



ART of
MENTORING
SPOTLIGHT

The Practice of Mentoring

Benchmarking Associations 2017





Mentoring programs offered by professional associations have gone from being a “nice to have” to an expected membership benefit. Members are forever seeking what they can gain from their participation and mentoring facilitates ultimate access to the like-minded.

In 2016, we surveyed hundreds of private sector companies and industry associations to delve into the benefits, roadblocks and practical aspects associated with mentoring programs. The report was so well received that we surveyed again in 2017, and will continue to monitor these trends in the years to come as mentoring shapes itself.

Let us delve into the details.



Do they or don't they?

Associations are increasingly being asked for mentoring by their members, yet two-thirds of respondents currently offer no mentoring program. As we found last year, over three-quarters had mentoring on their “to-do” list but were too busy or lacked resources to start one.

Why our association currently has no mentoring program?

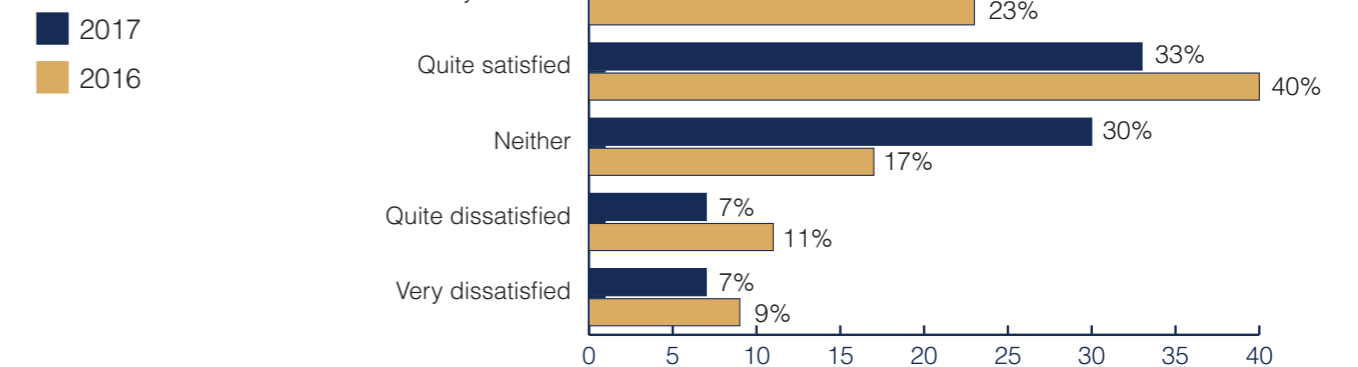
On list of “things to do”, other initiatives taking precedence	42%
Want to initiate program but not sure where to start	15%
Members interested but not sufficient budget	13%
Members interested but not sufficient people-power to initiate/manage	8%
Ran program in the past but not very successfully	6%
Never thought to offer a mentoring program	5%
We don't think members will be interested but not verified	5%
Not enough member interest	1%
Other	5%

Budget constraints are often linked to the priority of an initiative. We predict smart associations will seek corporate partners to fund their programs and alleviate this pressure point.

Are we satisfied?

The 2017 data reveals a disappointing trend toward ambivalence in program satisfaction rates. Deeper analysis has revealed two key correlations with program satisfaction: program spend and time invested from the program manager. Other reasons for dissatisfaction include perceived lack of accountability of mentors and mentees, too much reliance on manual administrative processes and a lack of program resources and structure.

Level of satisfaction



Core Standards of Best Practice

The International Standards for Mentoring and Coaching – ISMCP (www.ismcp.org) provides a framework for best practice in mentoring programs. Our benchmarking is based on the degree of alignment in program structure, implementation and delivery with each standard. Scores of 5 or less suggest a real shortfall against best-practice design.

1 Clarity of purpose	2016 7/10	2017 7/10 –
2 Stakeholder training and briefing	2016 5/10	2017 6/10 ↑
3 Processes for selection and matching	2016 8/10	2017 8/10 –
4 Effective processes for measurement and review	2016 6/10	2017 6/10 –
5 Maintains high standards of ethics and pastoral care	2016 5/10	2017 6/10 ↑
6 Supports participants through the process/systems of program administration	2016 6/10	2017 7/10 ↑

Despite satisfaction levels plateauing, there is evidence that mentoring programs in associations are leveraging best practice standards and heading in the right direction.

Setting the stage for satisfaction

Program structure, implementation and delivery

In 2017, more associations had training for mentors, a designated program manager for enquiries, held program events and offered support materials to participants. Combined, these have all contributed to the higher ratings seen in the core standards of best practice and underpin satisfaction levels within a program. This is not to say we are there yet - far from it - as a shift in satisfaction levels has not yet mirrored this improvement.

Compare these...

A Semi Formal Program Response – Low level program satisfaction

“CEO runs the program, no interest in improving. No real benefits to program as there is no true avenue for handling complaints, no training, no program measurement other than anecdotal, virtually no resources and minimal time or effort put into the program – program may as well not exist.”

A Formal Program Response – High level program satisfaction

“We receive solid Net Promoter Scores from participants; members happy to recommend; program outcomes are positive; members record increased satisfaction with our association as a result of participating in our mentoring program.”

Keeping the relationship alive

“Our experience with the pilot program demonstrates that those mentors and mentees who attended the initial workshop together had better success than those who did not attend.”

The challenge of maintaining mentor and mentee engagement was a theme that came through strongly. Attracting the best mentors and maintaining motivation of participants can be difficult in an environment where day-to-day demands can overtake the proactive and important time investment required for professional growth.

Finding the right amount of program structure is always a challenge, but this is truly the answer to mentor and mentee engagement. Left entirely to their own devices, participants often don't go the distance. But adding too many check-ins, long training sessions and demanding too much time can equally disengage. The role of a pilot program is to tailor the level of structure needed for a particular group, noting this may even change from program to program.

We argue that “quality is better than quantity”. The more that program designers and managers can do to educate and set clear expectations before the program even begins, the more likely people will enter programs with full commitment. This may reduce program numbers but increase engagement.

Time is money, or is it?

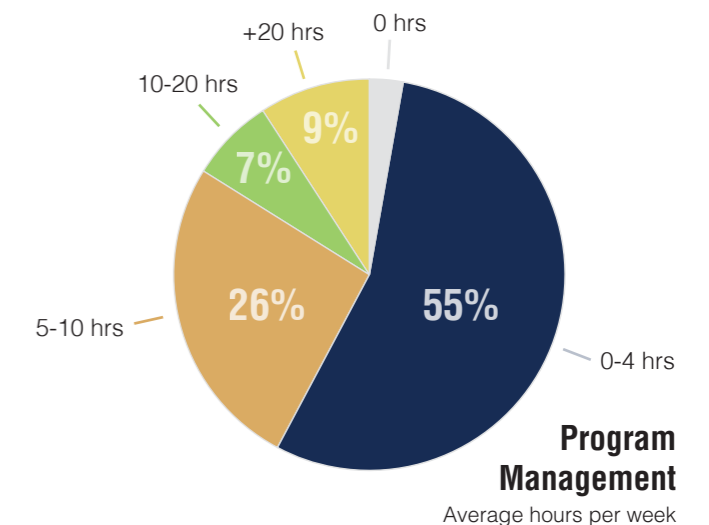
We asked respondents what they wish they had known before embarking on running a mentoring program. Their answer - a good program requires time!

To deliver a quality program requires someone at the helm to drive the various stages. An inexperienced program manager will often underestimate the time requirement of mentoring program management. If sufficient time is not allocated, the financial investment may be rendered insufficient and therefore ineffective.

“It takes more time commitment than you think. It is not something that ‘runs itself’ once mentoring pairs are established.”

In fact, the large time investment was the most common response (25%) to our question. Comments were made of the surprisingly large number of matters requiring consideration in planning and setting up the program, program promotion, coordination, pair matching and following up on questions, concerns and lack of commitment.

The importance of having an experienced program manager was noted as a way of countering this challenge, with external facilitators specialising in mentoring programs being seen to be the ideal solution. Automation of processes was viewed as an important part of project and time management in application management, matching, communications and providing a feedback loop between participants and program administrators.



Funding

In 2016, we remarked, “don't even start if you can't fund your program” and this remains true.

Funding was primarily sourced internally from revenue from other association activities. A small number had funding from sponsors or were partially funded by government grants. Only 10% charged fees to mentees, which we believe is a missed opportunity, not only to derive revenue, but to create commitment to the program on the part of the mentees.

Don't overlook sponsorship

So much of program success depends on adequate investment. If funding poses a challenge, sponsorship could be the answer. Explore the lifestyle and demographics of your membership base and approach companies that would spend advertising budget to access your audience. Engage a sponsorship or partnership broker if you don't have the resources internally.

Measuring success

We observed in 2016 that associations could do a great deal more in program measurement, and this has not changed in 2017. Most associations are using participant satisfaction and goal attainment as the only indicators of success. We would like to see more use of such measurements as return mentor rate, and correlation of program participation with member engagement and retention.

A program with purpose

The purpose behind association mentoring programs broadly fell into seven key categories:

- > Provide support through career transition
- > Assimilate new members into association
- > Provide for under-represented members (e.g. indigenous members, regional members and women)
- > Provide practical support as a personalised learning method
- > Respond to the wishes of the membership base
- > Attract, engage and retain members
- > Support the overall organisational strategy through quality programming

Respondents told us that of their mentoring programs:

57% felt participants have **higher engagement** with the association compared with non-participants

50% believe participants have built their capacity to be **leaders** in their profession/industry

47% thought their program has helped them **retain** members

43% agreed that participants have a more **positive attitude** toward the association

40% felt the mentoring program has helped to **attract new members**

7% were unclear what benefits have been delivered

These findings support our observations that mentoring programs deliver multiple benefits to associations.

They can help engage, attract and retain members, build a desirable association brand, and strengthen leadership capacity for both the profession and the association.

TREND ALERT

Mentoring is moving up the priority list into a must have!



Moving in the right direction

In 2017, we witnessed positive traction towards best practice, with key moves correlating to improved structure within the mentor program offering.

Respondents confirmed their programs had:

	2017	2016
Training or briefing for mentors	73%	53%
Designated program manager as the first point of contact for enquiries/problems	70%	NA
Virtual or face-to-face program launch event for participants	60%	45%
A published Code of Conduct/Terms and Conditions for the program	50%	43%
Database of educational and support resources	43%	25%
Virtual or face-to-face program close event	40%	30%

The benefits of moving in this direction are manifold, allowing for growth of individuals and advancement of an industry. The richness of mentoring also has a halo effect on the association's reputation. One respondent commented that they had not realised how rewarding running a mentoring program could be.

And what better way to finish our report than on that note?

Mentoring is one of the most positive ways to gain personalised learning experiences.

In an "opt in" program, mentees are usually very grateful for the opportunity to learn from someone more experienced.

Mentors are also likely to be positive people with a strong ethical compass, shown in their desire to "give back" and pass on wisdom.



At Art of Mentoring we believe mentoring enriches people's lives and strengthens their communities, and that every person, no matter where they are, deserves a chance to enjoy the rich benefits of mentoring done well.

We combine evidence-based mentoring expertise with the latest technology to enable associations to develop and deliver high-quality, cost-effective mentoring programs.

We service clients around the world from our base in Australia.

To learn more about mentoring, download free resources and find out how to make mentoring work in your company, please visit our website.

 www.artofmentoring.net



info@artofmentoring.net



www.artofmentoring.net



**ART of
MENTORING**

Thank you to all the people who took the time to respond to our survey. By sharing your experience, you have helped us support the continuous improvement of mentoring program delivery in the company sector.