



The Ripple Effect

A guide to achieving great things
in your **Government Agency** through
high impact strategic mentoring programs



ART **of**
MENTORING



About Melissa



Melissa is a global assessor for the European Mentoring and Coaching Council's ISMCP Award (International Standards for Mentoring and Coaching Programs) and leads the International Work Group for Mentoring and Coaching Program Manager training and accreditation. She has post-graduate qualifications in organisational coaching, counselling and marketing strategy.

Melissa directs the Art of Mentoring research agenda and regularly speaks on mentoring best practice.

My experience in mentoring spans over 20 years in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Yes, there are differences but ultimately, as in any organisation, success is dependent on the people involved.

In my time I've seen it all, the good, the bad and the ugly. I discovered early on that my greatest contribution to workplace performance, harmony and culture was through mentoring. I've seen the recipients of mentoring bring a room full of people to tears as they described how the mentoring experience had changed their lives. It's become my life's work and personal mission to make that life-changing opportunity available to more people who need it.

Quality mentoring can ignite individual and organisational performance.

Melissa Richardson, Managing Director
Art of Mentoring

Mentoring is an art, not just software...

About Art of Mentoring

Art of Mentoring works with organisations to design, implement and automate mentoring programs that create a ripple effect beyond their simplicity and far beyond the mentoring pair throughout the organisation and future generations of employees.

We are based in Australia and operate globally in 26+ countries through

our partnership with Professor David Clutterbuck's network, Coaching and Mentoring International. We offer the latest in mentoring best practice with a vast range of evidence-based programs, expert consultants, software and world-class resources to support the design and implementation of effective mentoring in your organisation.

Introduction

An organisation can be defined as an organised group of people with a particular purpose.

The purpose can vary but the most fundamental aspects required to achieve an organisation's purpose are the commitment and effectiveness of its people.

Many aspects of an organisation can be managed through things like systems, processes, structures and policies, but when all things are equal the difference lies in the people.

There are 3 elements to the people equation:



Attraction: Attracting the "right" people



Performance: Maximising the performance of the people to meet the purpose



Retention: Retaining the "right" people and their knowledge

The key then lies in creating an environment where people want to join the organisation, want to perform and commit to stay.

As we know, this must and does extend beyond the pay cheque, which is why so much time, effort and money is invested in developing a positive organisational culture.

Easier said than done, but in today's multi-generational and diverse workforce there are certain common human needs that, when met, help create that sometimes undefinable quality culture.

- > A sense of belonging
- > Having a voice and being heard
- > Communication
- > Opportunity
- > Someone to talk to—an outlet



Traditional organisational structures and hierarchies are not designed to cater to these needs. In fact, the larger and more diverse the organisation, the greater the chance of friction, dissension and turnover. This all results in under-achievement or worse, poor individual, team and organisational performance.

Enter the role of mentoring. When used strategically, mentoring offers communication channels that cross the structural and restrictive boundaries of complex organisations. These developmental conversations meet some of our most human needs, while meeting organisational goals.

There is so much evidence today that well-designed mentoring programs can address many of the challenges you may be grappling with in your organisation:

- > Loss of key talent and institutional knowledge
- > A leadership bench not ready to shine when it's their time in the sun
- > Fostering a positive workplace culture

...and the list goes on.

The organisations that embrace and implement mentoring programs enjoy the advantage of unleashing the untapped and often hidden value in their people.

Yet mentoring is an under-estimated art. Almost everyone has a point of view about mentoring, but not everyone can be a great mentor. Likewise, most people underestimate the skill and experience needed to design an effective organisational mentoring program. A large proportion of our work comes from organisations who have implemented a poorly designed and under-resourced mentoring program, only to discover that whatever they did spend, was totally wasted. They come to us to find out why their employees or members did not engage in the mentoring opportunity or dropped out of the program early.

In this guide I set out in a clear and practical way, what an effective mentoring program looks like, how to design and implement one and the real results it can deliver.

Get it right and the ripple effect can be enormous...



1. What mentoring is...and what it isn't

Mentoring is really not a modern concept, although structured mentoring programs only began to be introduced in the 1980s.

It's thought the first use of the word "mentor" was in Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. Before King Odysseus went off to fight in the Trojan war, he left his friend Mentor in charge to watch over his son, Telemachus, and his wife and kingdom. After several years away, all hope was given up of his return. It turns out that Mentor was somewhat inept in his role, so Athena, the goddess of wisdom and goddess of war, impersonated him, and supported Telemachus as he set out to find his father. Athena guided his journey and when father and son re-united, they returned to Ithaca to overthrow the people who were trying to steal the throne.

This classic Hero's Journey story forms the basis of many popular movie scripts in which a guide appears just in the nick of time to assist a hero in his (and it usually is his, not her) quest. Think Yoda in *Star Wars* and Mr Miyagi in *Karate Kid*.

The word Mentor has come to mean a trusted friend, advisor, teacher and wise person. History also offers more examples of helpful mentoring relationships: Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung are amongst the most well-known.

The Hero's Journey and the concept of mentoring doesn't just appear in western cultures—it can be found in most cultural traditions.

The simplest way to understand a mentoring relationship is to think about it in its most usual form—a helping relationship in which one person, usually more experienced or senior, takes time to assist the career, professional or personal development of someone else, who is known as a mentee, mentoree or protégé. Mentoring is most often a one-on-one relationship but is sometimes done in groups.

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for an entire lifetime".





A mentoring relationship is one that is built on trust, in which there is an exchange of knowledge, experience and goodwill. In developmental mentoring, the focus is on the development of the mentee's capacity, rather than just the handing down of advice or solutions.

In a developmental mentoring relationship, a mentee builds his or her ability to navigate new waters, with the help of the mentor. And the mentor often learns a great deal from the mentee in return. So, the relationship is very much two-way.

Mentoring vs Sponsorship

Mentoring began to be introduced in a formal way into organisations in the US and Europe in the 1980s. In the US, the mentor was often not just expected to guide and support, but to be a sponsor of the protégé and advocate or open doors for him/her. In some cultures, this form of mentoring is more common than developmental mentoring, which is more two-way and involves little or no advocacy.

Mentoring vs Coaching

Coaches and mentors have much in common. Many of the dialogue skills a mentor uses are also coaching skills. The content of the conversations may be different though. Mentoring is often about the person's future professional and career development, whereas coaching may be more focused on the person's performance in the role and ability to meet agreed targets right now. Mentoring is mentee-driven and the mentee 'owns' the agenda whereas the workplace coaching agenda is often driven by the person's line manager.

Business coaching and business consulting are often called mentoring, when really they are not. Business coaches and consultants give advice and can provide information. But unless they are helping the client develop their own capacity, it's not developmental mentoring. This confusion is most common in the start-up world, where high-profile business founders become 'mentors' to aspiring entrepreneurs. If they invest in the founder's business, then they have a vested interest in the success of the business and may provide advice and ideas but lack the objectivity to provide great mentorship in this situation.



This one of my favourite definitions of mentoring:

Helping someone with the quality of their thinking about issues important to them (Clutterbuck & Megginson).

Good mentoring provides a space for reflection in which mentees are 'learners' who are encouraged and given different perspectives that allow them to come to their own conclusions and develop their own solutions. Great mentors help mentees see their own talents and potential. The mentor that most profoundly influenced my career was the Marketing Director who hired me

straight out of university and who inspired, encouraged and guided me right up until I made it to that same Marketing Director role, some 13 years later. I will never forget the look of pride on his face whenever I did something he considered worthy. He was a role model for me that, to this day, informs how I lead and mentor others.





2. The importance of the WHY?

We see mentoring programs fail when:

- > They lack a program strategy with a well-defined purpose and measurable objectives
- > There are no clear criteria for mentor and mentee matching
- > The program has limited buy-in or support from critical stakeholders
- > Mentors and mentees are inadequately prepared for their roles in the process.

By far the most important element to get right is the **program purpose**. If you can't tell a convincing story about **why** your organisation needs a mentoring program, you might as well not even start. *Everything* else flows from this—the program design, measurable objectives, eligibility, matching and training strategy and a compelling reason for mentors to sign up.

The best programs we see are those that are well-targeted and designed to achieve a specific purpose.

Without a clear purpose, mentoring programs become a 'tick-a-box' exercise to which no one in your organisation will fully commit. They need direction, commitment and a little bit of love to help them flourish.

So, the best place to start, is to ask: What is my organisation trying to achieve in the next 1–3 years and how will mentoring help?

Here are some examples:

- > A professional association mentoring program supporting graduates in their first year, when they are prone to burn-out, mental health issues and leaving the profession
- > A government program designed to help people from different generations to work in reciprocal mentoring relationships to foster cross-generational learning and experience transfer, as well as to build a collaborative culture
- > An enterprise-wide mentoring program to build career mobility and provide development options for employees who miss out on other training opportunities
- > Mentoring to encourage and support women into more senior roles to meet diversity goals



3. What can mentoring do for my organisation?

Research has reported mentoring can deliver benefits such as employee commitment, motivation and retention, higher morale, better working relationships and better leadership.

In a study into formal mentoring programs in Fortune 500 companies¹, the five most frequently cited impacts of mentoring included:

1. Retention (59 percent)
2. Promotion and advancement (35 percent)
3. Satisfaction (35 percent)
4. Morale (29 percent)
5. Productivity and performance (29 percent).

In an often-cited long-term study², Sun Microsystems found 24% of participants in a mentoring program had a salary grade change and mentees were promoted 5 times more often than their unmentored peers. Retention rates amongst mentees (72%) and mentors (69%) was favourably compared to the general retention rate across the organisation of 49%. Sun claims to have made **\$6.7 million in savings in avoiding turnover and replacement costs**. They also estimate an ROI of more than 1000% on their investment in mentoring.

Even for a medium-sized company with 500 employees, we estimate savings in employee retention alone to be around \$390,000 p.a. = more than 500% ROI on the cost of a mentoring program.

This doesn't even include savings in recruitment costs, retention of corporate memory and impact of churn.

Once you have settled on the WHY, you can start on the WHO and then move to the HOW.

¹ Hegstad, C D & Wentling, R M. (2004) Human Resource Development Quarterly, vol. 15, No 4

² Sun Microsystems Study (2009), downloaded from [http://spcoast.com/pub/Katy/SunMentoring1996-2009.smli tr-2009-185.pdf](http://spcoast.com/pub/Katy/SunMentoring1996-2009.smli%20tr-2009-185.pdf)

Our government clients tell us mentoring helps them address these pressing issues faced by public sector agencies:



Making a government department an attractive career option for young people and top talent, in a world in which trust in our public institutions is eroding and in which start-ups look like so much more fun. Younger generations, in particular, are more likely to make employment choices based on perceived development opportunities.



Providing a development option for mid-level managers, who are often overlooked in favour of graduates or high-performing talent. Mentoring can re-engage and re-ignite their passion.



Embedding a service culture—it's hard for front-line people serving citizens to do this well if they are themselves disengaged and unhappy. Having and being a mentor increases general wellbeing and can re-connect people with their sense of purpose and re-kindle their interest in service.



Meeting diversity targets—mentoring assists people in any minority group to navigate towards a more successful career and their mentors learn a great deal about them in the process, building inclusion.



Increasing workforce mobility—interagency and intra-agency mentoring programs expose people to other areas, increase their networks and make it easier for leaders to move key people around.

Once you have settled on the WHY, you can start on the WHO and then move to the HOW.



4. Who mentoring is and isn't for

For organisations that want to create a positive environment for growth.

If your organisation is serious about growth and getting great results from people, then you need to create an environment conducive to learning and innovation. That seems self-evident but it's not obvious how to do it.

Actually, if you develop a coaching and mentoring culture in your organisation, it can magnify all your culture and training efforts.

It will help build the kind of people connections that are needed for team and cross-silo collaboration and create a culture that fosters a growth mindset and creativity.

“If you want to take training and development to scale, you want everyone to be a coach and a mentor...you want people to have the skills of coaching and mentoring which means that even if you can't touch them, they can.”
Daniel Goleman



This is the Ripple Effect!



Mentoring is not just for corporates or government agencies, either. Professional and trade associations are discovering the power of mentoring as a means to connect members and create a positive

growth environment for people in their profession or industry. Experienced members are desperate to give back and younger members appreciate the wise counsel of a mentor outside their own organisation.

Can any employee or member benefit from having a mentor?

Yes! It's not just for young or junior people. I've had mentors my entire working career. And not just one—I call on different people depending on what I need because mentors can guide, challenge, give advice, make referrals, open doors, answer questions, share experiences, be a brainstorming partner, provide a sounding board and be a critical friend. The mentoring role is very

broad, and it's hard to find just one mentor that can meet every need.

But when should people seek out a mentor? The truth is that it's helpful to have a mentor anytime, but if your employees or members fall into any of the categories below, it may be time for them to find a mentor:



Career re-evaluation. Trigger events that can cause individuals to reconsider career paths include divorce, illness, redundancy or just reaching a career plateau. Mentors can challenge mentees to realistically assess their strengths and weaknesses, suggest alternative pathways and introduce the mentee to other people who can help.



New career challenge. When an individual encounters a new challenge such as a promotion, or a move into a different functional area or company, a mentor can assist by providing a sounding board for experiences and sharing stories of how she/he dealt with similar challenges. Mentors can role model new skills and behaviours that the mentee wants to learn. As one steps up into a more senior role, a mentor can provide valuable guidance.



Career satisfaction. Mentors can help individuals self-assess and examine job-fit to enhance job satisfaction. The mentor can provide objective feedback to help the mentee explore their identity and job-related choices. Together the pair can identify obstacles to satisfaction and develop strategies to overcome them.



Personal satisfaction. The experience of mentoring can help the mentee build confidence, extend networks and change work-life balance.



Not everyone automatically makes a great mentor

Olivia has been a manager for over a decade, so she thinks that automatically makes her a good mentor. She believes she knows how to lead and manage people, so this mentoring thing should be easy, right? Wrong.

Mentoring is quite different from managing. If Olivia is asked to mentor someone that does not report to her, it's a completely different type of relationship. Olivia may not be a very good listener if she spends a lot of time directing her people. If she doesn't have a growth mindset, she may never make a very good mentor.

Steve lacks confidence in himself and if asked to mentor, will be very anxious,

despite the fact he may be a very experienced manager and may even make a good mentor. If only he can get past his anxiety.

Kate is self-aware, knows her own limitations and is willing to keep learning. She has natural warmth and empathy and quickly puts her mentee at ease with her accomplished listening and questioning skills. She isn't threatened by revealing her weaknesses, in fact she talks about her foibles with some humour and doesn't take herself too seriously. She has a growth mindset and encourages this in her mentees.

These are the typical mentor archetypes you are likely to see when you ask your people to become mentors. Over—or under—confidence—in the mentoring role can seriously hold potential mentors back. Our job is to try to train and support the Olivias and Steves to become good mentors, and help the Kates to become masterful in the role.



It's for people who are up for investing in their own development

There are also a few archetypes amongst mentees.



Enthusiastic Learners relish the mentoring opportunity and invest enough time in managing and preparing for their mentoring interactions. These mentees derive huge benefits from the experience and go on to become mentors for others.



Passive Hopefuls come to the relationship hoping they won't have to do a lot—after all the mentor is meant to just tell me what to do, right? In our training we emphasise to mentees that driving the direction of the relationship and setting appointments is their responsibility, but there are some who are just unwilling to do the work.

The last mentee type starts out as a Passive Hopeful and in time, sees the light and turns into an Enthusiastic Learner. The 'aha' moment may happen spontaneously

when something the mentor says or does inspires them to pursue more. Or it could be triggered by something they read or hear (for example, in training).





5. Critical success factors

We often say mentoring program design is hardly rocket science, but there are some traps that many people fall into. These traps can be easily avoided.



1. Clear Vision

As already explained, without a clear vision or purpose for the program, mentoring falls into the “I’ll do it when I have time” bucket for both program managers and mentors and mentees. It has to move from a “nice to do” to being a key priority, and the only way this happens is when it links back to an important organisational goal.

Programs without a compelling purpose suffer from poor participant numbers and high drop-out rates.



2. Strong Commitment

Many would think I was crazy, but I recently advised a CEO to close down their mentoring program for lack of organisational commitment. We have managed the program for them for two years, but the program was limping along with moderate results in spite of a well-executed design. It just didn’t have enough leadership buy-in, even though there were high satisfaction rates and goal achievement amongst participants. Mentors and mentees could sense the lack of top level commitment and their own commitment suffered as a result.

Programs with low commitment, particularly from senior leadership, suffer from poor program management. The reason is senior leaders haven’t told the internal program manager mentoring is a priority. Therefore the program manager completes program management tasks last (they almost always perform this role as an add-on to their already full loads). When senior leaders commit to a mentoring program, they indicate to others the program is an organisational priority. The truly committed participate fully as mentors themselves, by role modelling and gently creating pressure for those below to step up.



3. Measurement of Success

This is linked to the first issue: If there are no clear objectives, then it is unlikely that any measures of success are being used. This leaves a mentoring program open to being shut down on a personal whim by a leader who does not understand the organisational benefits or continuing when there really is no return on investment.



4. Appropriate Structure

By far the most common mistake we see is lack of structure. It simply isn't true that if given digital access to a portfolio of mentor profiles, potential mentees will seek out and choose a mentor that is right for them.

First of all, research indicates introverts will hold back, so unless you only want the extraverts in your organisation to have mentors, please don't use this approach. Secondly, people tend not to make good choices. When mentors select a mentee, they tend to choose 'mini-me's'. When mentees choose a mentor, they often select someone with whom they feel very comfortable, who will not provide them with enough stretch in the relationship.

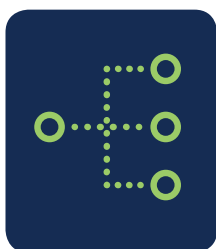
Getting the right structure in the form of program length, training, and support materials takes careful planning. Most people either provide too many or not enough materials to the mentoring pair.



5. Plan and Take Time to Execute

Smart organisations plan their mentoring program design, starting with considering whether mentoring is the right intervention to achieve the organisational objective. They involve key stakeholders at the beginning who can help steer the program once launched. They also don't rush the execution. Just as with any development program, it can take a few months to rally key people, promote the program internally and then invite people to apply. Rushing the execution to meet a deadline almost always ends up with something being compromised; usually the application and matching time is cut short and poor-quality matches result.





6. Adequate Resourcing

Most organisations under-resource their programs. You can expect to spend between \$500 and \$1500 per mentoring pair for a well-run program, depending on its size. (There are some economies of scale). This is roughly equivalent to or less than the cost of one day of training per person. The investment typically supports:

- a. A dedicated program manager who stays in contact with the pairs and nudges them along.
- b. Educational resources to prepare the mentors and mentees before commencement.
- c. Software that automates and streamlines program management. (This becomes necessary for programs over about 20–25 pairs, otherwise administration is tedious and difficult).

An under-resourced program in any of these areas will almost certainly not thrive. Symptoms of under-resourcing are:

- > High program dropout rates.
- > Low goal achievement by mentees.
- > Low satisfaction rates from all participants.

Don't be Swayed by Fashion—It's the Tried and True that Works

In the last ten years, we've seen new terminology creep into the field, that has caused enormous confusion about what mentoring actually is.

Flash mentoring and speed mentoring are not really mentoring at all. A ten-minute conversation with someone called “a mentor”, before a bell rings and everyone moves to another partner, is what Professor David Clutterbuck and I call “Fast Knowledge Transfer”. There may well be a valuable exchange of information, but there is no relationship formed in any true sense. At best, in a short amount of time, the couple might identify if they now wish to enter into a real mentoring partnership.

These new forms, often termed “modern mentoring”, have mostly been promulgated by technology companies in whose interest it is to sell software that encourages short-term transactional contacts amongst people in a large database. There is absolutely no evidence that modern organisations and younger generations can't benefit from the same “tried and true” structured mentoring programs that have successfully supported flourishing mentoring relationships for decades. Following fashion in mentoring, particularly with regard to technology, can lead to failed mentoring efforts. Ignoring more traditional methods misses the opportunity to support people to form and stay in meaningful developmental mentoring partnerships that can help people thrive in a tech-driven workplace.

6. You can expect results that will ripple through your organisation

A well-designed, well-executed and well-managed program will be very successful and sustainable.

You should see comments from participants like this:

“Couldn’t recommend it enough—even being tentative at the start, this mentoring program has led to a major change in the way I work which will impact the rest of my career.”
(Mentee, 2019 Program)

“I learnt from the experience too, improving my leadership skills and realising my past work experiences have been valuable in shaping who I am.”
(Mentor, 2019 Program)



Done well, mentoring programs enjoy high engagement and participation rates, low dropout rates, high satisfaction and goal achievement. Mentors enrol year after year, and mentees return to play mentor to others.



The Ripple Effect

You can expect that people who are mentored will be more loyal to your organisation and more engaged in their work, performing at a higher level.

You will discover people in your organisation who were hidden talent, until now. People who have provided mentorship will take mentoring skills into their own teams and become better leaders.

Silos in your organisation will be broken down, as people from different functions and departments engage in meaningful mentoring relationships.

Experience and institutional history will be passed from one generation to the next. People will be happier and more satisfied in their work.

Some may even discover they are not a good fit for your organisation, but they will leave on better terms, with gratitude and remain brand ambassadors. And some of them will return, bringing new experience and knowledge back with them.

You can also expect that mentoring will become a valuable and expected part of the culture, becoming a magnet for new talent.

Not only that, but as the ripple spreads, mentoring will have a significant impact on the culture of your organisation.

If you have been strategic about how you targeted the program and chose mentors who live the values, mentoring can help shift culture and values in the direction you choose.

Don't expect, on the other hand, the results will happen for themselves. You will need someone in your organisation to design, market, manage and monitor the program. Unless it's a huge program, this won't be a full-time job, but there will be times (around the program launch and matching phase) when it will be very busy. You can outsource this to companies like ours if you lack resources internally.



7. Designing the “right” program

An ideal “off the shelf” program design does not exist. You need a design that will work for your organisation and unique context. There are some universal principles of good mentoring program design, however.

Clear program purpose

We’ve already talked about this. The program purpose should be clear and well-articulated to everyone involved.

Adequate preparation of the mentoring pairs to engage effectively

Training is crucial. Without adequate preparation, very few mentoring pairs will go the distance. A mismatch of expectations in any relationship is deadly, so providing a launch briefing gets everyone on the same page. Mentors almost always need skills training for the role and mentees need to learn how to make the most of the opportunity.

The worst we have seen is totally random matching. (This approach feels a bit like “pin the tail on the donkey”).

Only slightly better, is matching on the basis of “I just think they would get on”.



The best matches are made when mentee development needs are matched to mentor strengths and preferences and there is enough difference in the match in terms of experience, background and style, to provide stretch to the mentee whilst giving a feeling of safe containment.



Program management that guides behaviour and participation, provides support and encouragement, and seeks feedback.

The program manager role is absolutely critical. We will talk about this more in the coming pages, but a mentoring program manager is a matchmaker/relationship counsellor/trouble-shooter/project manager rolled into one. Gentle nudges and reminders to keep going are mixed with empathic listening by masterful mentoring program managers. They need to have great people skills and also enough attention to detail to notice when a participant has fallen off the radar, plus an ability to interpret survey feedback and recommend design changes. It's hard to find experienced mentoring program managers, but people with good people and project management skills can be trained into the role.

Design variables such as program length, frequency of contact, whether the program is face-to-face or virtual, marketing methods and so on, will all depend on the purpose of the program and the context.

An important part of the design phase is considering whether your organisation is ready for mentoring, and whether key stakeholders are supportive. Like any initiative, if there are detractors, your program can easily be derailed. This is especially so in membership organisations where local chapters or volunteers need to be brought in early to contribute to design thinking. Otherwise they can jeopardise a successful launch by blocking the initiative at a local level. Likewise, business unit heads or department heads in private and public sector organisations can be briefed in the initial stages.

You may also have a Board to whom a business case must be made. Here's what you need to cover.

SELLING A MENTORING PROGRAM TO THE MANAGEMENT

WHY?

Do you have a **compelling Purpose?**
e.g. prevent drop-out rate amongst young professionals

WHO?

Which stakeholders need to be involved?
Get them on board early and demonstrate to your Management they're committed

HOW?

have a clear and well-researched **business plan** including budget and ROI

WHAT?

Design well, start small and grow, use professional resources, if you can

WHEN?

Don't start until you know all the ducks are lined up. Better to delay than fail.



8. Implementation

Now, this is where the rubber hits the road. To ensure you get off to a good start and keep everyone enthused, there are 5 key implementation components to consider:

1. Do I need software?

Implementation will almost certainly require software of some description, even if it is just email, spreadsheets and application and survey tools. Managing a program manually is not impossible for small numbers, but it is administratively time-consuming. You can

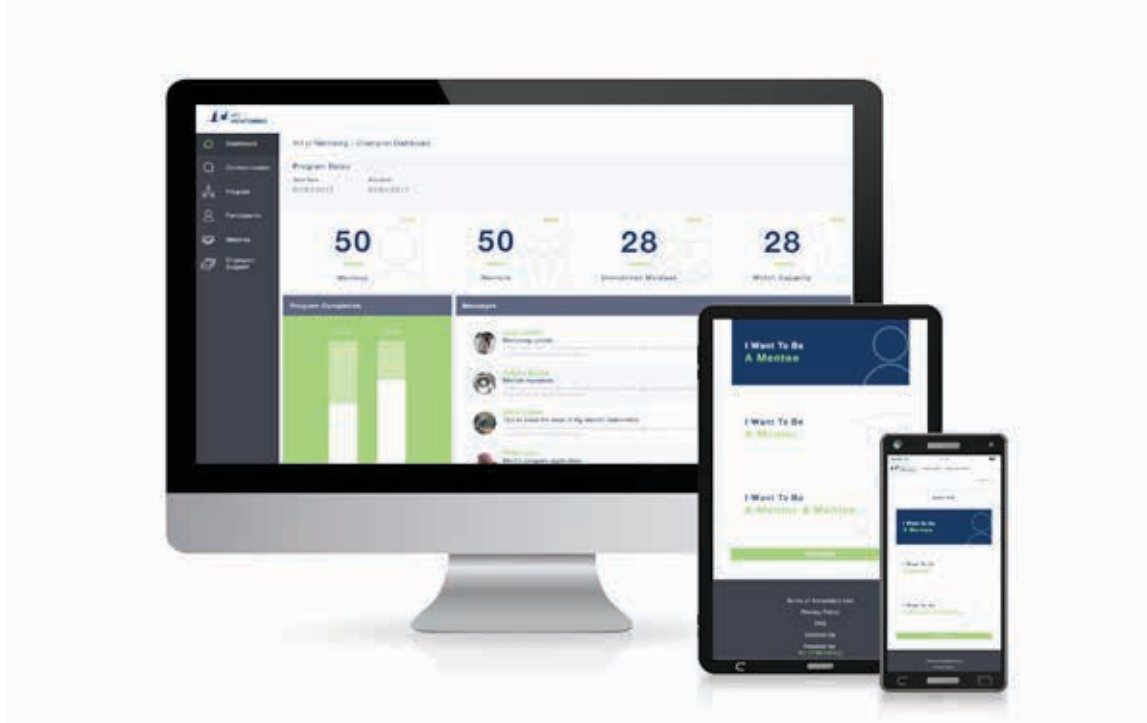
start manually, progress to multiple digital applications and then on to a program management platform if you plan to grow slowly. If your program starts with more than 20 pairs and you have more than one person doing program management, then you will need a platform.

A CONTINUUM OF MENTORING SOFTWARE SOPHISTICATION



Program management software brings all the digital tools together that you might need. These platforms combine email messaging, application and survey capability, database storage of participant profiles and resources and matching algorithms. Using software

speeds up and automates many manual processes. However, software alone will not save a poorly designed or executed program. It will just take less work to fail faster.



Choosing software

Start by identifying the features that you need, which almost certainly will include:

1. Applications/enrolment
2. Matching—individual and bulk
3. Messaging to/from mentors and education
4. Guided workflow incorporating continuing mentees
5. Knowledge base
6. Progress tracking
7. Analytics/reporting

Do you **really** need:

1. A forum for participants? (they rarely participate)
2. Goal tracking?
3. Pair workspace?
4. Booking appointments?
5. In-app messaging?



The more features and the more complex, as with any software, the harder it is to use for both program administrators and mentors and mentees. Most people tell us they don't want to log in to an app to record meetings or contact their partner with a quick message or question. Beware the temptation to ask for software bells and whistles that cost more and clutter up workspaces.

2. Recruitment

Implementation begins with recruitment of mentors and mentees. A clear program purpose will make it easy to provide a compelling argument for mentees and

mentors to sign up and their managers to support their participation. Clear marketing messages are important to help people understand if the program is right for them and also identify if they have the time to participate fully.

Don't overestimate the numbers in the first year. These programs can take some time to get into the groove and, in any case, starting with a small pilot of 20–50 pairs is an excellent idea.



3. Matching

We prefer facilitator matching over self-matching as explained earlier. Algorithm matching is an aid to the process but rarely can be used alone. Algorithms can miss the one request an applicant makes. This means a match with high compatibility may not in fact be a good match. Matching by humans, using suggestions made by an algorithm, is best. Having a matching panel of people to debate and select final matches is often a good idea.

4. Training

Training can be done in classroom format, or online. Good training is essential, preferably conducted by an experienced trainer who has participated in and run mentoring programs. Good quality training with video

demonstrations for online instruction can also be suitable, especially if the participant cohort is all over the country or global.

Mentors will need continued education if they participate year after year.

5. Launch and Close

Mentors and mentees in structured programs appreciate the certainty of a clear start and finish. Often, pairs will continue after the program ends, on an informal basis, sometimes for many years.





9. Management

The program management role is critically important and one of the success factors. These are the key tasks and responsibilities that contribute to good program management. The program manager:

- > Ensures the right people are invited to apply and helps them decide if the program is right for them
- > Matches applicants appropriately, seeking input from a panel of colleagues as needed
- > Conducts and manages training and feedback events
- > Provides proactive support and encouragement to mentors and mentees
- > Checks that pairs are continuing to meet
- > Troubleshoots relationship issues
- > Ensures participants are familiar with a program code of conduct and acts on breaches
- > Gathers and acts on feedback, reporting to stakeholders as needed.

The ideal program manager:

- > Has participated in a structured program as a mentor or mentee
- > Has great admin skills and attention to detail
- > Is able to converse easily with the participants—this is especially important when the mentors are senior; the program manager cannot be too shy to approach them
- > Is tech savvy
- > Can interpret feedback, recommend and implement program improvements effectively and argue for change
- > Can garner and retain organisational support and enthusiasm.

Whilst the program manager will check that pairs are engaging, the content of their conversations should remain confidential.





10. Measuring success

A well-designed, executed and managed mentoring program should have a very high success rate. Here are some measures of success we look for:

Did you achieve the goals you set for this mentoring relationship?

Achieved my goals

Achieved some goals

Did not achieve my goals

How satisfied were you with your relationship with your mentoring partner?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Would you recommend this program to others?

Yes

No

Please comment on the impact this mentoring experience has had on your opinions of the organisation which offered it to you

Highly positive impact

Somewhat positive impact

No impact

Somewhat negative impact

Highly negative impact



a. High program participation and low drop-out rate.

Expect most participants to attend a launch event; by the end, program close event attendance will be lower. A drop-out rate of up to 10–15% is almost inevitable over the course of a 6 to 12-month program, as people change jobs or circumstances change. A higher rate of pairs not making it to the end, is an indicator of either poor design or insufficient contact from a program manager.

b. High match satisfaction.

Re-matching should be rare if matching is done properly to begin with.

c. High mentee goal achievement.

Did most mentees say they achieved what they intended?

d. High program satisfaction.

At the end, over 80% of mentees should say it was either a good experience or one of the best things they'd ever done.

e. High positive impact on brand impression.

Almost all participants agree the mentoring program experience reflects positively on their view of the organisation.

Short surveys sent to both mentors and mentees two to three times over the course of a program can track and measure these sentiments.

Other analytics relate to the organisational objectives for the program. These may only be measured by comparing data from mentoring participants, with data from people who did not participate.

Is there a higher engagement or retention rate amongst people who have been mentors or mentored?

Are mentees more likely than their peers to be promoted or take new stretch assignments?

Are people who have provided mentorship to others better leaders than their peers?

Has mentoring become a part of the culture, to the point that informal mentoring is now happening across the organisation?

Is mentoring shifting the culture dial?

These results, and more, are available to your organisation today and I can soon see a world where your new recruits will not ask if you offer a mentoring program but “how good is your mentoring program and when can I join?”

Getting it right is not rocket science—common sense combined with a good dose

of experience makes the difference between disappointment and a highly rewarding and effective Ripple Effect.

Good luck and I look forward to hearing about your mentoring journey.


Melissa



Art of Mentoring provides expert advice and solutions to those responsible for establishing and managing organisational mentoring programs.

Doing the required research and planning upfront is vital to success. Get it wrong and you can end up in a worse place than where you started.

That's where we come in and help you lay the right foundations and if we don't think you're ready or we are not the best fit for your organisation we will tell you.

For most clients our Situation Analysis process is the ideal initial engagement.

We will undertake a complimentary exploratory workshop, which commences with a brief information session about our view of the world from a mentoring perspective.

We'll also discuss in broad terms projects we've undertaken with organisations similar to yours.

This Situation Analysis, which typically runs for 1–1.5 hours, will also dig deeper into the following:

- > Explore the WHY of mentoring for your department or agency and how to tailor it for your employees or members
- > Identify who will benefit most and how you might match mentors and mentees
- > Discuss strategies for success measurement, identifying investment needed, obstacles and risks

On completion, we will provide you with a high-level 3–4 page Situation Analysis report which outlines your optimal way forward.

The only provisos for this workshop are:

- > All attendees read this guide
- > The organisation's decision makers are present
- > Your organisation is big enough for a structured mentoring program

So that's it...let me know if you're interested and we can discuss possible dates and times.





NEXT STEP

Situation Analysis

Whether you're starting or already have a mentoring program, our Situation Analysis is an ideal way of getting on track and staying the distance.

In our Situation Analysis we take you through an initial investigation to build a picture of where your organisation is at and where mentoring can add the most value.

Use the Situation Analysis to highlight those areas of your organisation that are most in need and what the right program fit is for your goals.

Beyond the Situation Analysis, we have in-house experts to help you design, implement, manage and automate your mentoring programs.

More information is available at:

www.artofmentoring.net/situation-analysis

or call us on:

(+612) 9113 7265



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