



How to Efficiently and Effectively Pair Mentors and Mentees

Introduction

The foundation of a successful mentoring program is the mentor-mentee relationship. They need to get along, share similar goals and have a common understanding of what they hope to get from their experience. But for workplace mentoring programs, how do you ensure that each pairing is relevant and will work out—and do so for dozens or hundreds of employees?

At Together, we've spoken with dozens of people leaders, HR managers, L&D departments, and DE&I teams. Many of them started internal mentoring programs and would spend hours interviewing participants and manually pairing them. It was a gruelling process and it resulted in a lot of guesswork and hope that things would work out. That's in the past. Now there is mentorship software like Together's with customizable pairing algorithms that make matching mentors and mentees more efficient and effective. Forget hours of interviews and manual matching.

In this whitepaper, we'll break down everything mentorship program administrators need to know about pairing mentors and mentees. We'll cover:

- What makes a successful match
- The three different ways to pair participants, and
- How matching software makes the whole process a lot faster and effective.

Additionally, we'll provide tips for program administrators when they are going through the registration and pairing process.

If you're starting a mentoring program, this is everything you need to build a successful registration and pairing plan.

About Together

Together empowers organizations to accelerate their employee learning and development through mentoring programs. With 1-on-1, peer, and group mentoring, we enable organizations to level up their employee development initiatives.

Organizations leverage mentorship programs to:

- Support [diversity, equity, inclusivity, and belonging initiatives](#)
- Prepare [high potential employees](#) to take on leadership roles
- Build communities of well-trained and [experienced managers](#)
- Set up new hires for success with [buddy programs](#)
- Build meaningful connections between your [remote employees](#)

HR and L&D teams love Together because our platform offers the best user experience for employees. They don't need to learn or download a new tool because our web-based platform integrates with existing email and calendar systems to make it as easy as possible to build meaningful mentoring relationships.

Each program is fully customizable, allowing administrators to white label their program with a custom URL and branding. Together's platform includes session agendas and resources that provide employees with cues and steps to support mentors and mentees at each stage of their development. In addition, Together's dedicated Support Team provides guidance every step of the way.

Some of our customers include



Want to see how we can help you
bring your mentorship program to life?

Book Demo

Table of Contents

The importance of pairing in a mentorship program 05

What makes a good match? 06

The limitations of manually pairing 07

What is mentorship software? 08

How matching software works 09

Waves of registration in a mentoring program 12

Etiquette in communicating matches 14



The importance of pairing in a mentorship program

Finding someone at work to support and encourage you—and challenge you—is one of the best ways to develop your skills and reach your career goals. Most often, this type of relationship is a mentoring one. The benefits of having a mentor are widely documented:

- 97%^[1] of people with a workplace mentor say it's valuable.
- 89%^[2] of those who have been mentored will also go on to mentor others.
- 25%^[3] of employees who enrolled in a mentoring program had a salary grade change, compared to only 5% of workers who did not participate.
- Mentees were 5 times^[4] more likely to be promoted.
- 67%^[5] of businesses reported an increase in productivity due to mentoring.

These benefits and more are why over 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs.

However, the foundation of all successful mentoring programs is a **meaningful mentor-mentee match**. Without it, there's no way to unlock all the benefits of a workplace mentoring program.



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What makes a good match?

There are certain qualities that mentors and mentees should have to build a successful mentoring relationship. For example:

Mentees should:

- Be willing to learn and grow but also to teach or share their knowledge with mentors in return.
- Have an open mind and behave respectfully towards their mentor.
- Build trust with their mentor so that they both feel comfortable with each other.
- Cultivate a positive experience by being reliable, hard-working, and showing initiative.

Likewise, there are hallmarks of great mentors:

- Mentors should also be good role models. They should be professionals that act with integrity at all times.
- A mentor should be willing to share their knowledge and expertise with their mentee.
- Individuals that regularly set and meet professional and personal goals make excellent mentors.
- A person that loves what they do will be enthusiastic about sharing their passion with others.
- Mentors will need to offer guidance and feedback to mentees. Look for an individual who can do this with empathy and wisdom.

As a program manager, you need to make sure that the participants registering have some, if not all, of these qualities. In addition, there are particular considerations that we've found make a successful mentor-mentee match:

- Mentors had already done what the mentee aspires to do.
- Mentors felt that it was also important that the pairing share similar common interests to create a personal connection.
- Mentors and mentees have aligned expectations on what they want out of the experience.

Once you have mentors and mentees with the right mindset for developing a successful relationship, you can move to the pairing process.

The limitations of manually pairing

For program managers, how do you make sure every mentee has the perfect mentor best suited to their goals and personality? In the past, many HR managers and L&D leads championing these programs would use [spreadsheets and surveys](#) to collect information on every employee and then decide who would be best with who.

They may have an intuitive understanding of the participants and have confidence in choosing the right pairs. But as the program scales, it'll be harder to juggle all the different pairing combinations in their head. Likewise, it'll take significantly more time to consider each pairing.

Catherine Marchand from the People and Culture Team at Rangle.io discussed with us her transition from a mentoring program run through excel to one with Together's software:

“ As we grew in size and expanded across different functional units in our program, nothing was really that simple anymore. So having the tools to manage that complexity is very, very valuable. With Together, we're able to funnel everyone through a consistent, structured, and supportive [pairing] process.”

The complexity of running internal mentoring programs with dozens or hundreds of employees reveals why mentorship software becomes essential. It makes pairing (and more) quick, informed, and scalable.

What is mentorship software?

Mentoring software facilitates your workplace mentorship program. It can be used to pair participants, schedule meetings, track relationship progress, and generate reports. It can be challenging to run a large-scale workplace mentoring program because the administrative burden can be overwhelming.



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Programs are usually run by HR managers, L&D teams, DE&I directors, or managers. They have existing responsibilities, and running a mentorship program can quickly become a full-time job. This is one of the most significant advantages of using mentoring software like Together.

Our platform cuts down the time to do the menial (but important) tasks. In doing so, program administrators can focus on the higher-level objectives of the program like succession planning, upskilling, or onboarding employees. To learn more about determining the program’s high-level business objective, check out our blog [Objectives and Goals for your Workplace Mentoring Program](#).



How matching software works

Using mentoring software for pairing does not mean the administrator loses control. Using Together's platform, there are different methods you can use to pair mentors and mentees. You can allow a mentee to pick their match, have an administrator select and pair participants, or use the software's algorithm to create matches quickly. Before you pair mentor and mentees, however, you'll need information on them.

You can get this information in two places:

- HRIS data, and
- A registration questionnaire

Regardless of whether or not you leverage mentoring software, you'll need to keep track of some information on your registrants. This will help to paint a picture of the program's demographics. By this, we mean HRIS data like their departments, titles, level of seniority, and experience. The registration questionnaire should collect information on participants' goals and skills they hope to develop. Questions you may want to ask mentors and mentees in the questionnaire include:

- What are your strengths?
- Which area would you like to develop?
- What do you hope to gain from a mentorship program?
- Where would you like to be in 3-5 years?
- What are some challenges you would like to overcome?
- Describe the ideal mentor/mentee for you.

Let's look at the three ways to pair mentors and mentees.

“

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Mentee-led match

Following a mentee's registration into the program, Together's software will produce a list of potential mentor matches. The mentee can then shortlist up to five potential mentors they'd like, and the pairing process begins.

- The mentee ranks five possible matches.
- An automated message is sent to the first mentor choice for approval.
- If the first mentor choice is unavailable, Together will send automated messages to the next option until a mentor accepts.

This method of pairing is designed to fit into any workplace mentoring program parameters. It gives control to both the mentee and the mentor, who need to agree to be matched together.

Using the mentee-matching process can help to get a mentorship off on the right start. Participants will be able to build on the things they have in common. One drawback of allowing mentees to select their match is that it does not allow admins the opportunity to be involved. This method also gives the mentee the chance to pick a mentor they feel safe with rather than a mentor who may challenge them. If the goal is to develop a mentee's skills and capabilities, it might be better to have an admin do the pairing.



Administrative-lead pairing

Organizations with multiple workplace mentoring programs may prefer to put an admin in charge of the pairing process. Together's software is built to simplify managing many different mentoring programs and participants. From the dashboard, the admin simply selects the mentoring program they need. Then there are two options:

- Auto-matching - The software cultivates possible pairings using an algorithm for the admin to review.
- Manually matching - Admins can go through each registrant's details and manually pair mentees and mentors together.

An administrative-lead pairing is often the best way to create successful matches in executive mentoring programs. With Together, the admin can maintain control over the pairing process.

Software-algorithm matching

Using mentoring software's algorithm still allows admins to alter the criteria for matching until they are satisfied with the results. The algorithm used in our mentoring software can be adjusted and changed by setting different priorities for your mentoring program. By altering these priorities, Together can quickly create possible mentor-mentee matches.

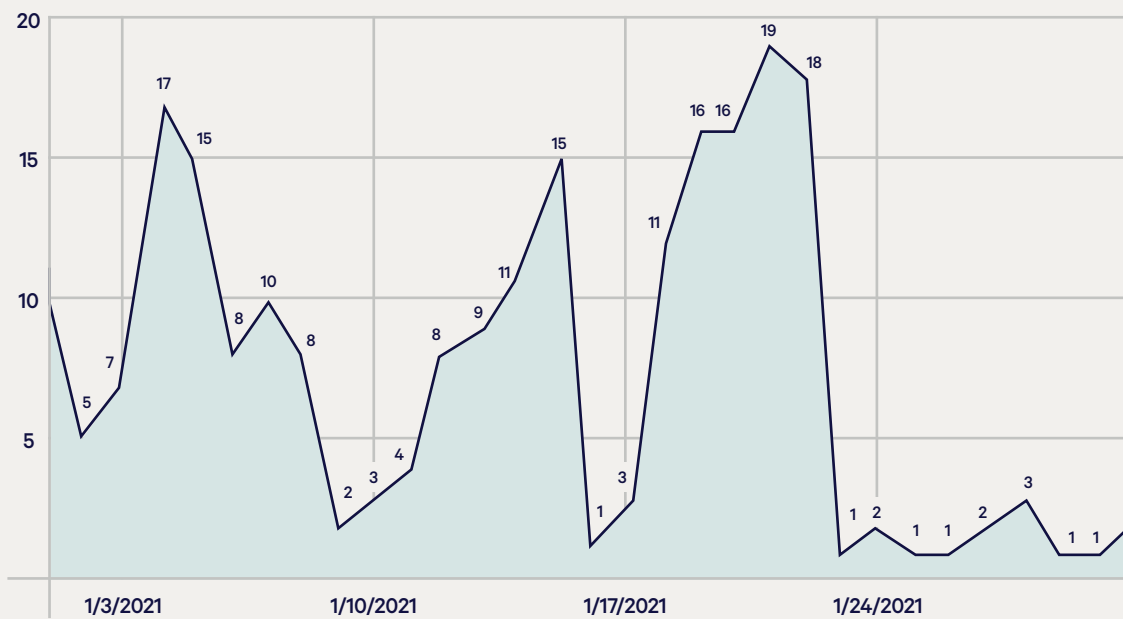
Final approval can still be given to admins before the pairing is confirmed. This allows for discussion between admins, which can be a valuable feedback tool for the pairing process. Together also enables you to send a notification to mentors to see if they are interested and have the capacity for a mentorship. In this way, everyone can be on-board before the mentorship match is made.



Waves of registration in a mentoring program

If admins do a good job promoting their program, they can expect to see a big jump in activity when they open the doors to allow pairing to begin. When looking at pairing activity, it's common that there's a big spike when pairing starts, but there's also a long tail. For that reason, you should be aware of the two waves of pairing in your program.

3 Waves of Pairing



The First Wave

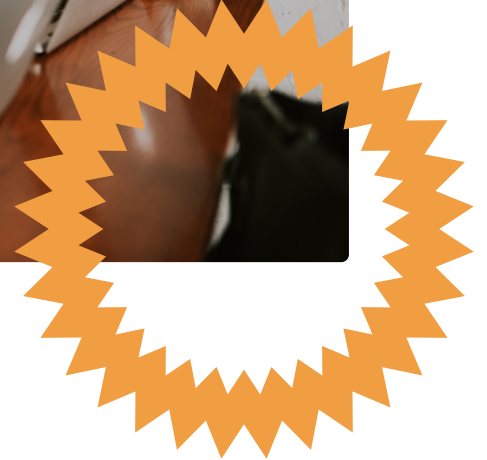
In the first wave of pairing, most of your participants will match up with one another and schedule their first meeting. These will be the enthusiastic and excited mentors and mentees. Roughly 50-70% of your users will pair up during the first week.

Then there's the long tail of users to pair in the second wave.

The Second Wave

The second wave of pairings is for the stragglers. They may have been busy and missed some promotional emails, or they're a little less engaged than others. These participants will need an extra reminder to sign up, complete the questionnaire, and match.

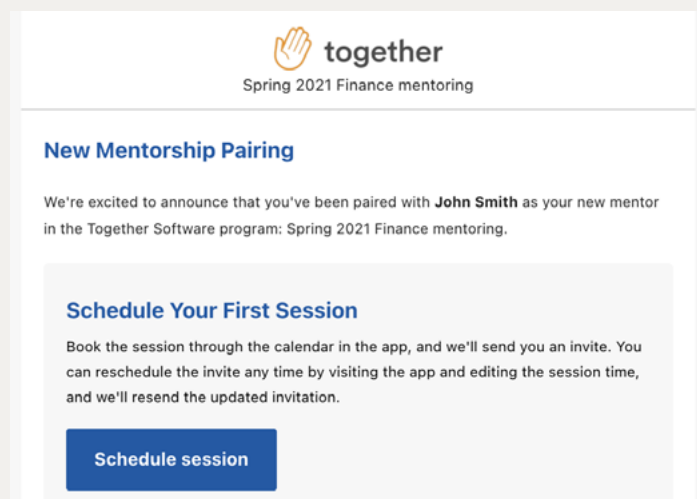
Overall, give the pairing process two weeks to get everyone on board. Doing so will allow you to answer questions that mentors or mentees have and get everyone set up.



Etiquette in communicating matches

After finalizing the pairings, there are some best practices surrounding etiquette that we suggest. Depending on how you want to run your program, introductions may look like this:

- Mentor personally reaches out to their mentee
- Mentee reaches out to their mentor



Automated introductory email when the match is made.

Mentor Reaches Out

Our preferred approach is to have the mentor reach out to their mentee personally after they are notified of their match. We find that this provides a better impression to the mentee that the organization cares about their development. Then there's the long tail of users to pair in the second wave.

Mentee Reaches Out

We've also seen programs run where it was the mentee's responsibility to reach out to the mentor. Depending on the power dynamic, this can work. However, we find that mentees are less comfortable reaching out than vice-versa.

Ready to start your mentoring program?

Pairing is just one step in starting a mentorship program. To get all the steps, check out our comprehensive [guide on starting a mentorship program](#). Running a mentorship program is arguably the most effective way to strengthen your companies culture and leverage the diverse experiences that all employees hold.

If your company has over 200 employees, this can get complicated. That's why our software exists. If you're ready to start your mentorship program and want it to run as efficiently as possible.

Chat with us today

To continue learning

To continue learning about mentorship, check out our other white papers, blogs, and webinars, where we explore the benefits and applications of mentorship.

Resources

- [Measuring Return on Investment of Mentoring](#) [white paper]
- [Examples of Successful Mentoring Programs](#) [blog]
- [Best Practices for Running A Mentorship Program](#) [white paper]
- [Round-Table: Mentorship Program Admins Share Best Practices](#) [Webinar]
- [How do I promote my mentoring program?](#) [blog]
- [How To Start A Group Mentoring Program](#) [blog]
- [The Definitive Guide to High Potential Talent Programs](#) [white paper]

References

^[1], ^[5] [Facts And Statistics](#) - National Mentoring Day

^[2], ^[3] [Why mentoring: what the stats say](#) - McCarthy Mentoring

^[4] [How Becoming A Mentor Can Boost Your Career](#) - Forbes