Building Your Mentorship Program

A well-structured mentoring program delivers results.
Here are the steps to make yours run as smoothly as possible.

together
an Absorb company

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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

AAA · Kellogg's · randstad

Discovery · HEINEKEN · NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION

Want to see how we can help you bring your Social Learning program to life?
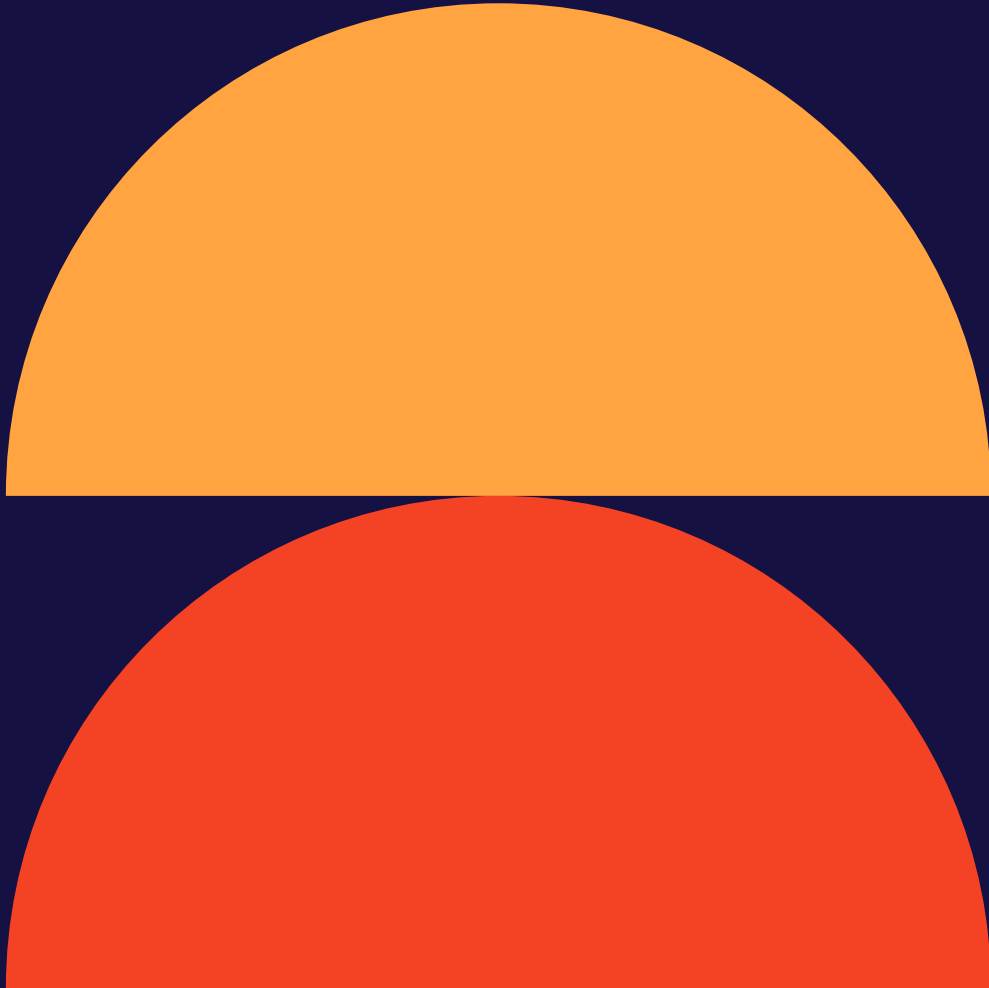
Book Demo

Introduction

Every organization should have a mentoring program. If it's a small company, leaders should buy into the idea of raising up future leaders and using their years of experience to educate the next generation. Leaders should be of the same mind if it's a larger company.

But with scale comes complexity, and running a mentorship program with 20+ employees can become challenging to manage.

If you're planning a mentorship program, you need clear steps and resources to ensure it runs smoothly. This guide will help you outline the process in six steps. We'll cover each step and provide resources that dig deeper. This guide will be your checklist to ensure nothing is missed.

If you have any questions or want further advice, we're happy to help. Our team at Together helps companies run world-class mentoring programs. We do this with our mentorship software, which makes it a breeze. Start your free mentoring program today or talk to our team to learn how to scale it using our mentorship platform.

With that said, let's jump into each of these six steps.

Planning

Before you start pairing employees, the best thing you can do is to take a step back and think through what you hope to achieve. In short, your goals.

## Decide on the goal of the mentorship program

We've seen mentoring programs in many different companies and industries. Although they all pair employees, they do so with a different purpose. Their goals impact all the other steps in building their program.

Common goals for mentoring programs are:

- Develop emerging leaders

- Reinforce employee training

- Onboard employees faster

- Promote diversity

- Support employee career development

- Foster connections between employees in a remote workplace

- Aid succession planning and develop high potential employees

- Improve company culture

- Increase employee retention

- Support an employer brand that nurtures its talent

Decide on the primary purpose of the program. Maybe it fits in nicely with the learning and development initiatives you have. Or perhaps you want to reduce turnover by helping employees find growth opportunities internally.

Once you decide on a goal, you then decide on the program's structure.
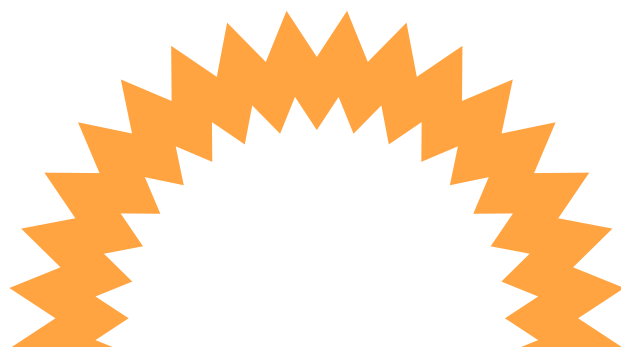
How will you structure your program?

There are five ways to structure a mentoring program. They are:

1. **Traditional 1-on-1 program** - Pairs senior employees with junior ones.

2. **Group mentoring** - A mentor takes on several mentees simultaneously, and they learn together.

3. **Peer-to-peer** - Colleagues at similar levels in the company coach each other.

4. **Reverse mentorship** - The junior employee is the mentor, reversing the traditional 1-on-1 mentorship model.

5. **Flash mentoring** - Mentors and mentees only meet once or twice instead of having recurring meetings.

You can use any of the following models for your mentorship program. It all depends on the goals of your program. We outline where each is best in this document on Popular Workplace Mentoring Models.

Registration

Once you've laid the groundwork for your program, it's time to get employees to register. You'll need to do two things:

1. Generate excitement among employees, and

2. Collect information on participants to be used during the pairing process.
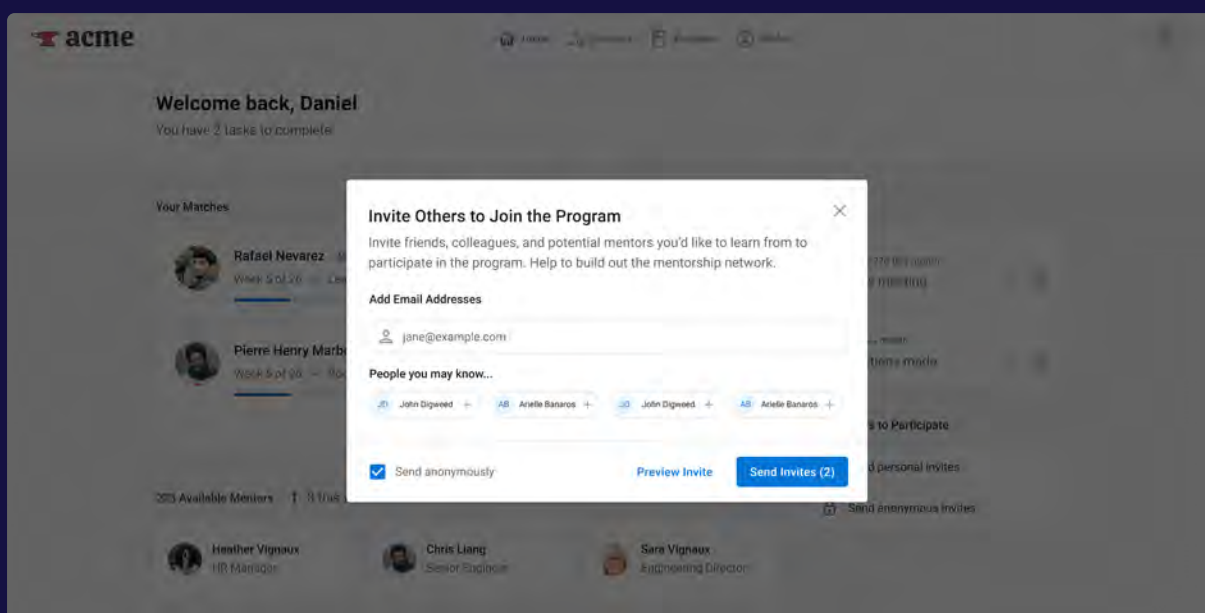
Generate excitement for your mentoring program

You can't force employees to join your program. They have to volunteer. You need to sell mentorship with a promotion plan to get employees to register. Here are several tips to promote your mentoring program:

- **Focus on the benefits of mentorship.** Employees will be more interested in joining if they see clear opportunities to grow their skills or career prospects.

- **Get leadership on board.** Ask company executives to promote the program. Perhaps the company CEO can write a brief letter to employees to encourage participation. They may even be a mentor themselves.

Collect participant information

You need information on mentors and mentees to make relevant pairing decisions. Together's mentorship platform automates this process. But you can use the following registration questions to ensure you have enough information on each mentor and mentee.

Profile questions

1. How many years have you spent in your professional career to date?

2. How many years have you spent in your current role to date?

3. What is your current professional discipline?

4. What other professional disciplines are you interested in learning more about or prefer your mentor to be from?

5. What other professional disciplines/functions do you have experience in, either here or at other employers?

Skill questions

1. **[Soft Skills]** Which skills are you looking to grow and develop through this program?

2. **[Soft Skills]** Which skills are your greatest strengths, which you can mentor on?

3. **[Goals]** Which goals do you hope to achieve through this program?

4. **[Goals]** Which goals or accomplishments have you achieved in the past, which you can mentor on?

Experiences

1. Describe any experiences or learnings you are hoping to get from this mentoring program.

2. Describe any experiences or topics you can help with as part of this mentoring program.

Download these questions if you want to take them away with you.

Pairing

The foundation of a successful mentoring program is the mentor-mentee relationship. There are certain qualities that mentors and mentees should have to build a successful mentoring relationship.

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.

Mentors should:

- 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.

Check out our guide to efficiently and effectively pair mentors and mentees for more on pairing.

Scheduling

Mentees should meet at least once a month. And the meetings should be recurring in their calendars. If they need to be rescheduled, that's okay, but committing to meet at a regular cadence is important.

Without this commitment, many mentoring relationships will slowly fizzle out. And that's detrimental to your program's success. Employees will share that they didn't get much out of the program with one another. That will deter future mentors and mentees from joining. The result will be a poor reputation and even poorer results.
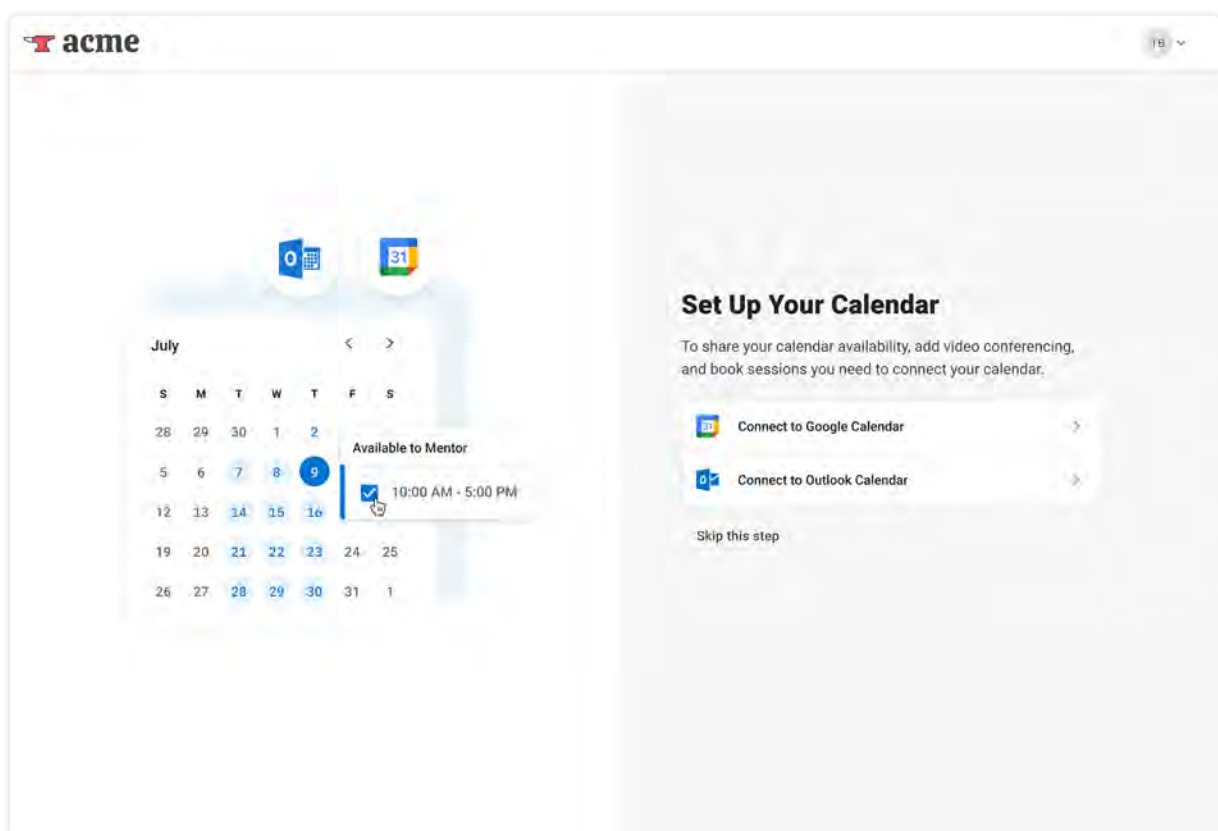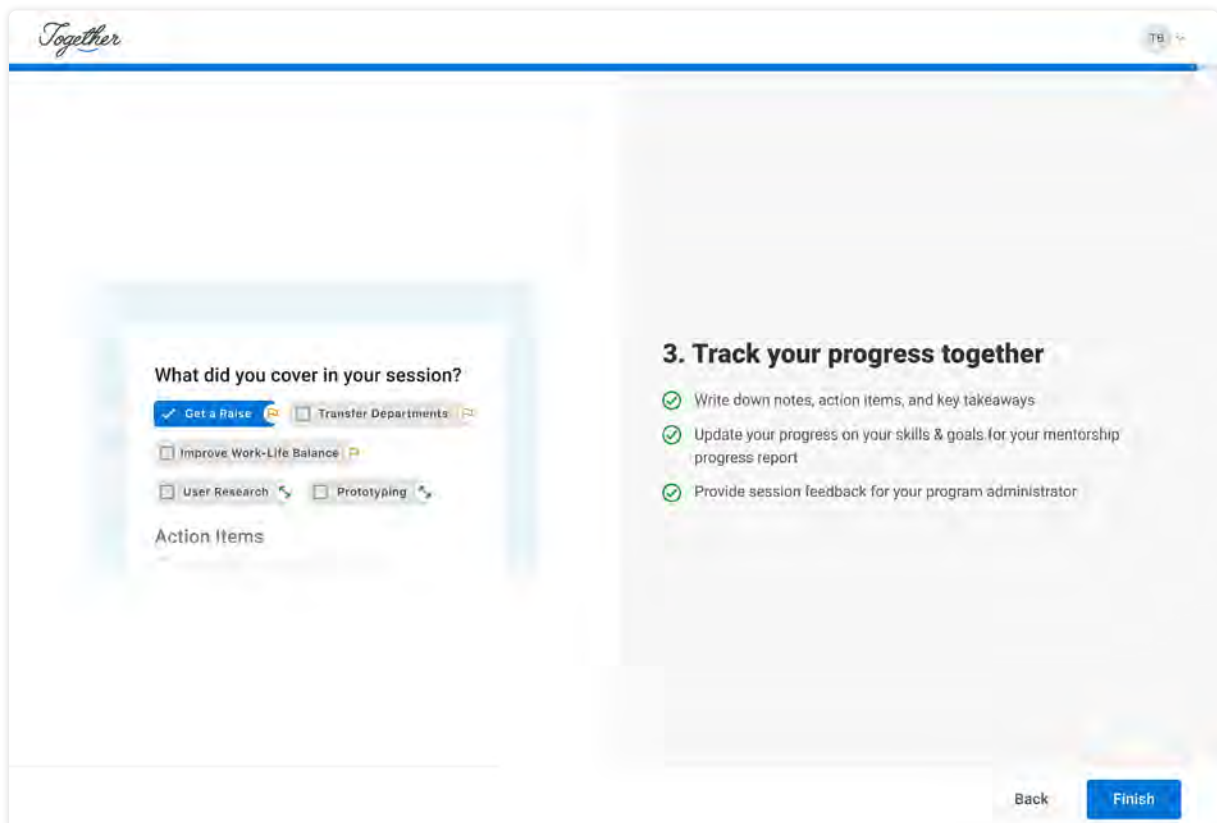

To avoid this, you can use Together's mentoring platform to integrate with employees' calendars. Participants can then schedule their sessions and receive reminders as they approach.

If you don't use software, encourage mentors and mentees to agree to a regular meeting cadence (bi-weekly or monthly).

Supporting mentoring relationships

Once mentors and mentees are paired, your job as the program manager isn't over. Mentoring programs run anywhere from 6-12 months, so program managers have plenty of time to help mentors and mentees develop meaningful relationships.

Help your mentors and mentees get started by providing them with resources like articles, TED talks, discussion topics, and some sample questions to break the ice.

At Together, we offer participants template agendas that they can use with our mentoring programs. Sometimes mentorships can get off to an awkward start if they don't have something to work off of. We've found having templated resources are a useful way to help them begin building rapport.

Likewise, encourage remote mentoring participants to create development plans with each other. Having some ground rules can help guide the mentorship and create appropriate boundaries.

Reporting

You can't improve what you don't measure. Your mentoring program needs metrics to track to know if it's a success. These are the things to measure in your program:

1. Registration

2. Pairing

3. Session reports

4. Skill and goal reports

Let's dive into each in more detail.

Registration rates

Regardless of whether or not you leverage mentoring software, you'll need to keep track of some information on your registrants. By this, we mean their departments, titles, level of seniority, experience, and skills they hope to develop.

Overview

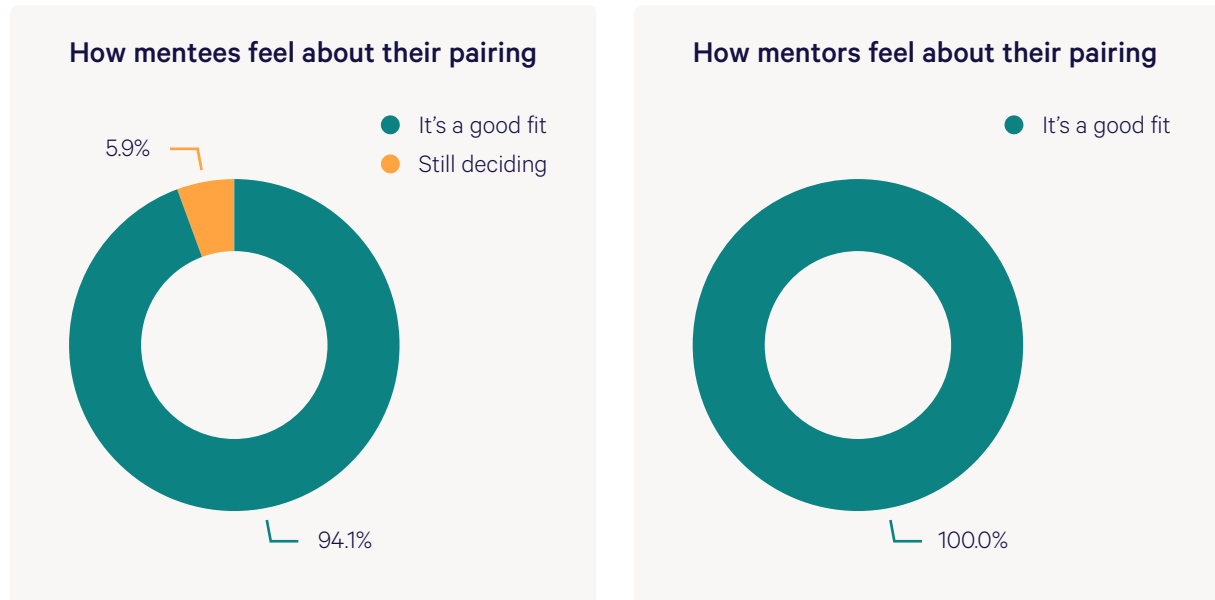| Number of registrants	Number of Mentees	Total capacity of mentors
150	121	108
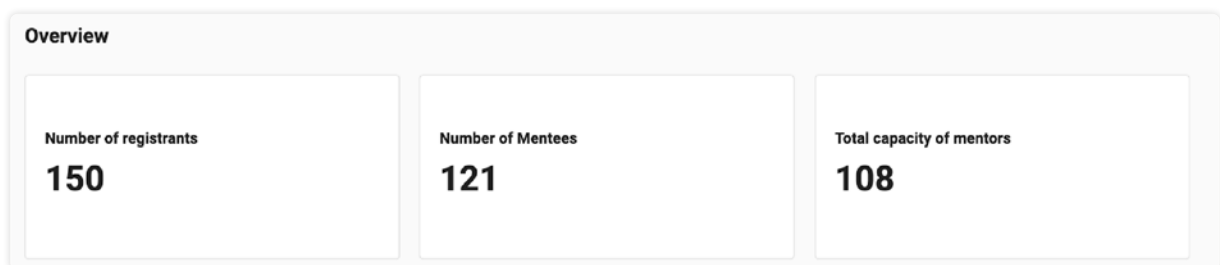
With Together's mentoring platform, you'll get the following information in an automatically generated registration report:

- An overview of the number of mentors and mentees

- How many mentees mentors have listed they can take on at the same time (their mentoring capacity)

- Registration by day

- Feedback from registration questions
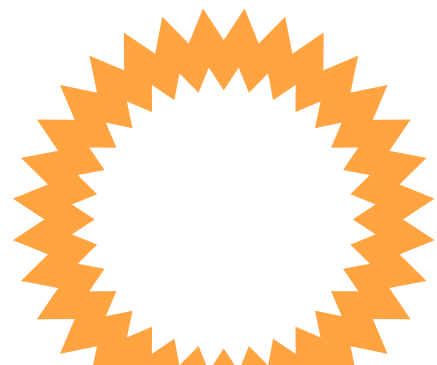
Pairing success

Program managers need to keep a close eye on the quality of their pairings. At Together, we strongly recommend that program managers empower mentees to have a say in who mentors them unless. If mentees choose their mentors, they'll be more invested in the relationship.

How mentees feel about their pairing

- It's a good fit
- Still deciding

5.9%

94.1%

How mentors feel about their pairing

- It's a good fit

100.0%

Session scores

One of the best ways to measure your workplace mentoring program is by asking for feedback from those involved. You can use surveys throughout the program. Along with asking mentors and mentees to rate each session out of 5, here are several questions to include in your survey:

1. How have you felt about your growth throughout the program?

2. What skills have you been developing?

3. How has your relationship with your mentor/mentee been?

4. Would you recommend this program to your colleagues?

5. Would you sign up for another mentoring program if you had the opportunity?

Completed Sessions over Time
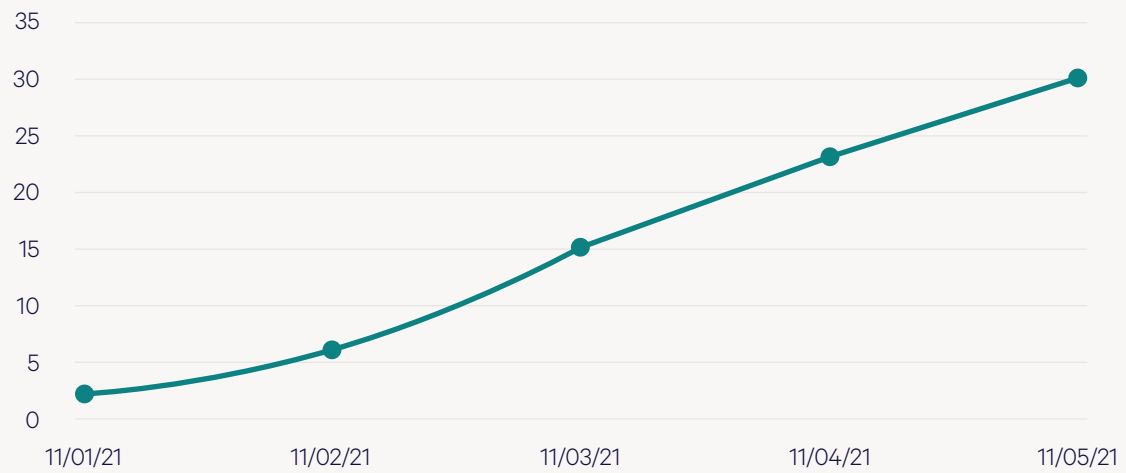
Session Completion Funnel

- ● Completed with Feedback
- ● Completed without Feedback
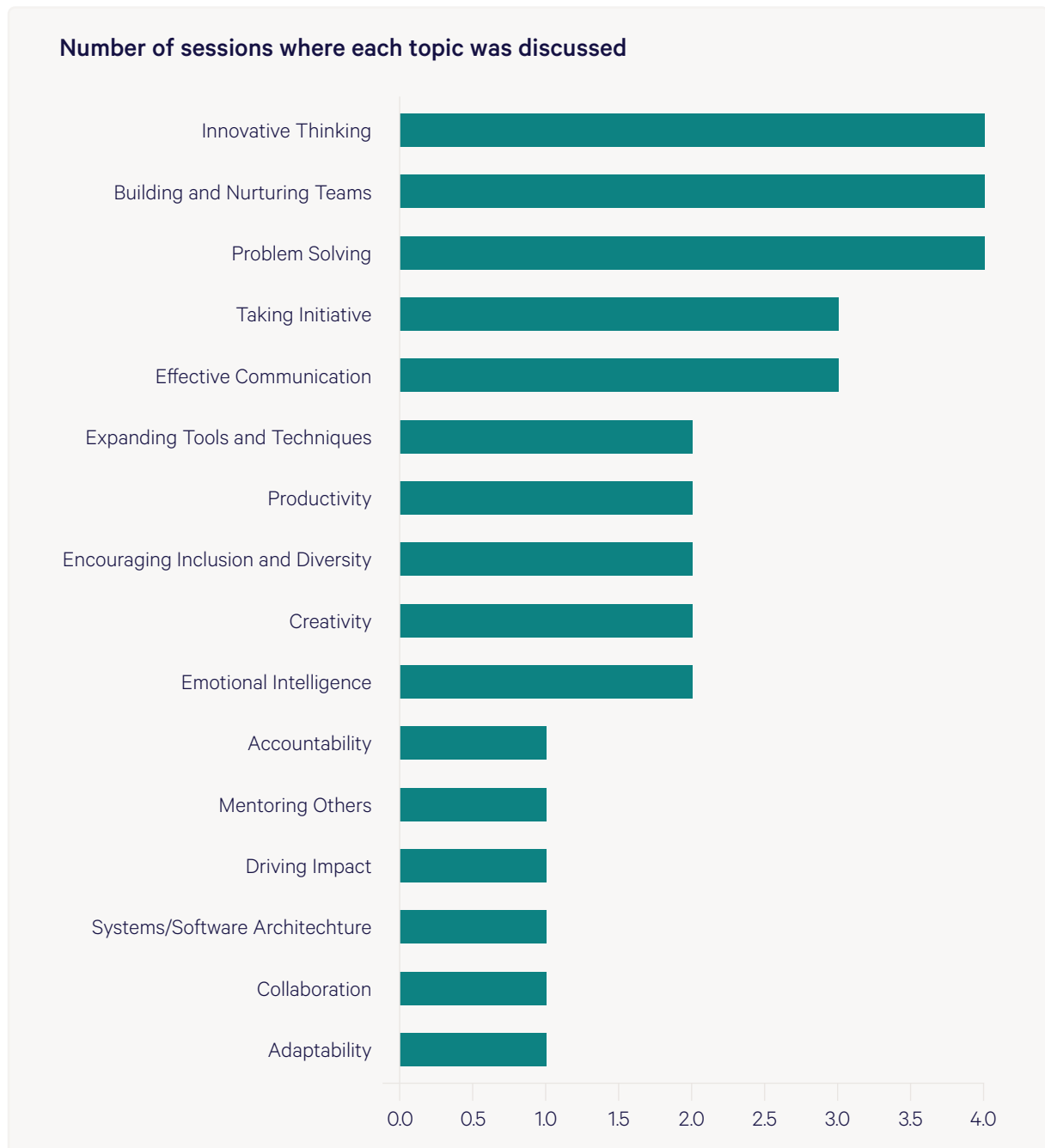- ● Scheduled
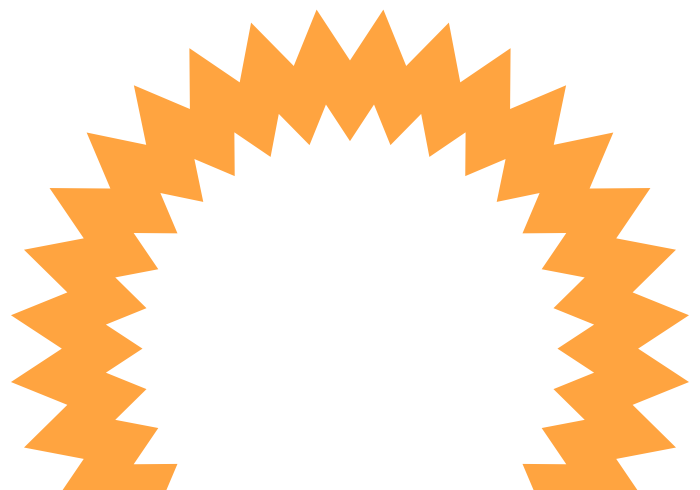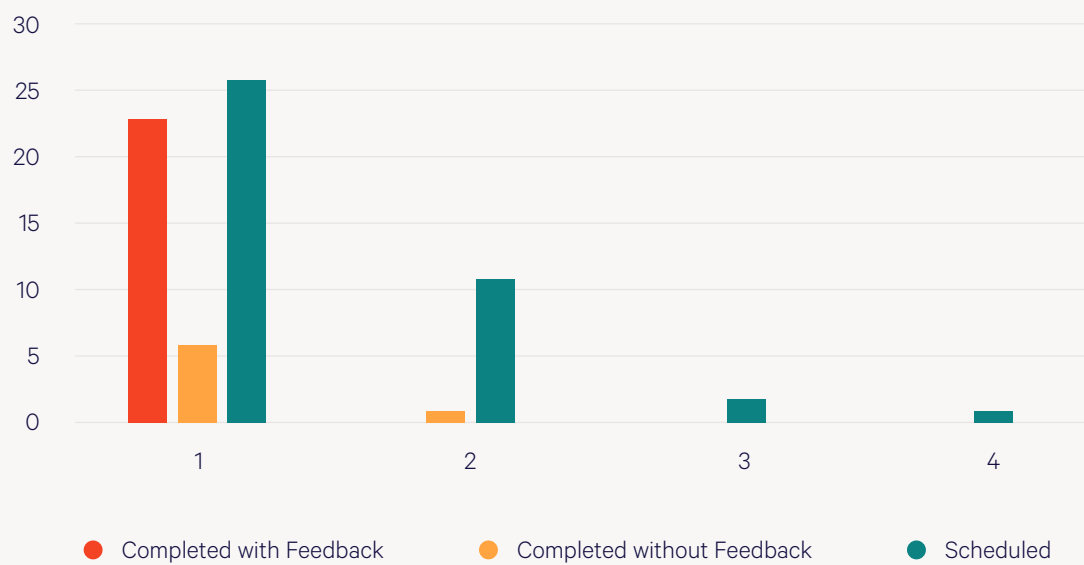
Skill and goal development

Your program needs to include mentors that have the skills mentees want to develop. This leads to compatibility between mentors and mentees. The skill and goal report provides this information.

Program managers can see what's discussed most often in each meeting. In the image below, for example, this mentoring program has a focus on innovative thinking and team building. You can use this information to inform future mentoring programs and what their focus should be on.

Number of sessions where each topic was discussed

Topic	Number of sessions
Innovative Thinking	4.0
Building and Nurturing Teams	4.0
Problem Solving	4.0
Taking Initiative	3.0
Effective Communication	3.0
Expanding Tools and Techniques	2.0
Productivity	2.0
Encouraging Inclusion and Diversity	2.0
Creativity	2.0
Emotional Intelligence	2.0
Accountability	1.0
Mentoring Others	1.0
Driving Impact	1.0
Systems/Software Architechture	1.0
Collaboration	1.0
Adaptability	1.0

Conclusion

By following these steps you'll build a mentorship program that drives positive employee experiences.

The most important thing to keep in mind whether you use a platform to run your mentoring program or not is to deliver relevant pairings. If you can find each employee a mentor who cares about them and wants to help them reach the next level in their careers you've succeeded.

Together can help you do that and more. See our platform in action with our interactive demo, or talk to our sales team today.