Ten Thousand Coffees

Online Mentoring in the Workplace

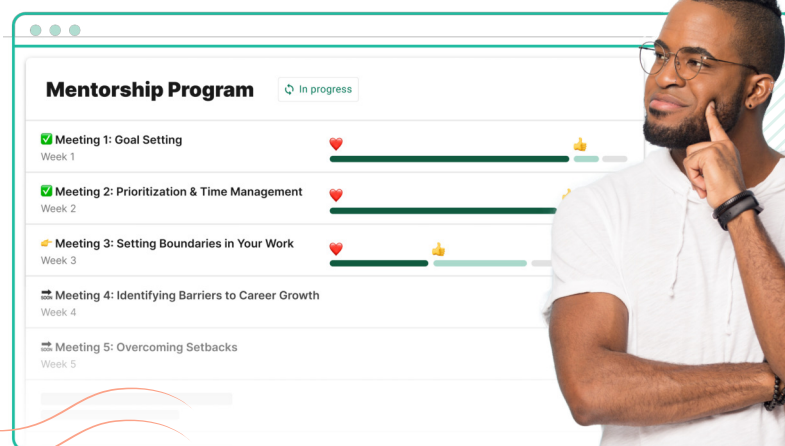## A Complete Guide

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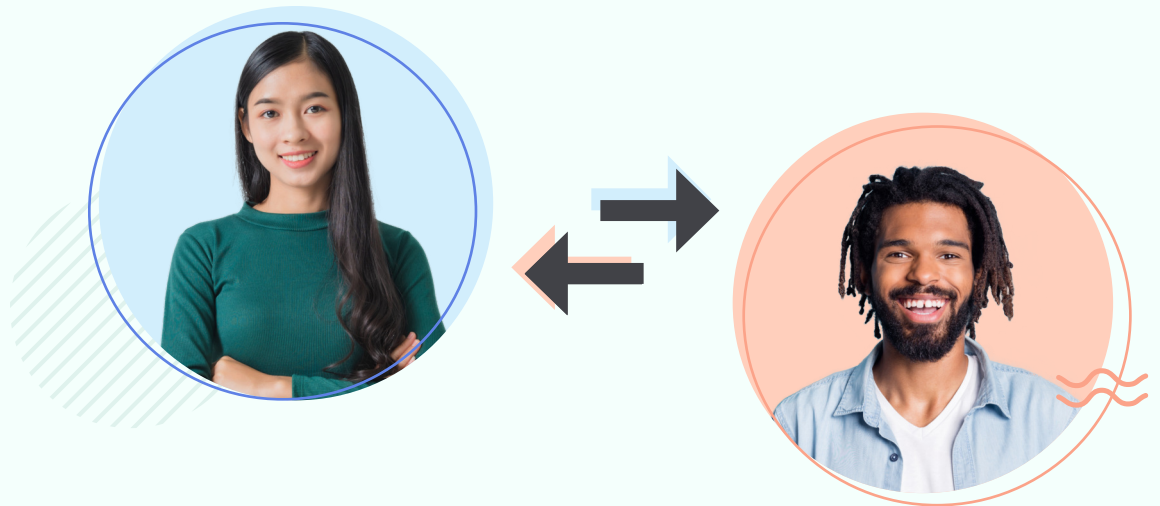
The importance of mentorship in a virtual world

With decentralized work the new norm, it's not hard to understand why organizational connections are on the decline. Although we're invited to more meetings than ever, we feel more isolated and professionally off-track. Not only is the daily coffee chat reduced to Slack messaging and the odd after work Zoom drinks, but focusing on career development seems the furthest from our minds. While many are juggling homeschooling, puppy-sitting, and mental health issues, it's hard to prioritize taking the next step on the career ladder

With the future of work uncertain, the power of virtual connections is truly realized; with its ability to break down barriers and increase access for all. Here's where mentoring comes in.

Not only does mentorship provide the connection that we've all been yearning for, but it also allows us to refocus our energy on our professional development and take control of something in our lives, when we've been feeling so out of control for so long.

For businesses, mentorship offers a chance for leaders and SMEs to share their knowledge and boost the productivity of their teams. In fact, 67% of businesses reported an increase in productivity due to mentorship.

While the everyday world may have stopped, it certainly hasn't for businesses who, despite the chaos, still have very real business goals to meet. Mentorship programs offer the opportunity for Talent teams to keep reaching HR goals tied to objectives such as retention, recruitment, & championing diversity.

The many faces of mentorship

Mentorship comes in many shapes and sizes, and has had to be particularly flexible since the onset of remote work. Here are just some of the most prevalent types of mentoring we're seeing today:

1:1 mentorship

Arguably one of the most traditional forms of mentorship, this relationship usually involves a mentor who has a certain skill that a mentee would like to develop, or has reached a particular stage in their career. The mentor acts as a guide for the mentee in acquiring skills and supports them in their career progression by sharing knowledge and advice from their own experiences. This type of mentorship can also act as a buddy program for new hires or early talent adjacent to your formal onboarding programs.

Group mentoring

Not to be overlooked, group mentorship offers mentors the opportunity to reach more mentees in a shorter period of time and incorporate teamwork and inclusion. This type of mentoring is particularly useful if there is a shortage of mentors or if information needs to be shared fast.

Team mentorship

Similar to group mentoring, team mentorship involves having more than one mentor in a group, allowing different experiences to be shared and offering various perspectives. Team mentoring is most commonly used in sports, and allows mentors to cater to a range of needs and encourages diversity.

Reverse mentorship

A newer form of mentoring, reverse mentorship operates the same as 1:1 mentoring, but lets the more junior participant take the lead. This particular type of mentoring is usually used to help leaders gain a fresh perspective on the business or generate new ideas.

Virtual mentoring

The most common type of mentoring we're seeing in today's climate, virtual mentorship follows the same principles as any of the above mentoring options, but without location restrictions. This means that mentorship can break out of the office walls and global teams can expand their network and provide a unique perspective. This type of mentoring is just as effective as in-person mentoring, and existing mentor/mentee relationships have had great success continuing their meetings online.

No matter what type of mentoring best suits your business and people, with 79% of millennials seeing mentoring as crucial to their career success, just make sure you're doing it!

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SUGGESTED QUESTION

What excites you about your current role or project?

A snapshot of mentoring benefits

The benefits of mentorship are endless, but not all businesses invest in it. In a recent survey, 97% of professionals with a mentor said that they were valuable, yet only 37% of professionals actually have one.

We've gathered feedback from our clients and experts to break down exactly why you need to incorporate a mentorship program into your business. Afterall, there's got to be a reason why 71% of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs.

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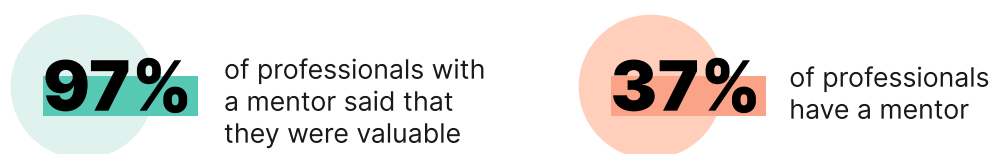
Benefits for mentees

It may seem obvious, but mentees get a great deal out of mentorship programs. In fact, a recent survey showed that mentees are promoted 5 times more often than those without mentors.

Mentoring allows mentees to get a better understanding of company culture, develop relationships at a more senior level, and enhance their competencies. If a mentor program is based upon skills development, then mentees have the opportunity to learn new skills from those who know them best and can relate them back to the business. Diversity-led mentorship programs can help sponsor underrepresented talent and impart knowledge upon allies which will positively impact the company at large. This is just a snapshot of the potential benefits; the possibilities really are endless.

Benefits for mentors

Despite the common misconceptions, mentees aren't the only ones to get the glory. Mentors should expect to increase their communication and leadership skills when they sign up for a mentorship program, and receive an influx of fresh perspectives from more junior talent. In addition, mentors tend to increase their organizational knowledge and feel empowered by their mentoring relationships, increasing their confidence.

And did we mention that mentors themselves are 6 times more likely to be promoted? Mentoring not only increases your skill levels but also makes management take notice.

Benefits for your company

Mentorship programs don't just benefit the participants. Mentoring and skill development allows your business to foster a mentoring culture, which continuously promotes individual employee growth and development. It can also help your business boost minority representation at the management level. A mentoring culture allows you to engage your employees as internal experts for professional development; a development accelerator with low cost and high impact. This also helps break down the 'silo' mentality that impacts cooperation between departments or divisions.

A mindset such as this naturally attracts new talent and increases the retention rate of your employees, who see you actively investing in their future. A recent study found that some of the top reasons that millennials want to quit their jobs are: 'Not enough opportunities to advance' at 35% and 'Lack of learning and development opportunities' at 28%. And with millennials expected to comprise more than 75% of the workforce by 2025, businesses would do well to pay attention.

55%
of businesses had a positive impact on their profits from mentoring

Another benefit of mentorship or buddy programs is improved onboarding experiences and productivity of new hires, which leads to enhanced job satisfaction and increases long term retention.

A surprising benefit to businesses is the reduction in training, learning, and development costs. Not only does mentorship provide a source of support for mentees who are facing stressful situations and would otherwise take sick days, but leveraging your existing employees as mentors reduces training costs normally associated with third party training. As the icing on the cake, a recent study found that 55% of businesses said that mentoring had a positive impact on their profits.

Goal setting

A successful mentoring program aligns with business goals or resolves common challenges that the business is facing. If you want your mentoring program to be worth its weight in gold, you'll start by identifying why you need a mentoring program in the first place. By starting with the end goal in mind, you can decide on how you are going to measure results and keep everyone on track along the way. Here are a few of the most common objectives we see:

Reduce employee turnover rates

The cost of employee turnover is no joke. Luckily, mentorship programs have the power to support those who are facing workplace stressors, help them develop new skills, and make real change in your business. It's no surprise that a LinkedIn Learning study found that 94% of employees said they would stay at a company longer if they were offered opportunities to learn and grow.

Whether it's by opening up access to skill development, making leadership aware of organizational problems, or simply making an employee feel more valued, mentorship can have a huge impact on who stays and who goes.

Increase employee engagement

Showing an active interest in your teams' development and providing opportunities to advance in their careers is a game changer when it comes to engagement. Mentoring programs can give your employees the confidence to take risks and ultimately work harder to reach their goals.

Move towards diversity, equity, and inclusion goals

As well as creating a more equitable business culture, research has shown that businesses who have diverse representation in leadership have higher productivity and earnings. Win/win! Mentoring underrepresented groups allows them to overcome obstacles that other employees may not face, and support them in knocking down barriers that are in the way of them progressing in their careers.

Create a talent brand

If you have a good mentorship program, job seekers are going to hear about it. Once your mentorship program is up and running, be sure to include it as a benefit in job descriptions and see how much more interest you receive.

Develop new leaders

As the workplace gets younger and younger, it's crucial to set time aside to train emerging leaders and impart the knowledge of more senior employees. Keep the wisdom of your SMEs in-house, increase diversity at the top, and keep your business on the road to success by leveraging mentorship between high potential talent and senior leaders.

How to prep and deploy

Before you even think about getting started, you first need to select a mentoring technology that will be your saving grace when it comes time to organize and deploy. Mentoring software removes any manual match work that you may have begrudgingly dealt with before, and automates touch points throughout the mentoring journey to keep everyone on track.

Once your tech is signed, sealed, and delivered, it's time to work with your business to determine the mentoring topics that will most benefit your business. Be that onboarding buddies or DE&I allyship, start with the goals that we set in the last chapter and work backwards.

When it comes to content, top mentoring solutions offer off-the-shelf content for both mentees and mentors, and some even provide the opportunity to work with a team to create your own.

Now it's time to create a bit of excitement. Feature your mentorship program in your town hall meetings and internal messaging channels, and send teaser emails with the information your participants will need prior to starting the program. If you haven't already collected a group of willing mentors, now is your time to harp on about all of the benefits that partaking in a mentorship program has.
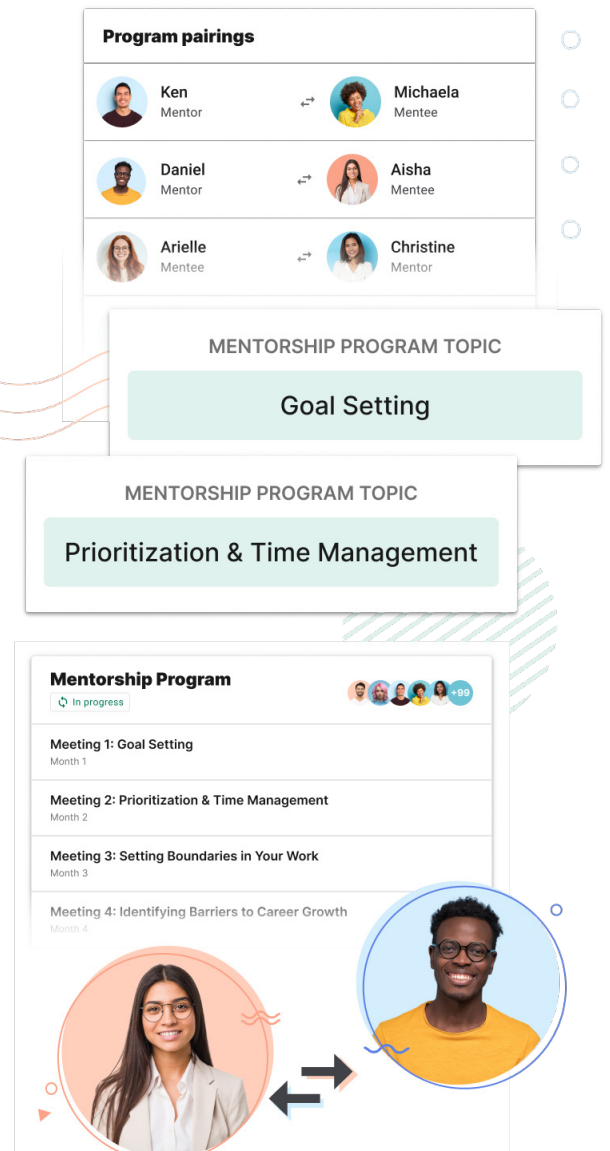
Setting expectations with your teams

Now you have your online mentorship program ready in the backend, it's time to set some expectations with people managers, potential mentors, and mentees. In order for your program to be successful, you're going to need their buy in and commitment.

Time commitments

When preparing your mentorship program, you should have worked out how long each program will last, depending on how much content you have dedicated to each curriculum. Make sure to be upfront with your participants with how many weeks they will need to commit to the program, and be realistic when setting the lengths of each meeting. Each discussion should be long enough that participants can connect and cover all content in good detail, but not so long that meetings will get rescheduled due to work commitments. We say aim for roughly 30 mins to 1 hour per discussion.

Women in Leadership Program

📅 8 months ‹‹‹‹‹ Select

Confidentiality commitments

Perhaps the most important commitment your participants will make, agreeing to keep conversations confidential (unless someone is at risk) is an important part of establishing trust between the pair. Whether it be disagreements with colleagues, distractions with family issues, or simply a lack of confidence in certain aspects of their role, participants shouldn't freely share the information their match gives them unless agreed upon beforehand.

Mentee commitments

When a mentee agrees to take part in a mentorship program, they must also agree to be the one driving the relationship. With the main focus on them and their development, it falls on them to be responsible for their own career development and planning. Mentees should also be willing to provide feedback about the mentoring relationship and be open to receiving feedback themselves. As the pair are getting to know each other, it's important for both parties to be honest and open about the way they learn and communicate best. Make sure your mentee is aware of this dynamic before they sign up.

Collecting feedback

Collecting feedback before you begin your mentorship program, while it is happening, and after it has finished is crucial to getting the most out of your program. This allows you to start on the right path for your business, make tweaks as you learn more, and keep your participants engaged throughout the process.

Pre-program discovery

Before you launch your mentorship program, it's wise to get the opinions of potential mentors and mentees on what they would like included in the program curriculum, as well as business leads. While you may feel that you have a good sense of what's best for your teams, you may be surprised by what you discover. Start by sending out a pulse survey and follow up with people managers on any areas that you need to go more in depth about.

Program touchpoints

Gauging the health of your mentorship program as you go and reigniting interest is paramount. Good mentoring technologies, such as [Ten Thousand Coffees](#), will send out regular and automatic feedback surveys after each mentor / mentee interaction, along with conversation guides to help break the ice on particular topics. In addition, reminders to set up the next meeting should also be automated from within the mentoring solution to make sure your participants stay on track.

Post-mentorship feedback

Finally, collecting feedback at the end of your mentoring program is the best way to wrap up your efforts. Send automated surveys to your participants to see what they thought of the overall process and pairings, learn what information they gained, and which new skills they developed. From here you can prove the ROI of all of your efforts, tie results back to business objectives, and gain insights that will help you make your next program even better.

10KC Development Programs

We wouldn't be able to create a guide on how to create the best online mentorship program without introducing you to our solution - Development Programs.

Development Programs are guided learning programs that enable people to collaboratively develop the skills they need to unlock the next step in their career.

Scaleable, measurable, equitable, and guaranteed to address your business needs, we've built a library of off-the-shelf content for you to use as you please, or offer the ability to create new ones with our team, tailored to your business needs.

Our Smart Match algorithm automatically pairs employees based on their goals and career interests, and initiates them into a mentoring program. Mentors and mentees meet at a cadence chosen by you, and for a period of time best suited to your needs.

All you have to do is press play and we take care of the rest - from reminders, meeting structures, conversation guides, and results, we've got you covered!

Mentorship Program

Meeting 1: Goal setting
Month 1

Meeting 2: Prioritization & time management
Month 2

Meeting 3: Setting boundaries in your work
Month 3

Meeting 4: Identifying barriers to career growth
Month 4

Meeting 5: Overcoming setbacks

Overview

This meeting sets the foundation for the relationship with your mentor or mentee. Use this time to share a little about yourselves personally and professionally. Before you meet, identify 1-2 professional development goals that this program can help you achieve. Write them down so you can easily revisit them.

Discussion Questions

? What motivated you to join this program? What does sucess look like at the end?
? What are your professional development goals over the next 3-12 months?
? How are you hoping this relationship will help you achieve these goals?

Resources

Final thoughts

Mentorship programs aren't just a 'nice to have', but rather an irreplaceable step in each of your employees' career development, and crucial to attracting and retaining top talent.

Done correctly, and with the right development software, programs such as these don't have to take up hours of your admin teams' time, but can produce unmatched results for the participants and the business.

If you're ready to build high-impact mentorship programs, without the admin hassle, get in touch with our team to create guided, 1:1 programs with automated pairings and reminders that help people learn the way they learn best, from other people.

[Speak with our team today](#)

Ten Thousand Coffees

Get in touch with our team to start your own mentorship journey

tenthousandcoffees.com/solutions/mentorship

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