

# Seven Reasons Mentoring Programmes Lose Momentum

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DEVELOP LEADERS • DELIVER STRATEGY • DRIVE RESULTS

Find out how to keep your programme energised and effective



# Introduction

Mentoring has huge value to add to organisations. It helps you retain talent. It helps you develop people. And it helps empower employees to manage their careers.

So, why - if they add so much value - do mentoring programmes lose energy and momentum? In this ebook, I'll share with you the seven reasons a mentoring programme might lose momentum. And I'll recommend some steps to address them.

I wrote this ebook to address questions I hear from Learning and Development professionals who are tasked with starting or reinvigorating a Mentoring Programme in their organisation. I hope it helps you too.

So, if you want to re-energise your mentoring programme, read on.

If you have any questions, please get in touch.

*Antoinette*

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# Reason 1: Lack of a clear purpose and strategy

If mentoring is going to add value to the organisation, you must align it to the business strategy. It must have a clear purpose. What benefits will mentoring deliver and how will those benefits help the company achieve its vision?

Start by looking at the organisation's vision, strategy and goals. Then think about the challenges it needs to overcome to achieve them. By determining how mentoring can help overcome those challenges, you can build a business case. For example, is staff turnover an issue? Is employee engagement low? Do you want to increase diversity in the ranks of senior leadership? Answering these questions will help you decide on the purpose of mentoring. From this you can determine the specific outcomes you want to achieve and how you will measure results.

For example, a common strategic aim for mentoring is staff retention. For mentoring to impact on staff turnover you need to identify who leaves and why, and whether mentoring will make a difference. Then you can focus on a target group and their specific needs. If the issue is that you lose new employees, mentoring can be part of your on-boarding programme. If you are not keeping graduates, their ongoing professional development may be the key. If the issue is equity for particular groups, mentoring may support career development. If you need succession planning, you can target high potential employees and link them with senior people in key positions. By measuring retention rates before and after you introduce mentoring, you will be able to measure the impact. Then you can calculate the return on investment.

# Reason 2: Lack of commitment and buy in from managers

For a programme to work it needs commitment from senior management to make the investment. But it also needs commitment from other managers and the target population to make it happen.

One strategy for gaining commitment is to make sure the CEO communicates that mentoring is a priority. You can also provide evidence of the need for the programme as well as the benefits that the organisation can gain. But the most powerful way to engage stakeholders is to involve them in the planning process.

The best way to start is with a strategy workshop where you bring people together to discuss what's required. You need senior decision-makers on board so they understand what's involved and are willing to provide resources. You also need some mid-level leaders involved so you can address any of their concerns and suggestions. And, having some of your target population involved will help you design a programme that works for both mentors and mentees.

To maintain momentum, you need to continue to reinforce the value of mentoring after the programme is underway. You want managers to encourage their people to take part and remain committed. Communicate through every available channel – talk, write, use visual aids – to keep them aware of mentoring's value and the CEO's commitment to it.

# Reason 3: Lack of co-ordination and Administration



To maintain the momentum of a mentoring programme, you need a person or a team who handles the programme. Time, as well as money, must be committed to the initiative. Their role is to plan the programme, organise events, share resources, check progress and report results.

They need to have excellent organisation, project management and interpersonal skills. They need to develop and put in place a plan that details communication, training and evaluation activities. It should also specify resources, budget and timeline.

# Reason 4: Lack of engagement from mentors and mentees

Attracting and engaging participants in your mentoring programme relies on great communication. Once you have planned your mentoring strategy, you need to promote it. Although most people agree that mentoring is a good idea, not everyone will prioritise it over conflicting demands.

Promotion could include management briefings and employee information sessions, posters, brochures, information kits, an intranet page, online presentations or videos that communicate the value of mentoring.

Social proof is one of the most powerful ways to engage people. Don't try and force people to accept mentoring if they don't see the value in it and aren't interested. Find positive, willing volunteers and let them lead by example. Work with them to get positive results. Then, communicate their success to the rest of the organisation. Create the idea that people not involved are missing out!

Storytelling is another powerful tool for engaging participants. Gather testimonials and encourage participants to share their success stories. Those can be in person, in the written word or via audio or video.

Role modelling is a third powerful tool for engaging participants. Enlist the CEO, senior managers and selected "champions" who will be happy to take part in the Programme. Ask them to share their experience of mentoring and the value they have gained from it.

# Reason 5: Lack of training

Every reference you'll read on mentoring best practice is emphatic that training mentors and mentees is critical to success. In fact, research suggests that the success rate of mentoring triples when both mentor and mentee are trained at the outset.

The biggest reason to train mentors and mentees is that although people understand, intellectually, the value of mentoring, they don't know it's real power until they experience an actual mentoring conversation. You can tell them and they can read about the process and techniques. But, they will only discover the impact when they experience being listened to without being judged or told what to do, see for themselves the amazing ability of people to find their own answers when given the space and support to do so, and feel the synergy that can occur when people share their learning and experience.

Training is best conducted face-to-face. It provides the opportunity for participants to meet and build rapport in a supportive environment that promotes networking with their peers. Mentors and mentees alike appreciate the support of fellow participants. Group activities break the ice and make it easy to get started. Resource materials, such as workbooks, become useful references over the life of the relationship.

It's a good idea to provide a workshop each for mentors and mentees, separately, then bring them together at a launch event to get them off to a good start. Follow-up group sessions are a feature of best practice programmes. If it is not workable to get people together regularly, webinars can be very effective as an alternative.



# Reason 6: Lack of ongoing support

It's also important to support mentors and mentees during the life of the Programme. You can't just partner people and expect them to get on with it. Some will prosper. But many, with good intentions, will be unsure about what they should be doing and how to go about it. And when people are busy, uncertainty in how to progress will lead to inactivity. The coordinator needs to follow-up to check that mentoring is happening and both parties are happy. Most problems in mentoring relationships can be solved with early recognition and action.

To provide adequate support to mentors and mentees, build it into your plan and budget. Areas to consider include:

- Regular, two-way communication to keep everyone engaged. A well-designed support programme provides a forum, online or face-to-face, for participants to ask questions, interact with their peers and get feedback.
- Resources and activities over the life of the programme. Follow-up materials such as newsletters, tips and tools can be critical in keeping participants engaged. They can also help keep supervisors and managers up to date.
- Networking opportunities. Networking events can combine social support with learning activities on specific topics. Where face-to-face networking is impractical you can use webinars.
- Help for participants. You definitely need a “go-to person” that participants can talk to if they have difficulties. This person should be accessible by phone or online, for quick answers, reassurance or an in-depth discussion.
- Progress reviews and feedback. The coordinator or manager of the programme should regularly check in with participants to see how things are going and resolve any issues.



# Reason 7. Lack of evaluation

With ever-increasing demands on resources, it is critical that mentoring is shown to have a positive impact on the organisation that invests in it and the people involved. You need to know and be able to show how effective the mentoring programme is; what value people are getting from it; and whether there are ways to improve the programme.

You will want to track records of progress, before and after measures and participant feedback. Those might include group reviews, personal interviews, questionnaires and data analytics. Data should be gathered over the life of the programme and reported periodically and strategically. For example, success stories in the employee newsletter, management reports, budget reviews and conference presentations, promote the message of achievement and value.



# Take Action



How is your mentoring programme getting on? Is it powering ahead nicely or are there some concerns? Is it consistent across the board or is it "patchy"?

If you feel it's losing momentum, could any of these reasons be the cause? If so, hopefully you now have some ideas on how you can re-energise it.

If you have other concerns that I haven't covered, please get in touch and I'll share any insights and strategies that might help.

Thank you for reading.

# About The Author



Hi. I'm Antoinette Oglethorpe. I'm now a consultant, coach, speaker and author specialising in leadership development and career management within organisations.

## My Background

I am a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD, a member of the Association for Coaching and a member of the Career Development Institute. I am licensed in a number of psychometric tools including the Hogan Leadership Assessments and Leadership Versatility Index.

Over the past 25 years' I have developed leaders for some of the most successful organisations in the world, companies like P&G and Accenture. A defining moment of my career was when I helped start up Avanade, a joint venture between Accenture and Microsoft.

That was the inspiration behind my first book, "Grow Your Geeks - A Handbook for Developing Leaders in High-Tech Organisations."

These days my company - a recognised ILM provider - works with aspirational individuals and companies who are driven to make positive change in the world and want to unlock their leadership potential so they can innovate and grow.



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