over a cup of coffee, Together matches employees at scale.

Together has consistently been granted the #1 mentorship software award for user experience by G2, the world's leading software review site.

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



[Book Demo](#)

