

Getting Started:

# 5 Key Ingredients for Matching Success



Mentorloop

# Introduction

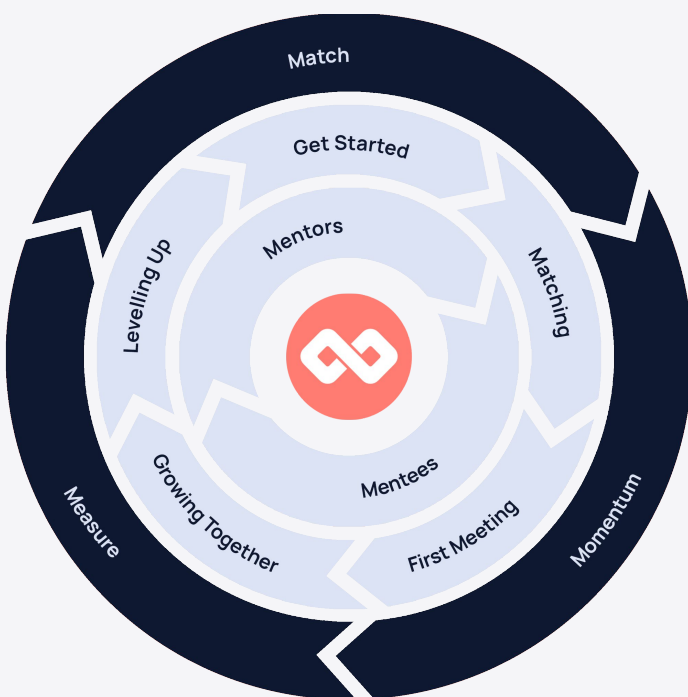
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Hi there! 🙌

If you've seen some of our other resources, you would have likely already had a think about your mentoring program's:

- ❑ Purpose
- ❑ Population
- ❑ Timeline

The next step, is to **start thinking about your matching criteria**. This may easily be drawn from your program's purpose (such as supporting women into leadership roles within your organisation) or, it may need to be further explored.



Once you've completed this step, you're almost there! You'll be on your way towards entering the Mentorloop flywheel:

**Match → Momentum → Measure**

With Mentorloop, you'll have everything you need to build an always-on culture of mentoring.

This eBook is designed to help you think about the role that each matching ingredient has when it comes to *your* organisation.

By the end of this eBook, you should know more about your desired **matching style and criteria**.

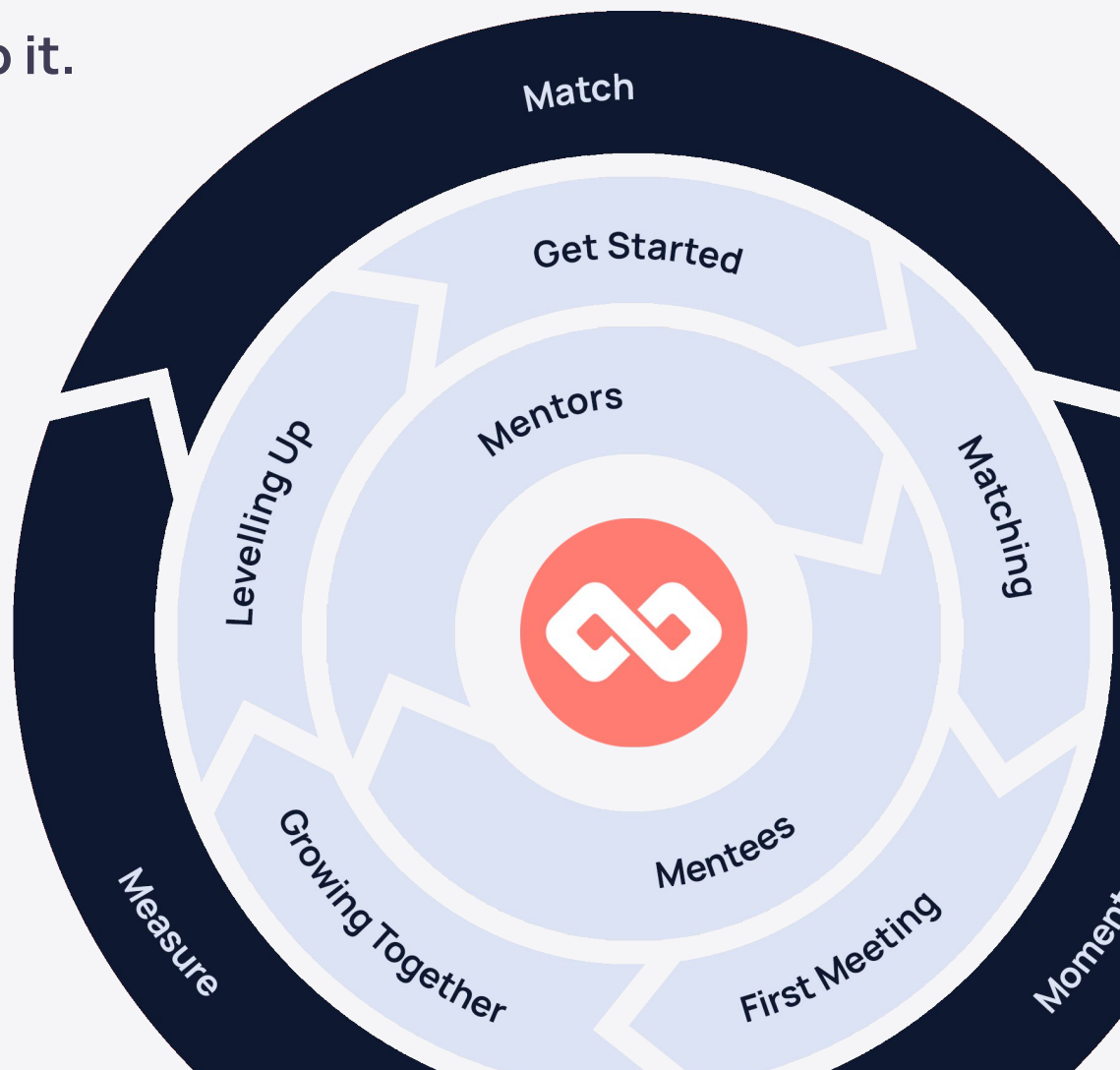
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## Getting Started: 5 Key Ingredients for Matching Success

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Let's get to it.



# Goals & Skills

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The best mentoring relationships are formed around alignment on outcomes, which is why the two most influential ingredients in Mentorloop's matching algorithm are Goals and Skills.

**Goals** can be described as broad outcomes of the match, while **Skills** are often more specific technical or soft skills that can be learned.

**In this section, we explore how people set goals and what is important to them when setting goals—including exploring some of the gaps that can be filled by the holistic nature of mentoring.**

While you're reading this, ask yourself:

## **Will your program be goals and skills driven?**

- **If not:** Is your program driven by something else, such as diversity and inclusion?
- **If so:** How would your people like to be supported? / How can your people support others?
- Which focus areas would your participants like to improve? / What expertise are they able to share?





**Tip:** Take note of the article type. Some articles are for you, some are for your people! You can find many more on our blog.

# Understanding the art of SMART goal setting

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## Why is [S.M.A.R.T.] Goal Setting Important? It Allows You to Track Mentoring Progress

One of the most defining moments of your mentoring relationship will come right at the outset—how you kick it off.

Once your first mentoring meeting is on the books, take a moment to sit back and reflect: Why did you sign up for this in the first place? What do you want to get out of this relationship? What are some practical takeaways you want to get from it, and what are some hopes and dreams you have for it?

By doing a little self reflection before your first meeting, you'll be better prepared to start things off on the right foot: with direction, intention, and self-awareness. Whether you're the mentor or mentee, demonstrating these behaviours will inspire your mentoring partner to mirror them.

It will also make goal setting *a lot* easier, as you'll already have a good grasp of exactly what you want out of this partnership.

### Why Goal Setting?

Many of us don't go into mentoring relationships lightheartedly; we're not participating in this exercise only to meet cool people and learn a few things. No, we're here to better ourselves, make progress, and see the improvement in our personal and professional lives. But how can you know definitively that you're actually improving? Goal setting helps.

When we go into any endeavour with clear-cut goals, when we're *intentional* about what we're about to embark on, the likelihood of us getting something worthwhile out of the experience increases—especially if we [write them down](#).

[Researchers](#) have also found that you have a 65% chance of success of completing a goal if you commit to someone, and a 95% chance if you have a specific accountability appointment with a person you've committed to. Since you already have a built-in accountability partner in the form of a mentor or mentee, this bodes well.

So now that you know you *should be* setting goals, how should you go about it?

### Setting S.M.A.R.T. Goals

As we've written about before, [ensuring your goals are S.M.A.R.T.](#) will make it easier to not only define exactly what you want to get out of your partnership, but also help measure your progress.

As a refresher, S.M.A.R.T. stands for:

- **Specific** (simple, sensible, significant)
- **Measurable** (meaningful, motivating)
- **Achievable** (agreed-upon, attainable)
- **Relevant** (reasonable, realistic, resourced, results-based)
- **Time-Based** (time-limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive)

Not only should you make sure your goals follow these parameters when you create them, but you'll need to regularly go back and check if they continue to fall under these guidelines. Oftentimes, we set smart, simple goals, and then convolute them as time goes on. Be mindful of revisiting your goals to ensure they continue to be **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based**.

Ultimately, by encouraging you to define objectives and set a completion date, your S.M.A.R.T. goals should continuously provide you with the clarity, focus, and motivation you need to achieve them. By so doing, you'll also improve your ability to, and the eventuality that you indeed will, reach them.



# How to Maximise Your L&D or 'People' Budget

When it comes to your L&D budget, it's important that you're investing in the right areas—for both hard and soft skills—and in things that your team members will actually use.

It's not only important to your organisation that this investment happen, but that it's done correctly, especially since [54%](#) of organizations believe skills gaps are hampering transformation and competitive advantage.

So how can you first decipher what areas your people need training in, and then what deployments of said training will be most effective?

**Here are some of our recommendations:**

## Hard Skills

One of the best ways to start understanding where your team requires hard skills investment is to conduct an audit of current skills they have—which will also highlight where they're lacking capabilities.

This can be executed by administering tests in certain hard skills areas, reviewing results, and conferring with direct managers to learn where they think their people are at and where they need improvement.

Using this information, HR managers and team leaders can have a better idea of where certain people, positions, departments, and teams need more skills development and invest accordingly.

## Soft Skills

Soft skills can be a bit harder to assess, as they are, by nature, harder to measure. Understanding which soft skills team members need to improve will require more involvement from direct managers as well as coworkers, which can make the process a more delicate one.

To help you navigate this process, you can send out a simple assessment to team members. During said assessment, they'll be able to rank themselves on a scale of one to ten at which level they believe themselves to be with regard to each soft skill listed.

This online self-assessment can then be discussed with direct managers to further understand individuals' strengths and weaknesses. Finding ways to improve the soft skills people would like to develop, however, is a more difficult task.

## Training Types

### Hard Skills

When it comes to training your people in new hard skills, many HR managers and team leaders opt for online learning such as LinkedIn Learning or Coursera. However, these programs can be expensive, and oftentimes people don't use the subscriptions your organisation is paying for.

This is where recommendations for skills-based learning from trusted people within your organisation, such as mentors, can be incredibly beneficial.

That's because if these experienced and successful individuals have found value in these programs themselves, it's likely that others will too.

### Soft Skills

Soft skills is hard skills' overlooked sibling, most likely because it's much harder to train and develop employees in these areas. However, these very skills may be more important to your organisation than you realise. In fact, while only [22%](#) of executives believe a technical gap is what's hindering business success, double that (44%) believe the real gap lies in soft skills.

Thankfully, mentoring can help. That's because, at its very core, mentoring is based on a foundation of two people coming together to intentionally invest in and learn from one another. The very basis of a mentoring relationship encourages people to practice—and ultimately improve—their soft skills: listening, receiving and incorporating feedback, being more self-aware, thinking through and committing to their goals, practising empathy, and more.

Ultimately, while advances in technology and digital learning can help with hard skills improvement, what's needed to improve your team's soft skills is good, old-fashioned human-to-human (albeit digital) interaction. That's why no matter how far along we come or how many new tools and toys we have, the practice of mentoring will always have its place when it comes to improving our people and bettering ourselves.

## Ready to be a people hero?

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**Did You Know:**  
Mentorloop shares articles such as these with your participants?

# How to Measure Your Mentoring Progress

Once you've embarked on the mentoring journey and are out to sea on mentoring waters, how do you know you're making progress?

Thankfully, with the [S.M.A.R.T. goals](#) we set at the beginning of our relationship, our mentoring partnership is already built on a foundation that is measurable.

Remember, within the S.M.A.R.T. principles themselves, the M itself stands for measurable, helping us continuously get an idea of where we started, where we're at, and how much further we have to go. The T in S.M.A.R.T. is also important, giving us Time-based or Time-sensitive end-dates that serve as a yardstick—as well as motivation.

Here are some examples of how to make goals both **Measurable** and **Time-based**:

- “I want to grow my professional network by at least five people a month.”
- “My goal is to increase my output to include one more [sales deck, piece of content, prospect outreach] a week.”
- “By the end of the quarter, I hope to bring on one more major client.”

In all of the aforementioned scenarios, mentors can support their mentees reach these goals by:

- Introducing them to some relevant people in their own networks or recommending certain online professional groups or clubs.
- Providing soft skills support in the form of efficiency and time management tips and tricks to help mentees find the time and motivation to be more productive.
- Giving mentees the support they need by sharing how to reach out and talk to C-Suite executives, position themselves within the organisation, and more.

But measuring mentoring progress doesn't start and end with setting S.M.A.R.T. goals. Here are a few other ways to understand the real progress you're making.

## Linking S.M.A.R.T. Goals to Business Objectives

Another great way to measure progress is to link your professional S.M.A.R.T. goals to the organisation's overall business objectives.

If you don't already have access to them, ask a direct manager for your department's business objectives for the year and link your own professional goals accordingly. That way, you will be able to see and enjoy the direct impact your contributions are making on objectives bigger than your own.

This approach has been proven to be effective. According to McKinsey Research 91% of companies who have effective performance management systems say that employees' goals are linked to business priorities. That's because seeing how our individual goals fit into and affect the big picture encourages both accountability and better performance.

## Ensuring S.M.A.R.T. Goals are Adaptable

Last but not least, it's important to ensure your S.M.A.R.T. goals are adaptable to the changing organisational and technological environment.

For example, let's say your goal last quarter was to meet up with five new professional contacts for coffee. Given the pandemic, this goal would need to be adapted to fit the current environment: maybe having a virtual coffee instead.



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While you don't want goals to become moving targets, you do want to make sure they're dynamic, evolving to your current needs, and adapting to what's going on around you professionally. In this way, they continue to fit into the A in S.M.A.R.T—Achievable. This is why revisiting goals frequently is of the utmost importance to ensure you're still on track to reach them.

Ready to start your own organisational mentoring program? →

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# Proximity

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## Introduction

The role that proximity plays in mentoring has most definitely changed over the years.

Where mentoring once solely took form in-person—perhaps with a coffee—it now occurs in many places: over the phone, via email, text, Zoom, Whatsapp, Messenger, Slack... the list of course, goes on.

It's obvious that in our digital world **physical proximity** has changed a few things.

More importantly, **professional proximity** has changed mentoring too.

It's now more common than ever to ensure a variety of mentoring partnerships are accessible within a modern mentoring program.

Some examples of this may include:

- **Mentoring across geographically dispersed or remote working teams**
- **Cross-team, silo or functional mentoring**
- **Peer-to-Peer programs to share tacit knowledge**

In this chapter, we explore some of the roles **physical and professional proximity** play in modern mentoring programs.

Let's get to it.

# Stepping Outside of the Silo

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## When is the right time to find a mentor?

It could be two years into your career, or for Caroline, it could be 15. No matter what stage you're at in your career, it's never too early or too late to seek a mentor.

We had a quick chat to Syngenta mentee, **Caroline Winn, Product Safety Research Portfolio Lead at Syngenta, Jealott's Hill.**

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When I started a new role at Syngenta, I had a mentor from a different department, based in a different location that was a great support. He was always available as a friendly, independent face to listen to my concerns and help me arrive at solutions.

**This experience helped me to see that it's not only a line manager that can offer advice and provide guidance – sometimes it's better if it *isn't* a line manager that plays this role.**

While having a mentor that wasn't my line manager, I found that it was good to get a second opinion of how to tackle certain issues/situations, particularly from someone who wasn't involved in my end-of-year review discussions, i.e. someone who can give an independent view.

I'd just started working on a new project that was quite high profile within the business, working with a completely new set of stakeholders and the whole experience had taken me somewhat out of my comfort zone.

I was fortunate that my mentor always made himself available to discuss my day to day concerns when I asked for support. Additionally, he knew many of the people in my new team, so was able to advise me on how to approach various situations. The opportunity to learn from both of them gave me a well-rounded experience of leadership styles.

Going into this mentoring program, I hope to again build a relationship with my mentor where I can discuss my career pathway, as well as day-to-day topics and concerns in a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

I think it is really important to find a mentor that you are comfortable talking to, and that you respect professionally; this led me to select my new mentor.

My previous interactions with her indicated that she would be a great choice of mentor, as she has a wealth of experience within Syngenta to draw upon, and is very approachable. While we are still in the early days of our mentoring relationship, I can confirm that this is indeed the case!

**What do you think the 'secret' is to a good mentoring relationship?**

Trust and openness.

**And if there wasn't a mentoring program such as this?**

I think there would be less networking, and transfer of knowledge across departments. Despite best intentions, people tend to work in silos with those who they are co-located or in an organisational unit with. Such a program helps to break down these barriers.

**What tips or advice would you like to share with those new to mentoring?**

Give it a go! Don't be shy and be open-minded as to the opportunities that entering into a mentoring relationship could bring. Having more than one mentor/mentee relationship is also perfectly acceptable – you'll find that different people offer different things.

# How 2020 Taught Us Physical Proximity No Longer Matters (for most things)

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Long gone are the days when we had to be physically present to eat food from our favourite restaurants, grocery shop, see a newly-released film, or even do our jobs.

Technology—and the pandemic—have spurred us faster into an almost completely remote culture in which we don't have to do much in person anymore.

Along with convenience, this also provides us with opportunity. And there's no going back—the pandemic has shone a light on the flex future we should strive for that's inclusive for all.

Let's take a look at a few ways this new transition has transformed our lives and how we can harness it to our advantage.

## Remote Work

Remote work truly is the future of work. Even big companies whose C-Suite was previously opposed to remote work have seen the light. Case in point? Twitter and Square CEO Jack Dorsey. Back in February, right before the pandemic lockdown in the US in March, he said the company was seeking to hire globally since the company's concentration in its hometown of San Francisco "is not serving us any longer." However, while open to a more global workforce, he was still sceptical of remote work.

Fast forward to May and not only had Dorsey admitted the company's forced transition into remote work was going better than he'd imagined, [he told](#) staff they could continue to work from home even after the pandemic lockdowns were lifted. Only people with jobs that require a physical presence, such as server maintenance, absolutely need to come in, and once things are back to a new "normal", employees will have the option to come back to the office, but only if they choose.

Seeing as remote work might not just be a solution to working in the pandemic, but the way we work from here on out, how can we help our people adapt and thrive?

As we mentioned in our eBook [The Definitive Guide to Remote Mentoring](#), equipping your people with the right remote tools and processes can help you lay a solid foundation. Once these are in place, engaging in regular check-ins to see how people are coping and finding new ways to work will help you take your workforce's pulse and provide additional support where needed.

## Remote Mentoring

Remote mentoring is another perk of this modern age. Now we can access mentoring partners across teams, offices, and international markets. Levelling the playing field in terms of accessibility. This not only allows for your employees to get to know people not directly related to their professional roles, but helps them better understand how your organisation operates while learning new skills from other, equally experienced team members.

Being connected across devices, work tools, and time zones makes it easier for everyone involved in your mentoring program. Whether they're scheduling a digital meeting or simply need some quick advice, a remote mentoring platform can facilitate all tasks assigned to both mentors and mentees and give you, the program coordinator, the data and clarity needed to cultivate a rich and successful culture of mentoring.

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While we still need physical proximity to receive a much-needed hug or a dose of socialisation (albeit safely these days), thankfully we're perfectly situated to do our jobs and progress with our mentoring relationships from a distance.

What's more, with Mentorloop, we can get you and your team started quickly, from setting up a profile to being matched in a matter of days.

# The Ease of Virtual Mentoring

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Many—if not all—of our relationships have become virtual recently. But there are some perks to these digital connections, especially when it comes to mentoring.

In fact, virtual mentoring has even proven to help [close the loneliness gap](#) during the pandemic.

Here are some of the benefits we've seen of virtual versus in-person mentoring for you and your organisation.

## Getting Started

The idea of launching a mentoring program can be daunting. Traditionally, there were a lot of variables, including getting people to commit to a long-term mentoring relationship, working around people's schedules, getting people physically together in the same space, etc.

With virtual mentoring, getting a program off the ground is much less demanding: everything is in place and ready to go right off the bat. All you need to do is sign people up—a much easier task as people will be more willing to do so with a digitally-based program.

## Finding a Mentor

Back in the mentoring days of old, you had to be located physically close enough to someone that 1. Shared your professional path, 2. Had experience you found relevant, 3. Was willing to mentor you, 4. Actually showed up to your meetings.

Nowadays, however, many of those obstacles have been completely eradicated. Thanks to technology, our mentoring partners can be located anywhere in the world, which provides us with a, quite literal, whole world of opportunities.

When your organisation offers a virtual mentoring platform, it not only gives mentors and mentees opportunities to connect with people they may have never met before that are similarly aligned, it also makes it easier for team leaders to recruit participants, match the cohort effectively, and share resources with all participants.

## Having Meetings

Virtual mentoring relationships also take the burden off of physically having to meet in-person with mentors/mentees (like that's even possible in the world today!). This provides more ease of schedule and a relaxed environment to conduct these catch-ups.

One thing we've learned recently is that meetings are important and should be taken seriously—whether you're taking them from a board room or your couch. This applies to mentoring meetings as well.

And when it comes time to catch up, quality of conversation is key. Your participants will benefit from learning effective mentoring skills, like agenda setting or ['the rule of three'](#).

## Keeping in Touch

Having a mentoring relationship based in the digital realm makes staying in the loop on progress, adapted goals, unanticipated obstacles, and more much easier for participants. They'll be able to always have a pulse on where their mentoring partner is at in terms of progress and what they're dealing with, and will have access to support with a mere message or nudge.

This will make mentoring relationships more successful and fulfilling overall, as participants won't feel isolated in their journeys or as if they're not making progress in the way they want.

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At Mentorloop, whether mentoring happens online or in the real world, we're not here to get in the way; we're here to help guide participants through their journey and provide timely assistance along the way.

We periodically seek feedback from all participants to ensure they're still happy with their partnership and offer timely advice and resources based on the milestones they've reached.

Ready to start your own organisational mentoring program? →

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# Experience

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In this section, we look at the role that 'experience' plays in modern mentoring.

Since mentoring was made mainstream, it has taken on a variety of forms.

Where it once was reserved for those with privilege, blossoming networks and 'high-potentials', today mentoring looks a little different.

And rightfully so.

Here, we'll look at some new ways of mentoring that you may not have considered:

- **Reverse / Shadow Mentoring**
- **Peer-to-Peer Mentoring**
- **Building a Personal Advisory Board**

After this section, consider the role that experience might play in your organisation:

- **Will you only pair 'older' participants with 'younger' participants?**
- **What could reverse mentoring bring to your organisation?**
- **Could your participants benefit from having many mentors from a variety of disciplines?**

# The Typical Mentoring ‘Experience’ Markers—and Why They’re Not the Only Relevant Ones

We’ve discussed how the more rigid roles and skills associated with traditional mentoring relationships are starting to evolve and adapt given not only the new ways of mentoring, but also on the type of mentoring relationships you can have (e.g. peer mentoring and Personal Advisory Boards).

**This means that once commonly-held experience markers for mentors also no longer apply.**

In this section, we’d like to explore some of those more traditional markers and why they’re no longer the only relevant ones in this day and age.

## Typical Mentoring ‘Experience’ Markers

Thanks to Linda Phillips-Jones, Ph.D.’s 2003 “Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentees” (and it’s amazing late-90’s stock photos), we were able to revisit some of these more traditional markers of mentor experience.

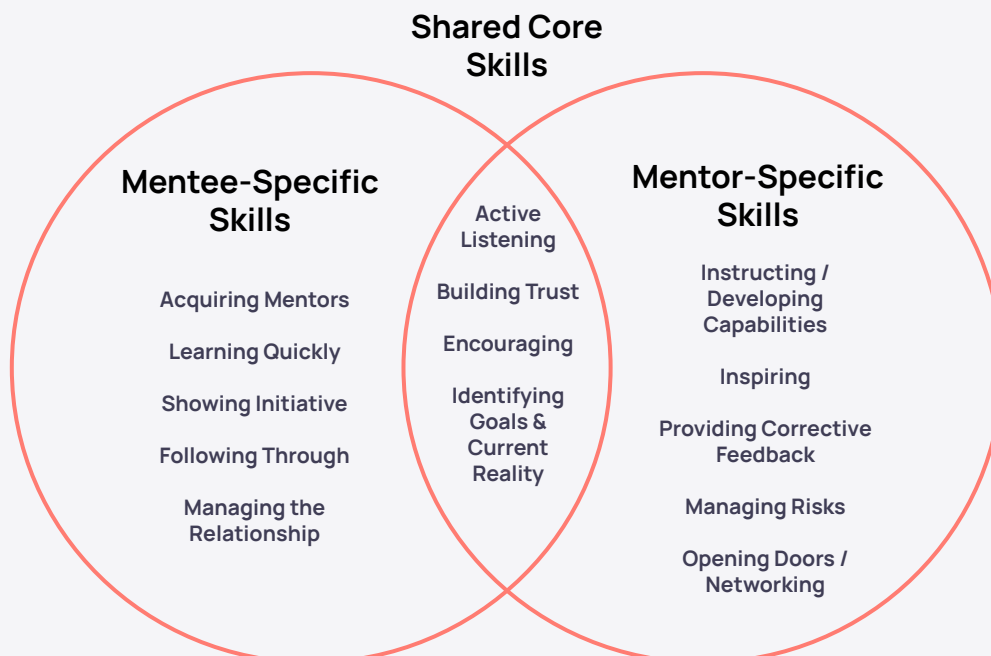
In her report, Phillip-Jones notes that core, mentor-specific skills include:

- Instructing / Developing Capabilities
- Inspiring
- Providing Corrective Feedback
- Managing Risks
- Opening Doors / Networking

These are in addition to those core skills shared by both mentor and mentee, including:

- Active Listening
- Building Trust
- Encouraging
- Identifying Goals & Current Reality

These skills see the mentor as part instructor, part inspirational speaker, part feedback provider, part risk assessor, and part gatekeeper. These all situate the mentor in a more active role, while the mentee takes a more passive one.





## Other Experience Markers that Should Be Considered

The technological and work landscapes have evolved a lot since 2003, but **unfortunately many organisations are *still* taking a late 90's / early 2000's approach to mentoring.**

**Here's what's different now:** the pace at which the aforementioned technological and work landscapes have changed have created a large chasm between those accustomed to the working styles of yesteryear and those accustomed to the always-changing workplace of today.

This means that team members who may be younger and/or more inexperienced professionally may be equally as valuable as mentors to older and/or more experienced employees (called reverse mentoring).

What's more, these younger/more inexperienced team members may also be great mentors to those close in age/work experience (called peer mentoring). They can share tools/advice regarding how they overcame a common obstacle to someone about to embark on a similar path, at a similar time.

**For these types of mentors, additional core skills include:**

- **Ability to simplify and explain new and emerging technologies**
- **Empathy**
- **Willingness to share lived experiences**
- **Honesty**

By employing these additional skills, mentors can relate to their mentoring partners on a more personal level, sharing their own mistakes and triumphs so that others can learn from them as well.

This also reduces any hierarchy between partners, bringing both to the same level where all input and advice is welcomed and valued.

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# What is Reverse Mentoring & How Can You Make It Work for Your Organisation?

As we mentioned in a previous post, reverse mentoring is when younger employees are paired with more senior or even executive team members in order to mentor them on “various topics of strategic and cultural relevance” (HBR).

Basically, it's a mentoring relationship in which the more senior or experienced mentoring partner—someone who would traditionally be seen as the mentor—receives advice and wisdom from a younger or more junior mentoring partner.

## The Perks of Reverse Mentoring

This practice can be particularly useful given the rapid pace at which our technological and social fabric is shifting—and how younger people tend to be more in touch with these types of changes.

### Retention

What's more, it can be a great way to retain millennial talent. As the biggest generation currently in the workforce, and one that likes to switch jobs more frequently than previous generations (60% are open to a new job opportunity right now, and on average they'll have four different jobs before age 32 and as many as 20 in their lifetime, according to [Gallup](#)), millennial retention is a hot topic.

How does reverse mentoring help? When realising that millennials were uninterested in working in financial services and those who did join the company left at higher rates than their older peers, CEO of Advisor Solutions Mark Tibergien told BNY-MellonIPershing they should implement a reverse-mentoring program.

By so doing, [HBR](#) found that millennials were provided with the transparency and recognition they were seeking from management, resulting in a 96% retention rate for the first cohort of BNY-MellonIPershing's millennial mentors.

## Skills, Culture, and Diversity

But reverse mentoring isn't only useful for retention purposes, it can also help older team members learn and master new technical or digital skills (harness social media for professional purposes), improve company culture (understand why people aren't applying or are leaving and make cultural shifts to improve those areas or misconceptions) and promote diversity (improve leadership's understanding of minority issues via person-to-person connections).

## How to Make It Work for Your Organisation

When implementing a reverse-mentoring program, you can do so in a variety of ways.

- **100% Reverse Mentoring Match:** Pair up mentoring partners in which the younger or more junior of the two acts as the mentor.
- **50/50 Traditional/Reverse Mentoring Match:** This relationship acts as a “two-way street”, encouraging both parties to teach, learn, and grow as individuals while developing a stronger, more egalitarian relationship.
- **A Personal Advisory Board:** [The Personal Advisory Board](#) isn't one mentoring relationship, but many, resulting in one's own personal board of advisors. One may act as a more traditional mentor, another as more of a mentee, and even another at the same professional level as you.

Ultimately, reverse mentoring can serve many functions, but in any form it takes, it creates a space in which each person in the relationship is able to bring their own input and expertise to the table, offering different and diverse experiences that are equally valuable.

# The Ins and Outs of Peer Mentoring

**More “traditional” mentoring is rather hierarchical—but modern mentoring has changed. In addition to reverse mentoring, another growing trend is peer mentoring.**

**What is peer mentoring?** This is a type of mentoring relationship in which the difference in age and experience in those involved is less pronounced. First made popular by universities, peer mentoring is starting to get more play in professional environments as well.

Peer mentoring is one partner helping the other that is maybe only a little bit behind them professionally. This way, the obstacles and issues they've recently dealt with are fresh in their mind, and they're more able to speak to their experiences and the tools they employed to push through them.

**But that's not the only perk, peer mentoring also relaxes those traditionally rigid lines between mentor and mentee dictated by age, experience, rank, and more. This provides both partners with a more even playing field to make contributions and help one another.**

Now that you understand why peer mentoring is a mentoring method that can benefit your people, here's how you can implement this type of program within your organisation.

## Finding a Mentor

Unlike a more traditional mentoring relationship in which the parameters are fairly clear cut from what is expected of both parties, the mutual nature of a peer mentoring relationship means team members or team leads need to be more mindful when selecting or matching partners.

**The ideal peer mentor** is someone who shares your work experience, but with a distinctive background than your own. In this way, they'll be able to offer you a unique perspective on both the everyday work and the long-term goals and challenges you both face.

This shared professional foundation with different personal lived experiences provides more exposure to diversity of thought, providing you with different approaches to common scenarios.

Although the work experiences of the two partners should be similar, they shouldn't be identical. After all, the point of a peer mentoring relationship is development, to push you out of long-held routines, roles, or responses that may no longer be serving you in order to further develop yourself and your path.

## Setting Goals

As we've discussed in previous posts, setting S.M.A.R.T. goals is an essential part of any mentoring process. These will help both mentoring partners understand what their counterpart is looking to get out of the relationship, as well as where they're best suited to help the other along the way.

In addition to personal goals, both partners should discuss what they want to accomplish and get out of the relationship together. What is the purpose of your peer mentoring relationship? How do you both intend to create a meaningful partnership together?

Ultimately, reverse mentoring can serve many functions, but in any form it takes, it creates a space in which each person in the relationship is able to bring their own input and expertise to the table, offering different and diverse experiences that are equally valuable.

## Communication is Key

As with any relationship in general, communication is key. Find a mentoring partner with whom you can be open and frank. You understand that directness isn't meant to be hurtful, it's meant to bring blind spots to the surface so that they can be addressed and worked through.

Communication will also keep you both on the same page, ensuring expectations are understood and that tasks are being completed so that goals can be met.

# Why You Need a Personal Advisory Board in 2021

We've recently discussed a few alternatives to traditional mentoring, including reverse mentoring and peer-to-peer mentoring. In this post we'd like to take a deeper dive into yet another alternative: a Personal Advisory Board (PAB) style of mentoring.

## What is a Personal Advisory Board?

A PAB consists of not one mentor, but many. Instead of having one "master mentor", you'll have access to a range of people with different perspectives and lived experiences.

This will allow you to build a support network you can turn to and lean on—in both good times and bad—with each member having their own distinct skills and areas of expertise.

## Who is Part of a Personal Advisory Board?

Your PAB may include:

- **A more traditional, "master mentor":** Someone who is older and more professionally experienced than you are.
- **A reverse mentor:** Someone more junior than you that can help you adjust to technological and cultural shifts.
- **A peer-to-peer mentor:** Someone about the same age and/or at the same professional stage as you—or just a tiny bit ahead—who is going through the same battles and challenges you are.
- **A cheer squad mentor:** Someone who is there to encourage and support you every step of the way.
- **A subject matter expert mentor:** Someone with loads of experience in a field or topic you'd like to learn more about/become an expert in yourself.

## Creating a Personal Advisory Board

To find the best people to serve on your PAB, start by identifying your own strengths and weaknesses. When it comes to your weaknesses, rank them based on your desire to improve in each, and then look for people that can help you fill those gaps.

Next, consider all possible matches, not ruling out individuals simply because they lack knowledge of or experience in your specific industry. Oftentimes, the general knowledge and experience an outsider brings to the table can provide you with the clarity you need to define a suitable path.

Last but not least, look for those individuals who are willing to [share their experiences](#), rather than solely provide prescriptive solutions. Absorbing these stories will allow you to filter out the lessons and apply them to your own situation.

## What are the Benefits?

More often than not, one single mentor cannot give you everything you need in terms of guidance, advice, direction, motivation, etc. This is where the PAB shines: given its make up of different individuals, every one of those people will be able to give you something you need, together creating that illusive, "perfect" mentor.

What's more, your PAB can help you upskill in multiple disciplines, providing you with a wider net of expertise, each mentor passionate and perfectly placed to guide you in their particular area of expertise.

These multiple perspectives will also expose you to a diversity of thought, challenging you to solve problems from a multitude of perspectives and approaches.

**Ultimately, with the right Personal Advisory Board, you'll be empowered, educated, and ready to apply the best ideas from a powerful group of minds to your life and career.**

# Inclusion

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**When it comes to diversity and inclusion, every organisation will approach this criteria differently.**

Mentorloop's algorithmic matching assists this decision-making by helping your matching outcomes avoid the unconscious advocacy pathways that naturally form when 'like is attracted to like.'

Historically when this has occurred naturally, we often see the same type of people gain access to opportunities. This perpetuates the same type of people moving further into positions of influence.

**This is your opportunity to interrupt that pattern—to ensure that all of your people are given the support and equal-opportunity that they deserve.**

After this section, consider how you may address diversity and inclusion in your program.

For example, is one of your program's goals to drive leadership opportunities for under-represented groups? Addressing this early on will assist you in selecting your matching criteria.



# Opposites Attract: Why You Should Consider a Mentoring Partner with a Different Lived Experience

It's easy to be drawn to those that are similar to us. In fact, it's scientifically proven that we are and will continue to be.

According to [Psychology Today](#), this is due to factors like:

- **Certainty of being liked:** "We assume that someone who has a lot in common with us is more likely to like us. And in turn, we are more likely to like people if we think they like us."
- **Consensual validation:** "Meeting people who share our attitudes makes us feel more confident in our own attitudes about the world."
- **Cognitive evaluation:** "We learn that a person has something in common with us, and that makes us feel positively about that person, because we feel positively about ourselves."

Furthermore, although studies have found that a benefit of relationships is that we can gain new experiences and knowledge by spending time with someone else ([self-expansion theory](#))—and that a dissimilar person would be more likely to actually provide new experiences and knowledge—[research](#) has shown that people are still more likely to see self-expansion opportunities when interacting with someone who is similar, rather than dissimilar, to them.

That's why it takes more of a conscious effort to intentionally choose someone who is dissimilar to you to serve as your mentoring partner. Now this isn't to say that this person should be 100% different than you—after all, it's difficult to establish rapport with someone you have nothing in common with.

Instead, as we've mentioned previously, someone who shares a similar (but not necessarily the same) professional foundation with you but has a distinctive background than your own is ideal.

## The Perks of Difference

Being in a mentoring partnership with someone who shares professional experience but has a different personal, lived experience provides more exposure to diversity of thought.

And what can exposure to more diversity of thought do for you? It turns out, a whole lot.

First and foremost, this person will be able to offer you a unique perspective on both your day-to-day work life and the short- and long-term goals and obstacles you both face.

What's more, social scientist [Adam Galinsky](#) found that people who have deep relationships with people different from them—like someone from another country—become more creative.

You'll also increase your adaptability, making it easier for you to take changes in stride, face challenges, and learn how to better accept and embrace new and different ideas—all helping to improve your interpersonal relationships at work.

Your communication skills will also improve. By expanding your range of viewpoints and working with people from different backgrounds, you'll learn how to communicate better with everyone around you.

Last but not least, it can make you more innovative, allowing you to engage in better brainstorming and problem solving and helping you get unstuck out of old routines.

**Ultimately, there's a whole lot to be gained by intentionally fostering relationships with those different from us; so why not make the non-obvious choice?**

[Book a Demo](#)

# What Role Does Equity and Equality Play in Your Inclusion Plans?

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We've never needed connection—and reconnection—more than we have during the social distancing days of the pandemic.

Thankfully, that aim is at the heart and soul of mentoring.

At Mentorloop, we believe that the right connection can change your life. That's because we've found that the best personal and professional growth is achieved through human connection, knowledge exchange and shared experiences.

This is why we've dedicated ourselves to making these connections more accessible, ensuring that every individual can thrive. How do we do it? By ensuring both equity and equality are in play.

## The Importance of Equity and Equality

The right mentoring program should level the playing field to empower entire cohorts of people: workplaces, member associations, social groups and educational institutions. Equality should be a cherished value so that every individual can thrive—whatever they are, whatever their background, however they worship or whomever they love. But we can't arrive at equality without its often forgotten partner, equity.

**Equity and equality are two strategies we can use in an effort to produce fairness in our workplaces.**

**Equity** is giving everyone what they need to be successful. **Equality** is treating everyone the same. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. At first glance, equity may appear 'unfair', but it actively moves everyone closer to success by levelling the playing field.

At the end of the day, you can't have one without the other if you're building a diverse and inclusive workplace.

## Eliminating Unconscious Bias from Mentoring


Not everyone starts at the same place, and not everyone has the same needs. That means that in order to create an equal and equitable mentoring program, we need to eliminate unconscious bias, ensure diversity is present and—even more so—that being inclusive is at the very top of everyone's priority list.

When organisations leave mentoring to happen on its own rather than using algorithmic matching, biases are reinforced. The same cookie-cutter people of influence are elevated, and privileges are reinforced. It's often simply because people are blindly biased to warm to or select someone that reminds them of themselves at an earlier stage.

## The Benefits of Algorithmic Matching

Most mentoring programs either give participants a compatibility score that's based on similarities between profiles or pair up people based on skills gaps (e.g. the person who wants to learn to dance salsa is paired with the person who can teach salsa dancing).

The problem with this is that it's regressive: the person who's at the top of the list will likely get the best match, meaning Adam Anderson is getting a far better experience than Xavier Zander. That's because the first two people to match (person A and B) get the best match possible (100%), but the third person (person C) may have been a 100% match with person A. But they don't get to match with them, so they get the second-best match: person D (80%). The further you go down the list, the worse it gets—the last two people are probably not even worth pairing. Thankfully, algorithmic matching can solve this problem.



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Another issue is that when program coordinators pair people, they often are swayed by their preconceived notions of a person (e.g. the person's skills, personality type, the colour of their skin, gender, sexuality, body type even!). Algorithmic matching helps remove some of this unconscious bias from the pairing process.

## Selecting the Right Program for You

**A mentoring program needs to do two things:**

1. Ensure it can surface the best quality matches for participants, and
2. Ensure that the whole cohort gets an equitable match.

A mentoring solution provider that champions both equity and equality should have these values woven into every aspect of their offering, team culture, and approach to work—both internally and externally.

The program's algorithm should look at all of the individuals and ensure everyone receives an equitable match. So, even if a person doesn't get a mentoring partner that's a 100% match for them, they'll get close. The people last in line will also have the same level of opportunity.

At Mentorloop, our algorithm matches people not only on what their interests or goals are, they're matched in relation to the rest of the cohort. This is to ensure that every individual within an organisation receives an equitable match.

What's more, as new matches are made every day, the latest version of our data-driven matching algorithm continues to learn through a feedback loop, improving accuracy and projections for new pairings in the future.

**Ultimately, through Mentorloop's accessible approach to mentoring, organisations and their people (members, students, employees) will achieve better results in both work and life.**

## Ready to be a people hero?

Chat to one of our Mentoring Experts and learn how you too can run one of the most successful organisational mentoring programs worldwide, with Mentorloop.

[Book a Demo](#)



# Summary

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In this eBook, we've presented five key areas to consider when forming your matching criteria:

- Skills
- Goals
- Proximity
- Experience
- Inclusion

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