PLANNING = MENTORING SUCCESS

Jump-start your mentoring program on the path to success with these key program planning tips.

1. DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES AND SECURE LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

You would be surprised by the number of mentoring programs without clear objectives or strong buy-in. Such programs often struggle because there is no consensus of what success looks like. Good objectives are SMART - specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. For example, "The goal of our mentoring program is to help new employees become 80 percent productive by the end of their first six months." Objectives provide direction to program participants and help organizational leaders understand why they should offer their support. Make sure to identify a senior leader who believes strongly in the program and is willing serve as its executive champion. This person will prove to be a critical resource and advocate.

2. FIND A STRONG, PASSIONATE PROGRAM MANAGER

Selecting the right program manager is critical to your mentoring program. A strong program manager doesn't guarantee success. But a weak one will guarantee underwhelming results. Program managers provide essential ongoing support, training and coaching to participants. They identify opportunities and troubleshoot issues, working with stakeholders to make ongoing adjustments to keep the program thriving. They also are instrumental in promoting the program to potential participants and serve as the programs ambassador (along with the executive champion) to the organization. Passion, excellent communication and organizational skills are a must. Prior experience in serving as a mentor is bonus.

3. BUILD FLEXIBILITY INTO THE PROGRAM

Successful mentoring programs balance the dueling needs of structure and flexibility. A level of formality is needed within the mentoring process, participant training, progress tracking, and communication to help the program run smoothly. Yet mentoring is about individual learning and growth, which means participant needs will vary in outcomes sought and preferred methods of learning. When planning a mentoring program, identify areas that require flexibility and build them into the program. Areas to consider include: mentoring format (one-to-one, group), duration, and participant interaction tools.
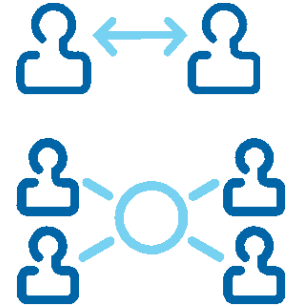
Will your mentoring program be one-to-one or a group mentoring format?

4. PUT YOUR MARKETNG HAT ON

When new mentoring programs are introduced in organizations, there is generally natural enthusiasm. Yet this enthusiasm doesn't always translate into high participation rates. A common reason is the absence of effective promotion. Don't assume potential mentors and mentees understand the benefits. For many, this will be their first opportunity to participate in mentoring. You will need to convince them participating is worth their time and effort. Beyond participants, key leaders and stakeholders need to be educated on the benefits of the program and strategic value to the organization.

5. THINK WIN- WIN

Consider the needs of mentors. Building a solid base of mentors can be a challenge. A key is to understand the positive and negative factors that impact mentor participation. Once you have identified them, look for creative ways to reinforce positive drivers and lower the hurdles of negative ones throughout the mentoring process. For example, mentors are often busy people with limited time to spend. How can you help mentors be more efficient with the time they have to dedicate to mentoring? Also consider recognition and reward strategies. Formally recognizing mentor involvement can be very motivating to those mentors and help attract new ones.

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6. PREPARE PARTICIPANTS FOR SUCCESS

Productive mentoring doesn't just happen. Provide training to mentors and mentees regarding the programs goals, participant roles, mentoring best practices, and your mentoring process. Help mentors and mentees clarify their own objectives. The need for training and guidance doesn't end after the initial orientation. Provide tips and best practices throughout the mentoring program to help participants stay on track and get the most out of the program.
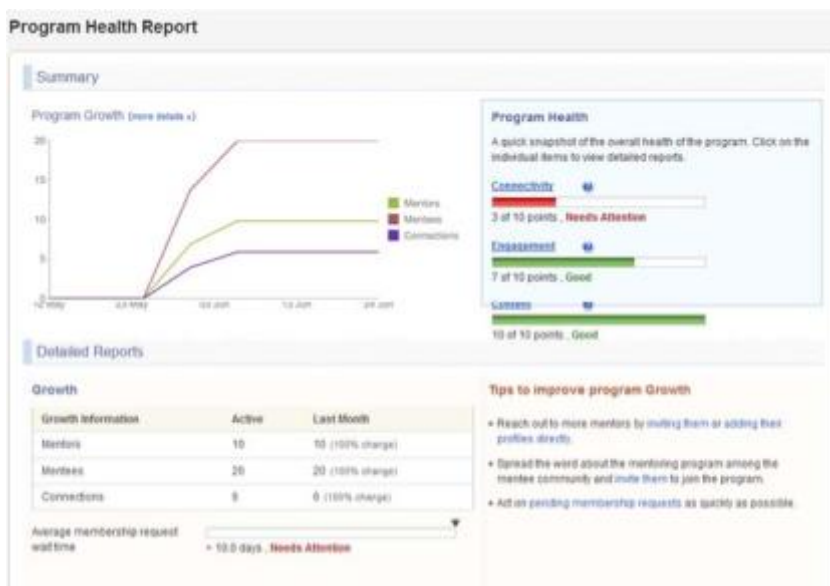
7. EMBRACE THE ROLE OF MATCHMAKER

For mentoring to thrive, a solid relationship needs to form between mentor and mentee. A critical step in the mentoring process is matching mentors to mentees. Consider giving mentees a say in the matching process by allowing them to select a particular mentor or list their top three choices. Mentoring management software can improve and speed up the matching process. Through intelligent profile matching functionality, suitable mentors are recommended based on learning needs and compatibility.

8. TRACK, MEASURE, LISTEN AND TUNE

How will you know if your mentoring program is a success? You won't unless you track program and connection metrics and ask for feedback. At the program level, build metrics around defined objectives (see Tip #1 above). Also, be sure to assess the outcomes of individual mentor and mentee connections. One of the easiest ways to measure success and capture feedback is through surveys. Ask participants and stakeholders how well the mentoring program met their goals and the goals of the organization. Also ask them for their ideas for improving the program.

Software can help you track program progress and generate metrics.

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9. BRING CLOSURE TO INDIVIDUAL MENTORING CONNECTIONS

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10. BROADCAST SUCCESSES

After a mentoring program begins, the focus naturally shifts into operating the program and keeping it running smoothly. Keep in mind, there are likely many more potential participants out there waiting for signs that joining the program is worth their time and effort. Continually demonstrate the value of the program, recognize participant contributions and spotlight successes. These efforts will bring energy to the program, expand participation and increase overall support within the organization.

CONCLUSION

Now that you've learned a few best practices for making your mentoring program a success, we hope you'll consider Chronus Mentor software as your mentoring program management tool. Chronus Mentor is software to easily start, manage, and measure mentoring programs online. With Chronus Mentor, you can drive participant engagement while simplifying program administration, resulting in a more productive, cost-effective mentoring experience. This configurable, cloud-based solution is ideal for use by corporations, government entities, academic institutions and associations.

ABOUT CHRONUS CORPORATION

Chronus is a leading provider of talent and career development software for enterprise-scale organizations. Chronus empowers mentoring, coaching, and continuous learning initiatives by combining cloud-based software and program best practices to provide a complete talent development solution. Chronus' solutions, including Chronus Mentor, Chronus Coach, and Chronus Spark, are used by more than 500,000 professionals worldwide at leading institutions including PNC Bank, Staples, MIT, and the American Diabetes Association.

MORE INFORMATION

For further information on promoting a mentoring program, or to schedule a demo of Chronus Mentor, visit www.chronus.com.

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