Keys To A Successful
# Mentoring Program

HACKEE

hacking human horizon

Mentoring is a win-win-win for mentors, mentees, and organizations

"Our high-impact talent management research shows that coaching and mentoring are the most valuable talent practices to develop in an organization."

~Josh Bersin, Principal, Bersin by Deloitte

While the benefits abound, successful mentoring programs can be hard work — particularly at scale. From mentor fatigue and lack of accountability to ineffective matching, common challenges can prevent your mentoring program from working well beyond a few dozen participants.

But breathe easy. By focusing on a few core components of your program, you can overcome the common challenges and create the right mentorship program for your business. With that in mind, here are six components to focus on for a successful mentoring program.
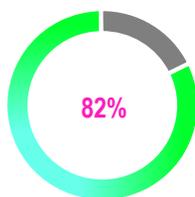
Motivated Mentors

Many executives are asked to mentor for organizational benefit — essentially, to donate precious time to help others. As a result, these executives may not realize that mentoring is also personally enriching. Once mentors do recognize the benefits, 82% would like to mentor again. So verbalize the personal benefits of mentoring to ensure your mentors stay motivated.

82%

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Pro tip: Communicate the benefits that past mentors have seen from your program. If your program is new, try to get use case studies and mentor spotlights from similar organizations to show potential benefits.

Mentee Goal Setting

Beyond wanting to 'improve,' 'develop,' or 'advance,' mentees often struggle to articulate how they'd like a mentor to help them. But without clear goals, the mentoring relationship lacks direction and can't advance past being a talking exercise.

Suggest focal areas, based on common issues that people face at similar points in their careers. To do so, you'll need access to detailed data based on aggregated learning and development figures.

90%

90% of our mentors
continue mentoring again

Effective Matching

Matchmaking is notoriously difficult. Some mentees find mentors based on title. Others, by shared hobbies. But mentor-mentee matches require a well-rounded picture of both parties involved. Create a questionnaire that asks several of questions spanning skill sets, interests, experiences, current roles, etc. From there, you can thoughtfully pair mentors with mentees.

Pro tip: Improve future matching by monitoring how those matches fared, and tweaking your matches accordingly.

Mentee Openness

When mentees work with mentors from within their organization, they may approach the relationship with reservations, especially when it comes to discussing particularly sensitive issues. Overcoming this reservation, mentees will also find value in working with mentors within the organization as they can provide insights into navigating company dynamics and serve as an internal guide and champion.

The key is to select mentors carefully, look across teams and divisions, and provide guidance on confidentiality.

A Structured Process

To prevent your mentorship programs from losing momentum, bring on a dedicated relationship manager. This role can help mentors or mentees when they run into problems. They can also check in with participants on a regular basis, and provide guidelines on the program structure.

Tracked Outcomes

Mentorship program results are rarely measured, despite the benefits of doing so. Track progress at the group level, for instance, to ensure there's a good return on the continued investment. Consider measuring engagement, progress against goals, and match satisfaction, to start. Mentoring software like Hackee can help with this.

Secure Internal Buy-In

Align your organization's leadership team first and foremost. You'll want to ensure that everyone understands the need for mentorship, the benefits of a program, and what a successful program looks like.

Find a Platform

Sign onto a platform that can support your organization's mentoring program. This platform should help you match mentees and mentors, manage your programs, and monitor results. Ideally, the platform also support L&D objectives beyond mentoring, so for example a mentor/mentee can use the same platform for manager training.

Prepare for the Six Components of Success

Create a program plan that incorporates the six components of success detailed above. Doing this off the bat will ensure that your mentorship program motivates mentors, develops mentees, and moves your business forward.

Establish Measures of Success

Identify the measures of success that matter most to your business. Is it engagement? Retention? Satisfaction? Then identify your benchmarks so you can measure your success.

50%

Less than 50% of organizations offer formal mentoring, which has been shown to increase retention by up to 20%

Introduction to Employees

Though employees tend to be receptive to the idea of internal mentorships, there may be some reservations. There are likely to be legitimate concerns that this kind of undertaking could change the relationship between employees and leaders. A good mentorship program will address these concerns and create a framework around how employees can navigate the relationship to get the most from this experience. This starts with a set of ground rules you'll want to create for the program participants, as well as setting clear expectations for what the mentorship will consist of.

Recommendations:

✓ Mentorships build rapport and trust between leaders and employees, giving rising stars more confidence and support as they advance.

✓ Having a leader who truly wants to understand what your goals are will give you the opportunity to face new challenges with guidance along the way.

✓ You'll learn ways to manage up and how to collaborate with leaders to work towards mutually beneficial outcomes.

✓ By getting to know your leaders better, you will gain a better understanding of the company and sharpen your business acumen, which can directly impact decisions you make regarding your career path.

66%
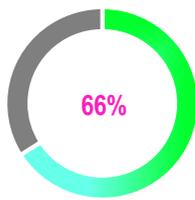
Two thirds chose to partner with mentors from outside the organization

Recommendations:

✓ Before your program starts, use interviews or assessments to identify the strengths of mentors and the development opportunity areas of protégés.

✓ Don't be afraid to match protégés and mentors from different parts of the company - in fact, this is a great way to share skills that transcend disciplines.

✓ Have an objective outsider collect information on protégés and mentors to create matches.

✓ Help protégés and mentors schedule a kick-off meeting, explain why they were matched and provide a sample agenda to get them started

Mentoring Stats

We've found that at least two or three potential mentors for each protégé is necessary to ensure good matching.

✓ 90% of our mentors continue mentoring again.

✓ Once mentors do recognize the benefits, 82% would like to mentor again. So verbalize the personal benefits of mentoring to ensure your mentors stay motivated.

✓ Less than 50% of organizations offer formal mentoring, which has been shown to increase retention by up to 20%.

When it is been given employees a choice between internal and external mentors, two thirds chose to partner with mentors from outside the organization. Those who chose external mentors liked the idea of being completely open and not having any fears of retribution.

Recommendations:

✓ Articulate the benefits

✓ Don't pressure people to sign up

✓ Consider bringing in external mentors

✓ Suggest focus areas

✓ Conduct goal-setting exercises

✓ Let the protégé discuss mentorship goals

When protégés find their own mentors based on filtering and sifting through mentor profiles, they tend to go for the people with the most impressive titles, overlooking people who might be great mentors because they don't seem senior enough or they work in an un-sexy group.

It's critical to get the right seniority gap between partners to avoid "level anxiety" where the protégé is too focused on impressing the mentor due to his or her seniority.

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