



Tips from actual mentoring administrators

Best Practices for Running a Mentorship Program

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Introduction

The white paper will outline best practices for running a mentorship program. These best practices come from the first-hand experience of program administrators and the expertise of the Together team.

We've structured the white paper to outline each stage of running your mentoring program and best practices for each.

The stages are:

- Launching your program
- Pairing participants
- Actively running the program

After including the best practices for each of these stages we'll also include more general tips and tricks for running an effective program.

At the end of this white paper, we've summarized the best practices as a 1-page benchmarks checklist that all successful mentoring programs have in common. You can print this off and use it for your own program.

Let's dive in!





Launching your Mentoring Program Best Practices

“

The quickest way for a mentorship program to fail is not having enough mentors to support your mentees. But there are strategies to help you solve this.

Jai Chaggar | Director of Customer Success at Together

What are these strategies? There's three:

- Starting Early With Your Registration Process
- Promoting Your Program With an Omnichannel Approach
- Asking Mentors to Take on More Than One Mentee

These strategies can make or break a successful launch. There's more to it than a single email to all employees, and we want to make sure you know what makes a great launch.

Let's unpack each of these strategies further.



Starting early with your registration process

When you’re starting a mentorship program, it’s critical to generate early excitement. We’ll explore how you can promote your program in the next step, but the purpose of promotion is to get employees enthusiastic about finding a mentor or mentee.

Although it’s important to get both mentors and mentees on board early, administrators should start with recruiting mentors.



The biggest mistake administrators can make is not putting enough time and effort into recruiting mentors.

Jai Chaggar | Director of Customer Success at Together

When you get mentors on board, they’ll be your early advocates for the program. You can then leverage the mentors’ excitement to recruit mentees into the program. In this way, your recruitment process will have a top-down approach from your promotion and a ground-up approach from early mentors who generate word-of-mouth.

For example, suppose your mentoring program will pair more senior executives with junior employees. In that case, an easy way to get mentees to sign up is by letting them know who a mentor they could potentially pair them with.

As the junior employee, it can be transformational to have direct, 1-on-1 conversations with an executive. They can tap into their wealth of experience and seek their advice for their current role or career path. Having them as a mentor can also expand their professional network and open up doors to new opportunities. After you have mentors on board, these are strong selling points for your program and will surely get mentees to sign up.

There are a lot of benefits to having a mentor. Administrators can find a list of benefits for both mentors and mentee’s in our blog detailing the purpose of mentoring.

[Check it out here.](#)

So Start Early and Recruit Mentors First. It’s Best to Plan Your Recruitment Process to Be Three Weeks.



Reach out directly to mentors and get them on board with your program



Open it up to both mentors and mentees.



Focus on getting the stragglers who intend to sign up but are slow to respond to emails.

Using an omnichannel approach to promote your program

We've just covered the importance of getting mentors on board before mentees. Now let's talk about specific tactics to market your program. A successful launch will reach participants in multiple ways. You'll have to take a page from a marketer's playbook and remember the Marketing Rule of Seven:

“

The Marketing Rule of Seven is the idea that someone needs to hear or see your message at least seven times before they buy from you.

Brittany Hendricks | Growth Marketing Manager at Together

So let's tap into our inner marketer and explore several ways you can promote your mentorship program.

They include:

- Sending out an email on behalf of an executive
- Sending an automated email from Together's platform
- Leaving a note in relevant Slack or Microsoft teams channels
- Reminding managers about the initiative, so they share it with their reports
- Talking about it at a company town hall or including a slide at the end of a presentation
- Posting it on your company social media
- Adding a PSA in large company meetings, like Townhalls
- Posters or bulletins around the office



These are just some of the different ways you can reach out and build momentum for your program. We encourage you to get creative with your messaging.

You may feel like you're over-communicating; you're probably doing the right amount. Your colleagues are busy, and many will need reminding.

Additionally, you shouldn't feel bad about getting the word out. Employees stand to benefit a lot from your mentoring program. You wouldn't want someone to miss signing up and complain to you that they didn't hear anything about it.

The point is, give participants every opportunity to sign up. They'll thank you later!

Looking for more ways to promote your mentoring program? We've outlined five ways you can generate buzz about your program in this article.

[Check it out here.](#)

As you begin generating the buzz, you'll start to hear conversations like:

“

Have you heard about the mentorship program? I saw in an email that registration was coming up and my manager said I could be paired with a senior executive. That could open up some doors for me.”

That's a conversation you want to start! If you do it right, excitement and anticipation about your program will spread like wildfire, and you'll start to see participants asking you when they can sign up.

If you knock it out of the park with your promotion, you'll have mentors and mentees banging down the virtual door to the program like a Black Friday sale.

Ask mentors to take on more than one mentee

One of the biggest challenges we see with mentoring programs is not having enough mentors. If you can get you mentors to agree to take on two or even three mentees, it will double or triple your program’s capacity.

From our experience, we’re seeing more and more companies running group mentoring programs. This opens up more opportunities to share the knowledge and experience of mentors throughout the organization. It’s also a great way to encourage peer learning as well.

It’s also a great way to encourage peer learning as well. It’s good for your program to have more mentors, but they may need some convincing. Time is the push-back we hear most often.

Here are some ways to pitch mentors on taking on more mentees:



Gain more experience as a mentor

“Different mentees will require different learning styles & support. Taking on more than one mentee can give you more perspective & experience.”



More impact

“Increasing the number of mentees you take on will exponentially increase the impact you can have within your organization & on other mentees.”



Accreditation

“Depending on the program you are following, taking on more mentees at once is a good way to increase your hours spent as a mentor - allowing you to gain more experience towards a certificate or accreditation.”



Supporting your organization & admins

“One of the toughest parts of running a mentorship program is having enough mentors for all the mentees. Taking on more than one mentee can really support and help your program administrators in running the program.”



Tips from real administrators

We discussed how to get executives on board with mentoring others during our round-table, where we asked administrators about best practices for running a mentorship program.

Tiffany Futch from the Center for Learning and Performance at First Horizon shared her strategy

“

I sell [mentorship to executives] by framing it as ‘you're not to drive this [relationship]. It's not your responsibility to step in and change your mentee's life through this relationship.’ So, yes, it can be lifechanging but take that weight off of the mentor. A lot of what we're asking mentors to do is give ownership to the mentee. Let them drive it.”

Furthermore, our Co-Founder, **Nathan Goldstein**, also shared a rule of thumb for administrators pairing busy leaders with mentees: from the Center for Learning and Performance at First Horizon shared her strategy

“

For any mentee who gets paired with an executive, a good takeaway [for admins] is to let them know that the mentees will have to drive the relationship and not be afraid of saying to their mentor, ‘Hey, I'm going to put time in the calendar with you.’ Otherwise, the executive won't necessarily reach out because they're busy.”

To wrap up this first section, our CS manager, **Joey Cheung**, summarizes what admins need to do to launch their program successfully:

“

Overall, you're making an internal communication strategy. By promoting it before pairing even starts, admins will set themselves up to build a successful program.”



Pairing Participants Best Practices

The pairing process is the most exciting part of a mentorship program. It's the crazy but fun part where all the mentors and mentees make a mad dash to pair up and schedule their first meeting.

Although things move very quickly at this stage, it still takes about a week or two to get everyone paired. There will always be stragglers who need reminders to sign up or hiccups with participants who lost a link or are confused about something.

Not to worry. It's part of the process, and we'll unpack some tips to make your pairing process go as smoothly as possible.

Here's what we're going to unpack:



The Mistake of Manual Pairing by Admins



The Waves of Pairing



Give Mentors a Say in Who They're Paired With



How to Communicate Matches

Let's now explore in detail each of these.

The mistake of manual pairing by admins

If you were looking for a mentor, wouldn't you want to make that decision yourself? Probably. You consult those close to you, but the decision should ultimately be yours. The same is true for your mentoring program. As our Director of Customer Success, **Jai shares,**

“A mistake we sometimes see is that admins think they know better than their mentees and decide what mentor is right for them.”

Together's pairing algorithm

Together's makes pairing easy for admins. When mentees and mentors register for the mentoring program they'll complete a questionnaire. They'll answer questions that identify their role in the company, but also more personalitybased questions about their goals, strengths, and preferences.

About Your Mentor

This is the beginning of an exciting new mentorship Journey at Together Software. Find out more about your mentor and what you have in common by checking out their profile below.

John Smith

Learning and development coordinator john.smith@example.com

What goals do you hope to achieve in next 6 months?

- Get a good review

What goals do you hope to achieve?

- Get promoted

Which goals have you accomplished in the past that you can best speak to or advise on?

- Settle into a new city

Which skills are your greatest strengths, that you can mentor on?

- Leadership
- Running meetings

Which skills would you like to grow or develop?

- Giving feedback

Example of pairing questionnaire answers.



Our pairing algorithm takes the answers participants provide in the questionnaire and uses them to inform the pairings. Admins have full control to change the questions that participants are asked as well as how the algorithm pairs them based on answers.

The result is that admins don't have to carry the burden of trying to pair up dozens - or sometimes, even hundreds - of participants.

Mentee-Led Pairing

In Together’s platform, mentees can browse mentors and shortlist their favourites. Letting them have a say in their mentor results in the mentees buying into the program and staying engaged. Giving mentees choices also makes it easier for admins to make a decision. In many cases, the mentor that’s shortlisted will be the one they pair with. However, many mentees shortlist a popular executive.

If this happens, admins can lean into Together’s pairing algorithm to provide other options.

Want to know more about the pairing process? We’ve outlined the key things to keep in mind when matching up mentors and mentees in a workplace mentoring program.

[Check it out here.](#)

Just because you have our algorithm at your disposal isn’t to say that admin-led pairing should never happen. In some programs, admins may follow a more manual approach to pairing. An example of this is when pairing senior executives with high potential employees. The groups may be smaller, and admins may have an intuitive understanding of which pairings are best.

The takeaway is that the algorithm becomes more important as your program scales. It’s not a replacement for an admins intuition but supports it. In addition, mentees should have the ability to choose who their mentor is or at least have options.



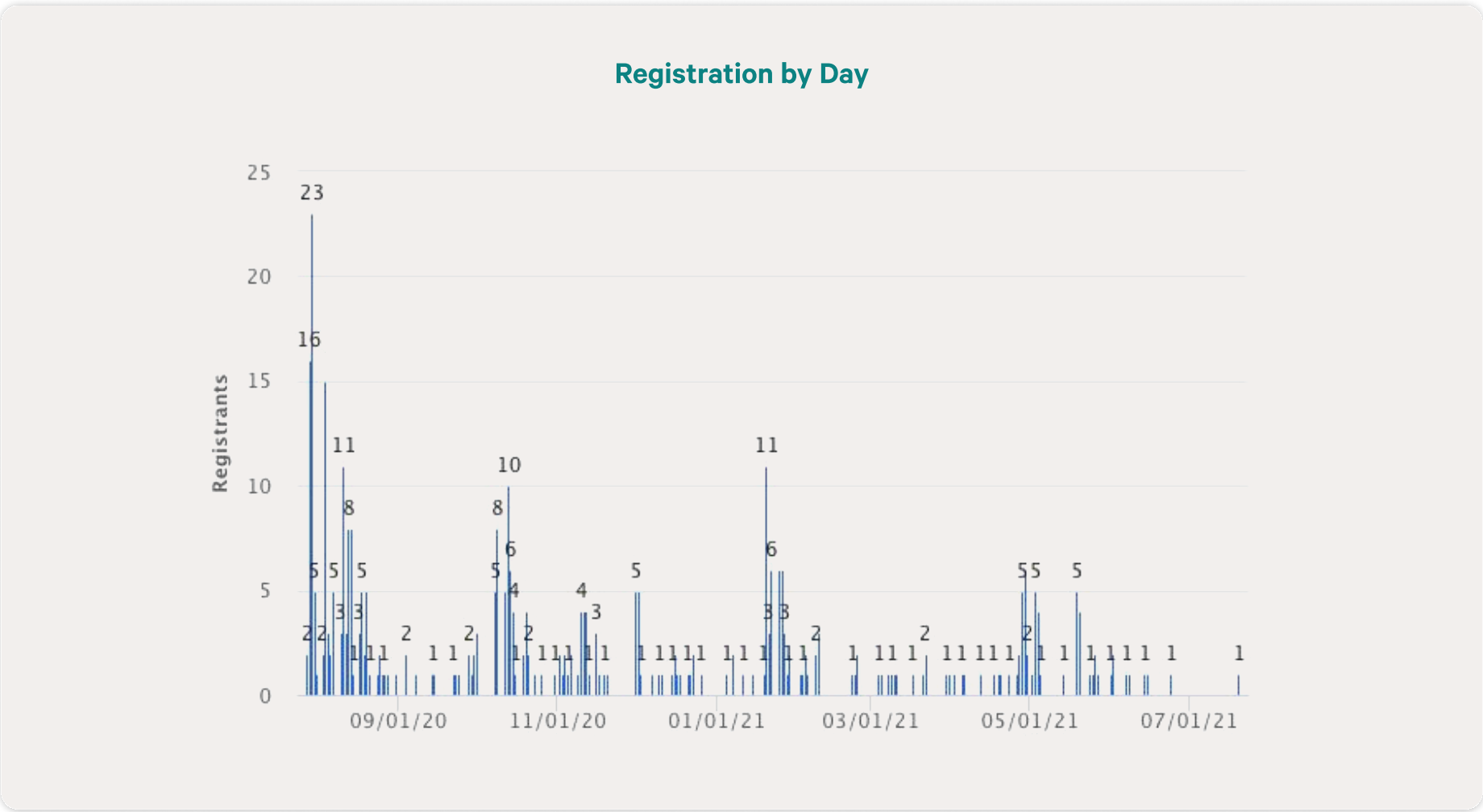
Jai summarizes this section by saying,

“ At the end of the day, mentees will have a specific list of criteria that they care about and that they’re going to want in their mentor. The best thing admins can do is give mentees a choice — a mentee-led process.



The two waves of pairing

If admins do a good job promoting their program, then they can expect to see a big jump in activity when they open the doors to allow pairing to begin. It's common that, when looking at pairing activity, 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.



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.

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.

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

Curious how mentor matching becomes successful? This article breaks down all the different types of mentor matching your program can follow.

[**Check it out here.**](#)

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

“

Give people at least two weeks to pair. That first week you’ll get a lot of engagement - give them that second week in case things were busy or they missed a couple of emails.

Give mentors a say in their pairing

Just as it’s important to give mentees a say in who their mentor is, give the mentor the ability to approve or decline pairings. A big part of building a successful program with successful mentoring relationships involves giving the users choice.

Matches may happen that look great on paper but may not be a good fit for the mentor. For whatever reason they feel this way, it’s important to give them the ability to make a pass on that potential pairing if they feel strongly about it.

The point is: give both mentors and mentees a say in who they’re paired with. In this way, they’ll both be more invested in the relationship.



Etiquette for communicating matches

Admin can decide if they want to pair people themselves, have the mentees select (without mentors having a say), or have mentees select but need mentor approval. Whichever process the admin chooses, the moment they are paired, Together's platform sends out an automatic email with the subject: (Name), you are now matched with (mentor/mentee)

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

Subject: Joey, you are now matched with John Smith



New Mentorship Pairing

We're excited to announce that you've been paired with **John Smith** as your new mentor in the Together Software program: Onboarding.

Schedule Your First Session

Book the session through the calendar in the app, and we'll send you an invite. You can reschedule the invite any time by visiting the app and editing the session time, and we'll resend the updated invitation.

Schedule session

For help, see this support article [here](#).

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.

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.

Elizabeth Dickson-Sanders, the Learning Architect in the Culture and Engagement Department at Lake Trust Credit Union, shares an interesting approach. As the administrator, she ran orientation sessions with mentors and mentees:

“

We ran admin-led orientations for both mentors and mentees. But we had a separate session with the mentees where we talked about why they chose to participate, the value of mentoring, and how to create SMART goals. This allowed them to ask questions and provide real-time feedback for me.



What to Do While your Program is Running

Now that your program is up and running, here are the best practices for supporting the mentoring relationships.

At this stage, admins may feel they can take their hands off the wheel and let the program run independently. Don't do this. Instead, admins have the opportunity to monitor your program's health through Together's dashboard and follow up with users to get valuable feedback.



Tiffany Futch from the Center for Learning and Performance at First Horizon adds a personal touch to her mentoring program. If she sees that a mentee or mentor left negative feedback after one of their sessions, she'll personally reach out to them:

“ If there’s one or a two [rating], I call them. I simply ask what happened. I’ll say, ‘Hey, I’m just checking the platform and saw you put in a 1-star for your pairing. Tell me what’s going on.’ And every single time, they say, ‘I can’t believe anyone reads that.’”

Reaching out to your mentors and mentees to check in with them lets them know the organization values their mentoring relationship. Doing so can even re-engage some plateauing relationships.

Another way to support mentoring relationships is by providing them with resources like Together’s handbooks, agendas, or sample questions. We’ll cover these in more detail in the section “Providing Resources To Mentors And Mentees.”

Are mentees not sure what to ask their mentors?

We’ve put together a list of 29 thoughtful questions for mentors.

[Check it out here.](#)

Here’s what we’re going to unpack:

- ✓ Transitioning to a software-enabled mentoring program
- ✓ Providing resources to mentors and mentees
- ✓ How to measure a successful relationship
- ✓ Dealing with attrition

Let’s go into detail about each of these points.

Transitioning to a software-enabled mentoring program

Many admins we work with have run internal mentoring programs in the past. But they’ve done so manually. As their programs grew, it became more challenging to run the program using spreadsheets, scattered documents, and email chains.

We spoke with Catherine Marchand from the People and Culture Team at Rangle.io about her transition from a mentoring program ran through excel to one with Together’s software.

She had four main reasons she made the transition to a software-enabled mentoring program:

- **Pairing people at scale became too challenging to do manually**

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.
- **Reporting is challenging without software**

We were limited with what metrics we could report [without software] - person A and person B are now paired up as of Date X - it kind of ends there. That's not super insightful when you're trying to understand the impact of your program.
- **Security of the information**

When you're capturing data that's fairly sensitive about your people - what they consider to be their strengths, or where there are some gaps in their skill set - that's not something that you want to get out there either accidentally or otherwise. So knowing that that data is safe in the platform is really important to us. It's also foundational to making sure that it's a safe space for participants.
- **Employee experience**

With Together, we’re able to funnel everyone through a consistent, structured, and supportive end-to-end process.

After sharing the four points above, Catherine summarized how admins can support vulnerability and trust in their participants:



I think being in a mentoring relationship certainly requires vulnerability and trust. We feel that the more the process is reflective of that, the more likely employees will be in that same mindset and will invest in that process. Adopting Together was 100% truly impactful all the way through.”

Providing resources to mentors and mentees

Mentors and mentees may need a helping hand when first starting their relationship. It can be new and awkward for both of them. Being a mentor can feel like they have big shoes to fill. Likewise, mentees may be nervous about opening up to someone within the company who is more senior than them.

Admins can help participants get over these first-meeting-jitters by providing helpful infrastructure for their conversations. By infrastructure, we mean:

- Meeting Agendas
- Handbooks and Guides on Being a Mentor/Mentee



Agendas

Together has **several agendas** in each program you can use out of the box or customize for your program. There are agendas for six meetings and cover topics like

- Getting to know one another
- Setting goals
- Problem-solving
- Shadowing
- Networking
- Concluding the relationship

These agendas aren't meant to dictate the conversation but provide guiding questions and prompts. They encourage the discussion to go deeper than surface-level conversations.

The purpose of these mentoring sessions is to help both mentors and mentees grow and develop. Guidelines can keep the conversations on track.



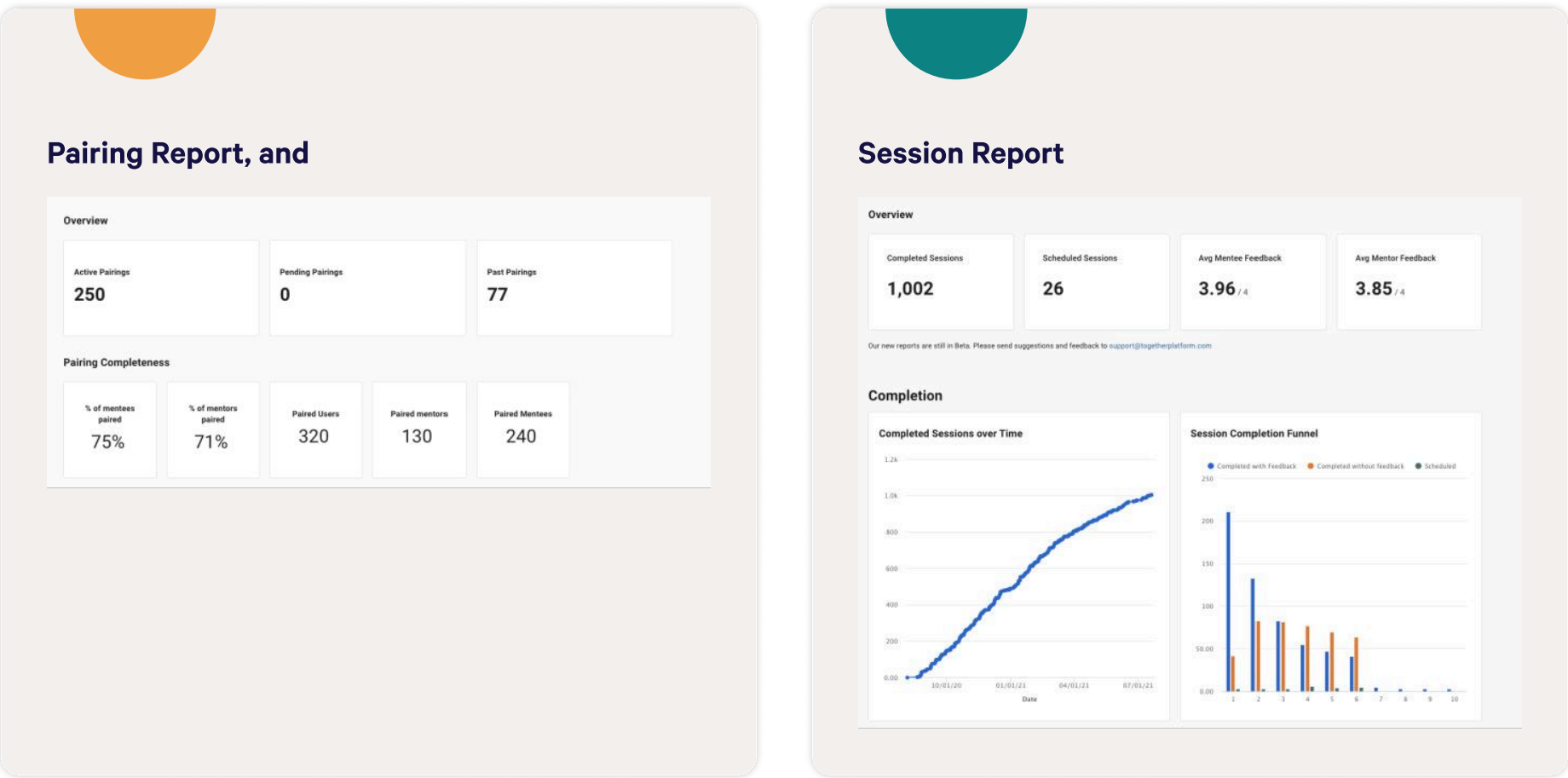
Handbooks and guides

Together also provides handbooks and guides for your mentors and mentees. We have handbooks on how to be a great mentor or mentee and several guides for different types of mentoring programs.

- [How to be a great mentor](#)
- [How to be a great mentee](#)
- [Diversity, equity and inclusion mentoring handbook](#)
- [High potential employee mentoring handbook](#)
- [New manager mentor handbook](#)
- [Onboarding new hires mentoring handbook](#)
- [Remote mentoring handbook](#)

How to measure a successful relationship

The purpose of keeping your hand on the pulse of your mentoring program is to know how successful each relationship is. This is easy to do in small programs because you can talk with each pairing, but what happens when your program is larger than, say, ten people? You need to make use of Together's:



These reports give administrators the ability to see, at a glance, how their program is running. You can see how many pairs are actively meeting, if they're leaving feedback during these meetings, and what feedback they're leaving.

To get more granular, administrators can decide on variables that determine if a pairing is successful or not. Some examples of variables include:

- Did mentors and mentees meet for their first meeting?
- Do they provide feedback after each meeting?
- Does the feedback they leave indicate they are growing or having fruitful conversations?
- Do the feedback scores indicate a good fit?

The answers to these questions can easily be found in the reporting dashboard of your program. What do you do if you see any red flags or concerns? Administrators should follow up promptly.

Looking for some resources to help mentors and mentees build a successful relationship?

We broke down several tips for mentees and mentors in this article.

[Check it out here.](#)

Following up

By far the most common gap in mentorship programs that we see is program administrators not following up with participants. This step is absolutely crucial to ensuring that mentees are getting the most out of the program.

It's not only important to ensure that mentees are in fact meeting with their mentors, but also gauging if the mentees are finding the relationship valuable. We hope in most cases they are, but in the few cases that things aren't working out, it's important to know so that you can intervene.

It is also critical to follow up to ensure that mentorship conversations are development-focused. Ideally, mentees will be recording agreed-upon action items after each session as well as progress made against previous action items.

Mid-point check-in survey

Another way that admins can follow up with their users (on top of collecting feedback after each session) is by sending out a survey that users fill out mid-way through the program. This feedback can be more thorough than regular post-session feedback.

You can ask questions like:

- How has your mentoring relationship been developing?
- Are you reaching the goals you set at the beginning of the program?
- Was this what you expected when you joined the program?
- What would make this program better for you in the future?

These questions provide insightful feedback for future mentoring programs. Our CS Director Jai, shares,

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We always recommend doing a mid-point check-in to ask people how things are going and get feedback for your program and future ones. It'll give you a clear idea of what's working or needs to change.



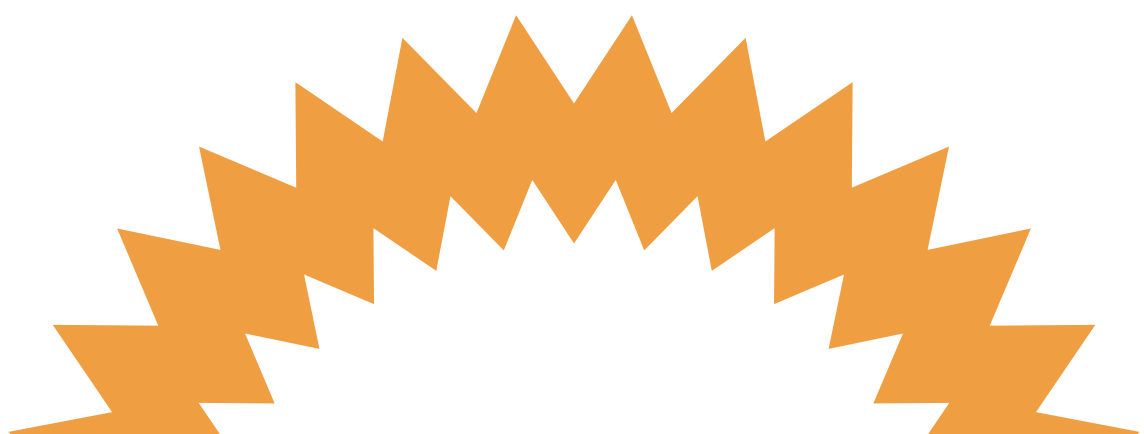
Dealing with attrition

As an admin, you need to know that it's okay if not every mentor or mentee stays until the end of the program. There will be attrition in the program and that's normal. When discussing attrition, Jai shares,

“

People are going to go on vacation; some aren't going to have a good fit. That's okay. That's all learning to help you improve your program for next time.

The point is, it's natural for some people to exit the program and it isn't something to see as an indication that the program has failed. However, it's important to follow up with them and get their feedback. Critical feedback can be the most helpful.





What Every Successful Mentoring Program has in Common

At Together we see a lot of different types of mentoring programs. Because of our experience, we know what the best mentoring programs all do that work.

So we've put together a checklist of everything successful mentoring programs have in common.

Checklist for a successful mentoring program:



Length of program

6-8 months.



Program recruitment

Open registration/sign-up 3 weeks ahead of pairing.

- Open registration/sign-up for mentors 3 weeks ahead of pairing. This will allow you to gauge the number of mentees you can take on
- Open registration/sign-up for mentees 2 weeks ahead of pairing
- Use the final week to catch any stragglers or balance out your numbers



Pairing process

Best practice is Mentee-Led, allowing mentees to choose who they think is a good fit. It is also best practice to allow mentors to Approve or Decline their pairing, so they can participate in the pairing process.



Marketing

Begin marketing your program 4 weeks ahead. This gives enough time to create excitement & recruit mentors/mentees.



Frequency of meetings

1.0-1.5x per month



Adopt an omnichannel approach to promotion

Don't send out a single email or mention it briefly at a meeting. Be an evangelist for your program. It's for their benefit. People also need reminding.



Program numbers

Shoot for 10-15% of your entire organization to sign up



Content/Resources

Mentees & Mentors will need structure and resources in order to have a successful relationship.

- Provide agendas for each session; ensure to include guiding questions for before, during and after
- Link to resources, handbooks, videos and case studies to help mentees & mentors prepare for their sessions



Location

Oer both virtual & in-person.



Mentors to mentee ratio

Shoot for 5 mentors for every 4 mentees. This is the magic ratio that will allow you to pair everyone happily.



Check-in with mentors and mentees

Reach out to participants throughout the program to see how their progressing. It's a great opportunity for informal qualitative feedback. They'll appreciate that you're making an eort to make them feel heard.



Surveys

At a minimum, send a mid-point and end-point survey. If possible, ask pairings for feedback after every session

See our software in action

Together software is purpose-built for running high potential mentoring and learning programs.

[Book a Demo](#)

