

HOW TO CREATE A PILOT MENTORING PROGRAM



A THOUGHT PAPER BY MANAGEMENT MENTORS

FALL 2013



How to Create a Pilot Mentoring Program

Congratulations on your organization's decision to invest in a pilot mentoring program. As you're probably well aware by now, mentoring provides program participants and the organization itself with numerous benefits.

Mentoring can truly transform mentorees and help them get “unstuck” and take control of their careers. For mentors, mentoring allows them to give back to the organization, to “pay it forward,” and to strengthen their interpersonal relationship skills. For the program manager, mentoring provides a way to become an even better manager and leader. And for the organization, a mentoring program is a great way to [attract top talent](#), [develop existing talent](#), and [support diversity initiatives](#).

Of course, the success (or failure) of the pilot program will likely dictate how—and if—your organization will continue on this mentoring path. And that's where this white paper comes in. Use it as your guide as you develop, implement, and evaluate your program.

The good news? Setting up a pilot program isn't as daunting as you might think. Essentially, it has two major components—selecting a mentoring program manager and creating the program itself based on seven straightforward action areas. Below, we'll go through each major component and each action area in detail.

Let's get to it.

Selecting Your Mentoring Program Manager (MPM)

What should I look for in potential MPMs?

When identifying potential MPMs, consider the three Cs: credibility, compassion, and common sense.

Credibility. Your MPM must have high credibility at all levels of the organization. Remember, people need to feel comfortable going to the MPM to discuss issues and other confidential matters. Not only must the MPM be trustworthy and well respected, but also he or she must be *perceived* as trustworthy and well respected by the people within your organization. People's perceptions are just as important (if not more important) than reality.

Compassion. MPMs must have the best interests of the organization and the mentoring pairs at heart. The MPM must also have the ability to understand people. If the MPM asks participants how things are going, he or she needs to interpret, based on things like nonverbal gestures, how things are really going. This requires sensitivity and an ability to read people.

Common sense. We all know people with high IQs, yet their "street smarts" are lacking. Common sense goes a long way, especially in mentoring programs. The MPM needs wisdom to exercise good judgment on sensitive issues and to resolve them appropriately. For example, if a mentor is too aggressive or if mentors are not meeting with their mentorees, MPMs need to be comfortable with confronting people, but they also need to be diplomatic and tactful in how they go about it.

What does an MPM do?

During the pilot program, the MPM typically works with 20 to 30 individuals (10 to 15 pairs). The MPM contacts the pairs on a regular basis, making certain the relationships are going well and that the mentoring program is achieving its goals. The MPM offers each pair whatever resources they need. The MPM also becomes the organization's internal mentoring expert, serving as a resource for various departments and divisions that have an interest in pursuing mentoring.

How does the MPM learn about mentoring? Is there special training?

At Management Mentors, we offer an [affordable e-learning course that certifies mentoring program managers](#) and gives them the knowledge and tools they need in order to be successful in their new roles. Is the course a requirement? No. (But we highly recommend it.) A wide variety of mentoring resources exist online, such as e-books, articles, and even webinars, so that people can teach themselves and learn as they go.



Think of the MPM as your program's center, its grounding force. Your pilot program begins and ends with this person, so it's important you select someone who is genuinely interested in the role and in mentoring in general.

Beyond initial training and the initial program setup, how much time should the MPM expect to devote to the program each week?

The amount of time can vary, but, on average, an MPM spends one to four hours per week coordinating the project, depending on how often the mentor-mentoree pairs meet. If the MPM uses an online system like [MentoringComplete](#), his or her time investment will be significantly less, more like two hours a month.



Creating a Pilot Mentoring Program

After the MPM is selected, the next step in the process is creating the actual pilot program. This begins with the MPM forming a task force of 6-8 people. Members of the task force should represent a cross-section of the organization, including potential mentors and mentorees, supervisory personnel, and any stakeholders who can bring value to the process. For example, a representative from human resources might help tie department goals with the goals of the mentoring program.

The task force then focuses on seven action areas:

1. Determining the program's goals
2. Choosing the right mentoring model
3. Identifying the selection criteria for mentors and mentorees
4. Defining other critical components of the program
5. Recruiting and interviewing potential candidates
6. Matching participants
7. Evaluating results at the end of the program

Let's look at each action area in detail.

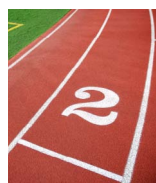


Determining the program's goals

You might think the very concept of "creating a mentoring program" is enough of a goal, but ask yourself what you want your pilot program to accomplish. Do you want to grow existing talent and help them with their leadership skills? Are you

looking to create a more diverse workforce? Are you hoping to hone the skills of your junior associates as part of a succession plan?

Your program's goals will be specific to your organization's needs. Discuss the goals among your task force members and agree on one to two main goals. These goals will guide you when making other decisions pertaining to your program, and you will articulate these goals to your mentors and mentorees as well.



Choosing the right mentoring model

Mentoring isn't a one size fits all solution. You customize your program depending on your organization's needs, the goals you've outlined, and the resources available. The four main mentoring models include one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring, self-directed

mentoring, and situational mentoring (what we call [Anytime Mentoring](#)). A variety of subsets exist, including peer mentoring, reverse mentoring, and speed mentoring (the last two are more akin to coaching, but people still perceive them as mentoring).

You're probably thinking that selecting the right model might be difficult, given the many different "flavors" you have to choose from. Don't worry! We created a free white paper that not only defines each mentoring model, but also identifies which one will likely work with certain organizations. [You can download that white paper here.](#)



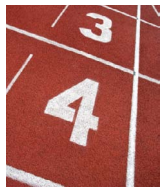


Identifying the selection criteria for mentors and mentorees

You already know the types of program participants you want: people who are eager, committed, and willing to do the work that will lead to transformation.

However, depending on the model you choose and your program's specific goals, you might need to identify additional criteria. For example, if the goal of your program is to develop the leadership skills among your junior talent, you will need to indicate who qualifies as junior talent and who qualifies as veteran talent (e.g. will you base it on years with the organization or years working within the industry?).

The other thing you need to keep in mind is this: pilot programs are purposely small (20-30 individuals, resulting in 10-15 pairs). The pilot program is essentially a beta test, a trial run. After the pilot program finishes, you'll determine if you've chosen the right MPM, the best model, and so forth. Since it's a small program, you'll need to have other selection criteria in place so that you can control the number of participants. For example, perhaps you limit the pilot program to three specific departments, or perhaps you only accept mentors who've been with the company for a certain number of years.



Recruiting and interviewing potential candidates

The best way to develop interest in your pilot mentoring program is through good old-fashioned marketing. Announce the upcoming program in all internal communications, like company-wide newsletters. Post information where people congregate, such as the lunch or break rooms. Send an organization-wide email that clearly outlines the program specifics and the potential benefits participants can expect to experience. Make sure you have one point of contact—your MPM.

When it comes to interviewing potential candidates, use the selection criteria you came up with in action item #3 above. If you get more interest than you have room for in this program, that's OK—that's a good problem to have. Let people know that due to overwhelming interest, you'll need to waitlist people until the next program, but that they will be at the top of the list for the next round.



Defining other critical components of the program

It's important to create a blueprint for program participants, and that's what this action item entails. How long will the program last (9-12 months is the typical length for formal one-to-one programs)? How often do you expect pairs to meet and for how long? What role, if any, will technology play? And so forth.

Once your task force agrees on these components, create a one-sheet

outlining them. The MPM can share this one sheet with the mentors and mentorees so that everyone is on the same page.



Matching participants

You're looking for compatibility as opposed to chemistry. What's the difference between the two? Well, chemistry is an intense, very personal feeling that consists of an initial connection or attraction

between two individuals that may develop into a strong, emotional bond. Unstructured and unpredictable, it is the basis for an informal mentoring relationship.

Compatibility, on the other hand, occurs when individuals work together in harmony to achieve a common purpose. In formal mentoring, that means a more-seasoned person leading someone less experienced through a structured professional-development program in much the same way teachers facilitate learning.

As you interview people, ask them . . .

- Their goals
- How they would describe their communication style
- What they're looking for in a mentor/mentoree
- The challenges they face (this would be for potential mentorees)
- Other questions that may be relevant to your program's specific goals (see #1)

Based on your program's goals, your selection criteria, and these interviews, you'll get a sense of how you want to match people. The members of the task force will discuss their recommendations with the MPM who will finalize the matches.

Note: We understand the matching process can feel like the hardest, most complicated part of the whole process. It's definitely the section that involves the most time. That's why we offer our [Precision Matching Tool](#) at an affordable cost for small pilot programs.

Precision Matching eliminates the need for the extensive in-person interviews, since candidates fill out online questionnaires. The tool then recommends matches based on the answers people provide on these questionnaires. The MPM still has ultimate control.

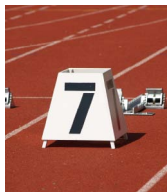




With the Precision Matching tool, the MPM can:

- Weigh certain components as more important or relevant than other components
- Use filters to fine tune matches for auto matching or 3-step matching
- Edit matches based upon information gathered that would influence a good match

Learn more about Precision Matching [here](#).



Evaluating program results

The whole point of launching a pilot mentoring program is to test the waters, see how it works, and learn how to improve and do things differently moving forward. So this “post mortem” step is incredibly important. You’ll want to get feedback—positive and negative—from program participants. You can request they email the MPM with feedback, take a short survey, or take part in face-to-face “exit interviews” with the MPM (the latter, of course, would be the most time

consuming). The MPM would compile all this data for the task force to discuss.

Items to look at:

- Did the program achieve its goals?
- Was the mentoring model effective? Why or why not? Would a different model be better? Why?
- How many pairs completed the program?
- How many people were satisfied with their matches?
- How many pairs were satisfied with the overall program?
- Did the MPM receive any feedback on his or her role?
- Is there a common theme in regards to what program participants liked or didn’t like about the program, the matching process, and/or the MPM?

From there, discuss what changes you’d make for the next program. Keep a detailed account of this entire conversation, all the feedback, and the recommended changes so that the next team can study them and learn from what this pilot program accomplished.

What if your pilot program was a success?

What should happen next?

If the consensus is that the pilot program was a success, then you’re ready to create a larger program for the next round. You’d follow the same steps as above, but, depending on the size, you might need more people on your task force and/or two (or more) MPMs. This is also when online mentoring software, like [MentoringComplete](#), can make a big difference in launching an organization-wide program.

What if your pilot program was a failure?

We don’t like using the word “failure,” but we understand and recognize that not all pilot programs are going to be a smashing success. Acknowledge what didn’t work, keep in mind what did, and consider trying again with another small program—one that addresses the issues you had in your pilot program and that improves on the things it did well. Before you launch, it would make sense to [bring on a mentoring consultant](#) who can provide expertise and objective advice on what you can do better in the next round.

Here’s to your mentoring success! We wish you much luck.

Congratulations again to you and your organization for investing in a pilot mentoring program. We hope you found this white paper helpful and that you feel confident about what needs to happen next on your end.

Please know that we offer many [free resources on our website](#), as well as [affordable e-learning courses](#) and [ebooks](#). And, of course, if you have a specific question, [feel free to contact us](#).

About Management Mentors

For over two decades, [Management Mentors](http://www.management-mentors.com) has been designing and implementing world-class corporate mentoring programs and helping companies attract and retain high potential employees. Based outside of Boston, Mass., Management Mentors' corporate mentoring programs develop future leaders and create a more diverse workforce by removing the barriers to equal opportunity. Management Mentors has achieved a 90% success rate with pairs it matches using a thoughtful, proven process. Current and past clients include Enterprise Rent-A-Car, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, The New York Times Corporation, The City of Tallahassee, FedEx Kinkos, TJX Corporation, and Sony Music Corporation. For more information on how your firm can enjoy greater success through mentoring, contact us at 617.789.4622 or visit us at www.management-mentors.com.



Management Mentors

P.O. Box 67291 | Chestnut Hill, MA 02167

617-789-4622 | www.management-mentors.com