

FREE RESOURCE

7 Elements of an Effective Mentorship Program: A Guidebook for Leaders



Pollinate Networks Inc.
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Why Mentorship?

Mentoring is among the most powerful ways to build effective, innovative, competitive organizations. Bringing the right people together at the right time builds both general and specialist knowledge, and hones leadership, decision-making and critical thinking skills.

Mentorship also has many other benefits. It can:

- create stronger ties between people
- break down barriers of gender, culture, ethnicity, and age
- create more opportunities for “sponsorship,” the ability for leaders to know, assess and recommend people they might not have otherwise encountered
- create more ways for mentees to get exposure to opportunities aligned with their interests and capabilities.

Research indicates that people who are mentored are more **promotable**, more **engaged** and more **productive**





7 Elements for Success

Since 2008, Pollinate has successfully matched thousands of pairs worldwide for purpose-driven mentorship experiences.

Our work with organizations of all sizes shows that the most effective mentorship programs feature these 7 elements:

1. A CLEAR PURPOSE

The most effective mentorship programs are purpose-driven; that is, they are created to accomplish specific goals, such as:

- to enhance career development
- to advance groups that are underrepresented
- to prepare people for positions of leadership, or
- to circulate key knowledge around the best ways of doing things.

Purpose-driven is the difference between having a good conversation and having the right conversation that returns value for time spent. A clear program purpose is the foundation for clear program goals.

2. STRATEGIC MATCHING

Strategic, thoughtful matching is the difference between a good mentorship program experience and a transformative experience that changes what people are able to do.

It's true that anyone can learn from anyone; however, the best mentoring programs are designed to transfer specific knowledge and inspire action. A mismatch between people in terms of collaboration style, goals and other preferences creates hurdles that waste precious mentorship time.

Mentoring pairs can hit the ground running when they understand a little about each other at the outset, and have the right balance of similarity and differences for meaningful learning to occur.



3. MENTEE PREPARATION

One major plus for a mentor is to meet with a mentee who is attentive, has goals and a flexible mindset for how they'll achieve them. The most common reason mentoring pairs fail is because the mentee fails to stay in contact or doesn't fully value their mentor's time. (One would expect this to be a career limiting move, but it does happen!)

Preparing mentees means ensuring they understand the etiquette necessary to benefit from someone else's knowledge and advice regularly - get on calendar, be on time, take agreed upon actions and generally make it easy for their mentor to maintain enthusiasm about the relationship.

4. MENTOR CULTIVATION

Having a growing pool of mentors and experts is a major advantage in today's environment. This can be difficult as people are often reluctant to commit to programs for obvious reasons: time is already too tight, the purpose isn't clear enough, and usually top mentors are already developing a team or teams of people.

Occasionally mentors need to see themselves as people who have a lot to pass on to others and they need support on what mentoring ideally looks like. Some tips:

- once again, ensure the purpose and goals are clear
- frame the time commitment upfront, e.g., one meeting per month for 6 months, plus some assessments
- plan a live kickoff session to discuss expectations
- provide self-serve mentoring education and how-tos

It's important to support mentors not only in building their skills but also in managing boundaries, expectation and unconscious bias in the mentoring process. Remember, you want your mentors to continue to volunteer to support different mentees over time.



5. ENABLEMENT STRATEGIES

After pairs are matched, resourced and the program is launched, it's time to back off and check in more infrequently.

Enablement strategy involves creating a cadence of communication from the program team to the mentorship pairs, with brief follow ups requiring input from participants using tools that make sense in the participants' environment. There is an art form to keeping an ear to the ground on how mentoring pairs are doing and ensuring they are on track to meeting goals and making a difference to capabilities and capacity without overwhelming them with attention or things to do.

It's important to take a pull strategy – offering a few high value materials – rather than a push approach. The meat of the mentoring experience is in the meetings; avoid encumbering participants with a lot of additional administration.

6. INTERCONNECTED BENEFITS

Mentoring programs offer a number of interconnected benefits, some of which we don't focus on enough. A well-run mentoring program can do some or all of the following:

- Transfer key knowledge
- Inspire action toward goals and purpose
- Increase team member engagement
- Increase career preparation and advancement
- Create opportunities for people to build partnerships
- Widen people's network so they are connected to more people
- Create the conditions for people to be sponsored into new opportunities

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Case
Studies



7. TRACKING & MEASUREMENT

Tracking and measurement is vital for mentorship program outcomes, in stark contrast to casual, transactional 'speed-mentoring' coffee dates that yield little in the way of meaningful, tangible results.

The success of any mentorship program should be measured against KPIs established at the outset, and include following up with mentoring pairs and groups to see if they received value from the relationship and are happy with the outcomes.

About Pollinate Mentorship Programs

Pollinate Mentorship Programs strategically match mentors and mentees to achieve specific goals - from operational improvements to diversity initiatives - delivering exceptional engagement and results that you can track, measure and report.

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