How to Establish a Successful Mentoring Program

A useful mentoring program connects a clear learning goal with regular support. Start with a manageable pilot and build around participants' needs, time, and feedback.

DESIGN A PROGRAM PEOPLE CAN USE

1. **Choose a purpose.** Define the goal: onboarding, technical development, career exploration, or leadership growth. Name a sponsor and a program owner.

2. **Invite participation fairly.** Explain eligibility and expectations. Make participation voluntary, communicate opportunities broadly, and offer an easy way to request a new match.

3. **Match for learning needs.** Consider the mentee's goals, mentor experience, availability, and preferences. Avoid assuming similarity alone creates a good match.

4. **Prepare both participants.** Explain listening, feedback, goal setting, and boundaries. Mentors support development; they do not replace a manager or guarantee a promotion.

5. **Protect time and trust.** Set a realistic meeting cadence and clarify what stays private. Explain limits to confidentiality, including issues that must be referred to HR.

Start small and learn

Pilot for 90 days, ask what is useful, and adjust before expanding the program.

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A simple 90-day mentoring plan

Use this as a starting point. Participants should adapt the cadence and activities to the goal and available time.

When	Conversation / action	Output
Kickoff	Agree on goals, roles, schedule, confidentiality, and a rematching process.	A short mentoring agreement
Days 1-30	Discuss the skill or challenge; choose one practical activity.	One learning goal and first action
Days 31-60	Review progress, discuss feedback, and work through an obstacle.	An example of learning applied
Days 61-90	Reflect on results and decide whether to continue, adjust, or conclude.	Next-step plan and program feedback

MENTORING AGREEMENT PROMPTS

Learning goal: _____

Meeting cadence and format: _____

First activity and due date: _____

How we will assess progress: _____

Evaluate participation, meeting consistency, goal progress, and participant feedback. Review access across teams and work arrangements. Treat retention or promotion changes as signals to investigate, not proof that mentoring caused them.

Keep it practical

Give participants a contact for support and permission to adapt the relationship when the match or goal changes.

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