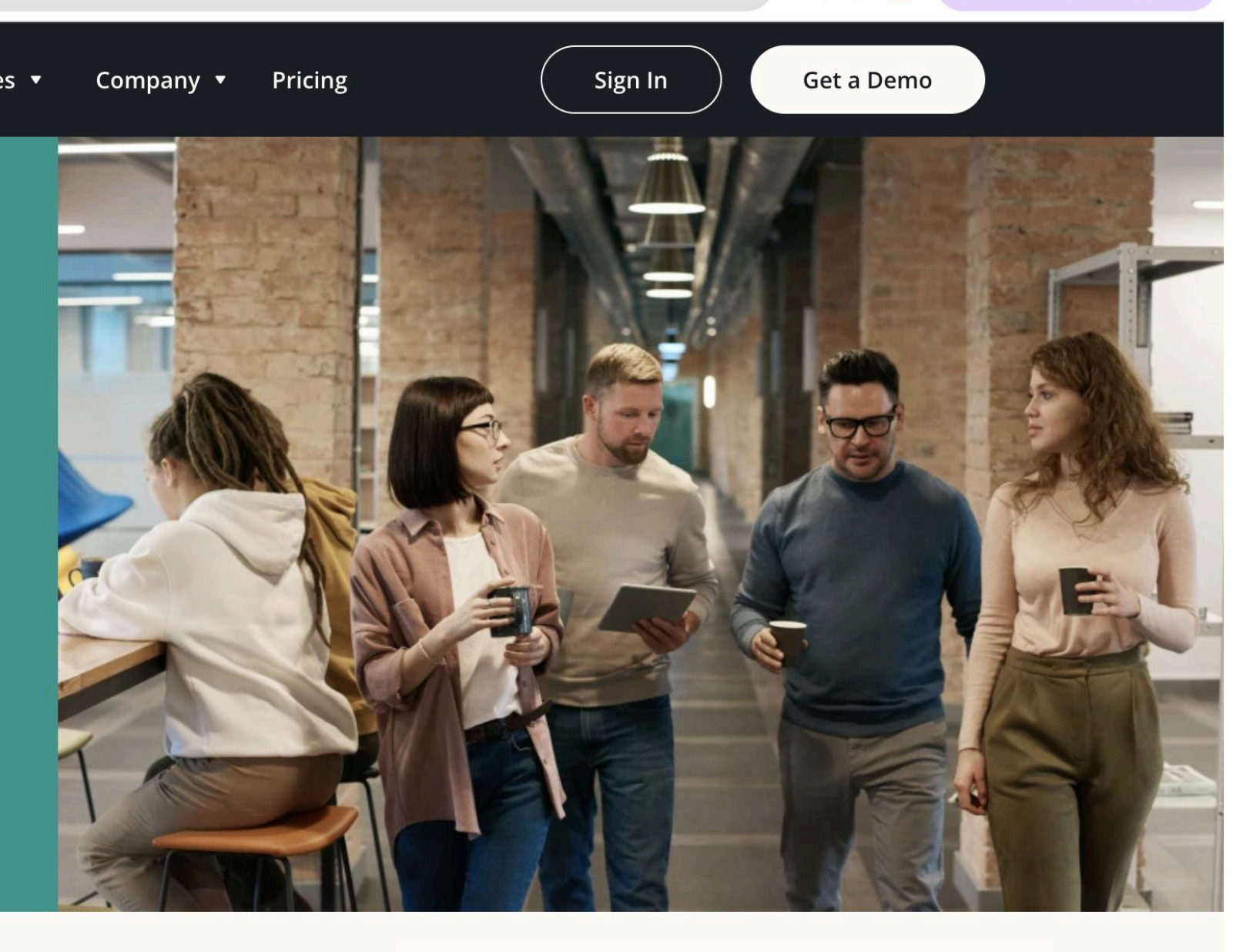
Back to Blog

Struggling to Recruit Mentors Into Your Mentorship Program? Here's How to Fix It.



You've launched a mentorship program. The interest from mentees is abundant. But then... silence. Where are the mentors?

Even when there's energy, intention, and demand for mentorship at your organization, without enough mentor engagement, programs stall. Matches get delayed, launch timelines slip, and reach is limited. Meanwhile, you're scrambling to recruit more mentors and momentum fades. Before you know it, the program starts to lose visibility, executive support, and the budget you fought to secure.

The good news? This challenge is completely solvable with the right positioning, structure, and support. At 10KC, we've helped countless organizations overcome this exact issue. So, we're sharing proven strategies to help you recruit mentors, remove friction, and build a scalable program that benefits everyone — mentors, mentees, and the organization alike.

Table of contents
Why is it so hard to recruit mentors?
5 proven methods to recruit mentors
Not enough senior mentors? Try these alternative mentorship models.
How 10KC helps you streamline mentor recruitment and engagement

See how 10KC helps manage mentorship programs:

Get a Demo

Why is it so hard to recruit mentors?

First things first: if you're struggling to recruit mentors, it doesn't mean your program is over and broken or that your people don't care. This is one of the most common mentoring challenges we see, even in organizations with strong cultures. So don't second-guess your goals. You likely just need to shift how you're positioning things.

To help you see the bigger picture, **here are some of the top reasons organizations run into mentor recruitment roadblocks:**

- **Time-strapped leaders who don't see the personal ROI:** Leaders are juggling priorities. If they don't immediately understand how mentoring benefits their own development or performance, it's easy for them to say no, or never respond at all.
- **Mentorship framed as a "favor" instead of a professional opportunity:** If mentorship is positioned as something mentors should simply do out of goodwill, it can feel like extra work rather than an investment in their own growth and visibility.
- **A narrow definition of mentorship:** If you're only looking to your most senior leaders, you're working with a small (and often overextended) pool. Expanding your definition to include peer or near-peer mentorship opens up the door to many more potential participants.
- **Unclear connection to business goals:** When mentorship isn't directly linked to company-wide priorities, it becomes harder to justify as a strategic use of time.
- **Lack of support or structure**: Without guidance, conversation starters, or clear expectations, mentoring can feel ambiguous or overwhelming, especially for first-time mentors.

> "One of the common challenges we see is that employees and potential mentors don't always understand how the mentorship program ties into the organization's bigger goals. Without that connection, it can feel like just another 'extra.' But when you clearly show how mentorship supports the organization's business-critical outcomes and their own 'what's in it for me'... personal development, participation improves dramatically." **- Liz Wamsteeker, Senior Customer Success Manager, 10KC**

Table of contents
Why is it so hard to recruit mentors?
5 proven methods to recruit mentors
Not enough senior mentors? Try these alternative mentorship models.
How 10KC helps you streamline mentor recruitment and engagement
See how 10KC helps manage mentorship programs:
Get a Demo

5 proven methods to recruit mentors

If your mentorship program is struggling to recruit enough mentors, it's not a sign of failure. It's a signal that it's time to rethink how you position, structure, and promote the opportunity.

Mentor participation doesn't happen with luck; it happens by design.

Rather than treating mentor engagement as an afterthought or a logistical hurdle, recognize it for what it truly is: a critical driver of program success. When you get this part right, everything else becomes easier. Mentor-mentee matching becomes smoother, momentum builds faster, and the impact on your talent goals grows exponentially.

These five proven strategies can help you shift the narrative, remove barriers, and build a mentor community that scales with your program.

1. Reframe the narrative by expanding the definition of mentorship

Many organizations limit their reach by assuming mentorship has to be exclusively 1:1, senior-to-junior mentorship matches. That traditional definition of mentorship reduces scalability and puts pressure on a small, often overextended group of leaders. Many successful programs widen the lens to include more flexible, inclusive types of mentoring.

💡 *If you're curious about this route, we'll go through a deep dive in the following section about alternative mentoring models.*

Tactics to try:

- Invite employees just 1–2 levels above mentees to serve as mentors. They're often more relatable to mentees, too!
- Promote peer mentorship, where colleagues at similar levels support each other's development. This could apply to any talent group, be it early-career employees, people managers, or leadership development programs.
- Offer group mentorship or 1-to-many formats, allowing one mentor to guide several mentees at once.
- Position these formats as lightweight leadership opportunities that support the development of both parties.

📌 **READ MORE:** ***Mentorship Matchmaker: How to Strategically Match Mentors and Mentees***

2. Reframe the value: Show mentors what's in it for them

Mentorship can't be framed as just "giving back." That story makes it easy to deprioritize while employees are juggling a million projects. Instead, position mentorship as an investment in the mentor's own development — a resume-builder, a visibility boost, and a chance to grow their leadership skills that are key to driving the company's success. When mentorship is framed as a professional growth opportunity that's visible and celebrated within the organization, participation rises.

Tactics to try:

- Highlight mentorship as a critical leadership development and resume-building activity.
- Emphasize increasing visibility and cross-functional exposure.
- Promote exposure to emerging talent and fresh business perspectives.
- Recognize and celebrate mentors publicly through leadership comms and spotlight features.

📌 **READ MORE:** ***10 Leadership Lessons Mentors Can Learn From Mentees***

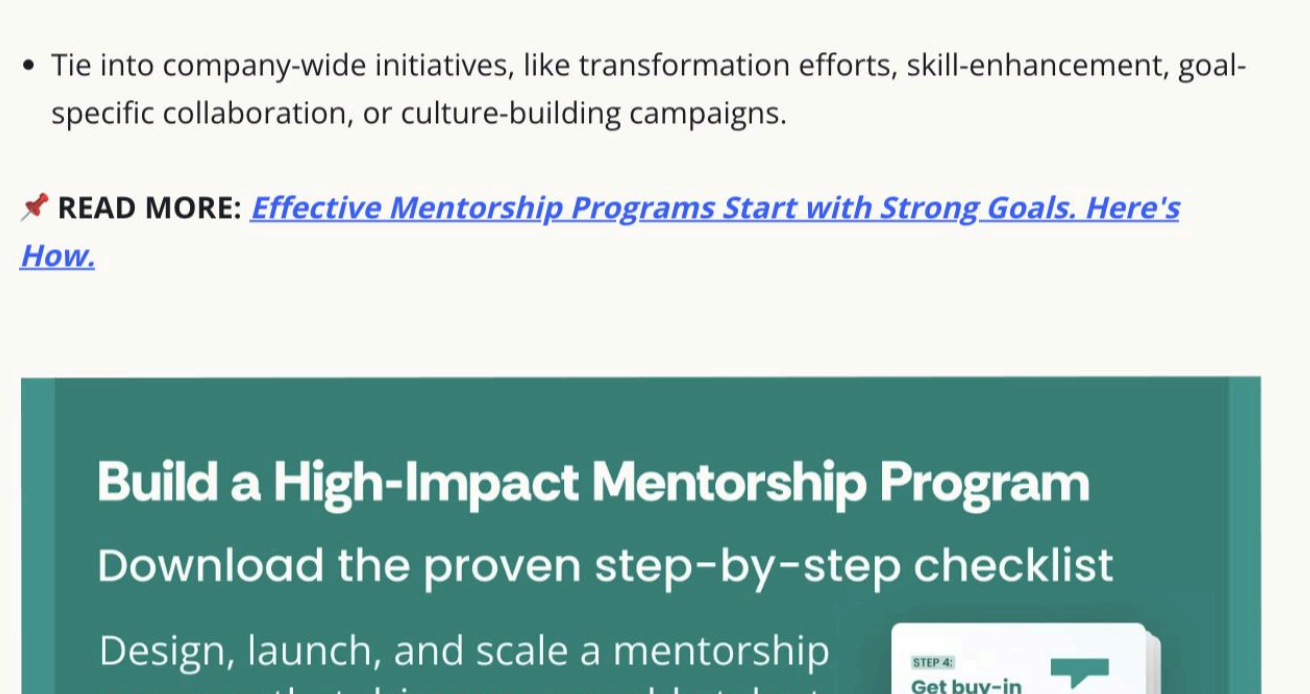
3. Embed mentorship into company culture and values

Mentorship gains traction when it's not seen as an "extra," but an inherent part of how your company operates, collaborates, and grows talent. Tie it to what your business already cares about, and make it a reflection of your values and company goals. When mentorship supports strategic business outcomes, it's easier to justify and prioritize participation.

Tactics to try:

- Link mentorship to your core company values like development, internal mobility, collaboration, or DEI.
- Align mentorship programs with succession planning, retention, and employee engagement metrics.
- Tie into company-wide initiatives, like transformation efforts, skill-enhancement, goal-specific collaboration, or culture-building campaigns.

📌 **READ MORE:** ***Effective Mentorship Programs Start with Strong Goals. Here's How.***



Build a High-Impact Mentorship Program

Download the proven step-by-step checklist

Design, launch, and scale a mentorship program that drives measurable talent outcomes.

GRAB MY CHECKLIST

4. Make it easy to say yes (and streamline the commitment)

> "Making it easy for employees to say yes is a huge driver of mentor participation, and that's a huge area where a software like 10KC comes in. The platform streamlines the entire experience: from conversation guides to built-in curriculum and automated communications. We remove the friction so mentors can focus on showing up, not managing logistics." **- Liz Wamsteeker, Senior Customer Success Manager, 10KC**

Even highly motivated employees will hesitate to be mentors if the experience feels ambiguous or time-consuming. Lowering the barrier to entry and giving mentors confidence from the start can make all the difference. That's where the right tools and structure come in.

Tactics to try:

- Set clear expectations and limit time commitments (e.g., 1–2 hours/month).
- Provide a mentor enablement deck outlining the program goals, mentor role, and practical tips.
- Offer structured conversation guides and outcome-focused curriculums for every session, so mentors don't feel like they have to be strategizing the direction of the program.

> "We built a curriculum so that mentors and mentees all had prep going into this that included courses that they could see in advance, articles that they could read, as well as structure to the conversation...You can't expect they're going to do this on their own. You have to give them the tools and resources required." **- Tiffany Smye, former Senior Director, Talent, Learning & Development, Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment**

5. Be strategic with various mentor recruitment tactics

Mentor recruitment works best when it's proactive, personalized, and championed by leadership. A generic blast or memo won't do the job. Targeted outreach and internal visibility are what help drive momentum.

Tactics to try:

- Use leader-endorsed nominations. Equip execs with templates to recommend their own direct reports as mentors.
- Promote the program via internal newsletters, town halls, and team meetings.
- Build a mentor pipeline from former mentees, since they've experienced the value firsthand.
- Host low-lift info sessions or "Mentorship 101" events to address questions and build confidence.
- Allow mentors to opt into supporting multiple mentees if they're interested.

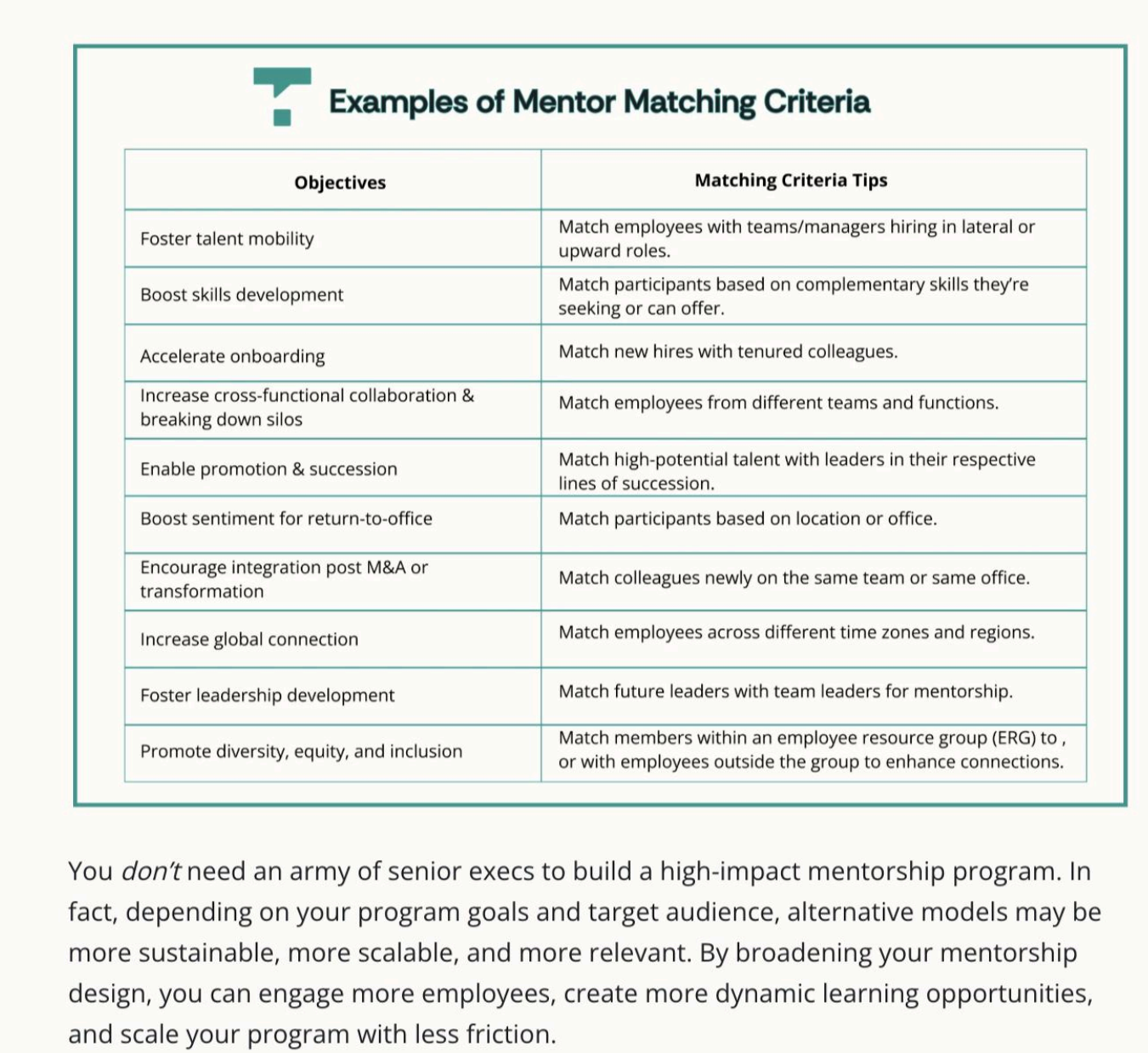
> "Some of the most successful mentor recruitment efforts we've seen come from customers who go beyond the standard HR outreach. It's most effective when the ask comes directly from senior leaders (the leaders and managers of the potential mentors). It reinforces that mentorship is part of what it means to lead and grow at this company. For example, one client used email templates for execs to nominate their teams. Another promoted the program through an internal leadership newsletter. And in one standout example, a Talent SVP sent a personal call-to-action that brought in a dozen new mentors. It all comes down to smart internal communication and visible leadership support." **- Liz Wamsteeker, Senior Customer Success Manager, 10KC**

Table of contents
Why is it so hard to recruit mentors?
5 proven methods to recruit mentors
Not enough senior mentors? Try these alternative mentorship models.
How 10KC helps you streamline mentor recruitment and engagement
See how 10KC helps manage mentorship programs:
Get a Demo

Not enough senior mentors? Try these alternative mentorship models.

Let's hone in even further on one of the most common concerns we hear from program leaders:
"We'd love to do more, but we just don't have enough senior leaders to be mentors."

We get it. Senior leaders are busy, and the list of internal requests on their time is long. But here's the reality: relying solely on Director, VP, or C-suite-level mentors severely limits your program's scale and effectiveness.



Examples of Mentor Matching Criteria

Objectives	Matching Criteria Tips
Foster talent mobility	Match employees with teams/managers hiring in lateral or upward roles.
Boost skills development	Match participants based on complementary skills they're seeking or can offer.
Accelerate onboarding	Match new hires with tenured colleagues.
Increase cross-functional collaboration & breaking down silos	Match employees from different teams and functions.
Enable promotion & succession	Match high-potential talent with leaders in their respective lines of succession.
Boost sentiment for return-to-office	Match participants based on location or office.
Encourage integration post M&A or transformation	Match colleagues newly on the same team or same office.
Increase global connection	Match employees across different time zones and regions.
Foster leadership development	Match future leaders with team leaders for mentorship.
Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion	Match members within an employee resource group (ERG) to , or with employees outside the group to enhance connections.

You *don't* need an army of senior execs to build a high-impact mentorship program. In fact, depending on your program goals and target audience, alternative models may be more sustainable, more scalable, and more relevant. By broadening your mentorship design, you can engage more employees, create more dynamic learning opportunities, and scale your program with less friction.

Here are several non-traditional mentorship models to consider.

Group mentorship (e.g., circles or learning pods)

Group mentoring brings multiple mentees together with one mentor (or facilitator) in a shared space, often with a focus on a specific theme, goal, or talent group.

Group mentorship programs can:

- Encourage peer-to-peer learning, discussion, and accountability.
- Maximize the reach of mentors who may not have capacity for multiple 1:1 relationships.
- Build community across roles, teams, or functions.
- Help mentors grow their coaching, facilitation, and group leadership skills.

While it may offer a less personalized experience, it enriches mentee development through exposure to diverse perspectives and can be ideal for programs centered around skill development, ERG support, or leadership themes.

One-to-many mentorship

In a one-to-many model, a single mentor supports multiple mentees, but still in individual 1:1 relationships, rather than as a group.

This one-to-many mentorship format will:

- Expand access to engaged, high-value mentors without overwhelming your roster.
- Allow mentors to tailor support to each mentee while still scaling their impact.
- Provide a great opportunity for mentors who enjoy direct, personal connections.

Use this model when mentors are open to more involvement but need structure and support to manage their time and relationships effectively.

Peer-to-peer mentorship

Peer mentoring pairs employees at similar levels or stages in their careers to support one another's growth through shared learning, feedback, and experience. This format thrives on mutual learning, collaborative problem-solving, and real-time support. The dynamic is fluid, allowing participants to take turns asking questions, offering guidance, and developing new skills together.

Peer-to-peer mentorship is especially effective for:

- **Mutual development:** Build confidence and accelerate learning through shared challenges and perspectives.
- **Skill-building:** Collaborate on specific skills, share best practices, and learn from each other's strengths.
- **Community-building:** Foster deeper connection, camaraderie, and a culture of support among colleagues.

It also shifts the mindset. Mentorship becomes part of everyday development, not just something you receive from "above."

📌 **READ MORE:** Why Peer Mentoring Is a Talent Game-Changer

Near-peer mentorship

Near-peer mentoring connects employees with mentors just one or two levels ahead in seniority. These mentors offer a powerful combination of relatability and perspective. They've recently walked a similar path and can offer timely, role-specific insights.

> "Your mentors don't always need to be the most senior leaders. Often, near-peer mentors can bring just as much, if not more, impactful. They're often closer to the challenges their mentee match is facing, and more available to help navigate them." **- Liz Wamsteeker, Senior Customer Success Manager, 10KC**

Near-peer mentoring works particularly well for:

- **Practical, career-relevant advice:** Near-peers often understand the day-to-day nuances of a mentee's role or function.
- **Approachability:** Mentees may feel more comfortable asking questions or discussing challenges with someone closer in experience.
- **Scalability:** Broadens your mentor pool significantly without sacrificing relevance or quality.

Near-peer mentoring is especially impactful for onboarding, career mobility and upskilling programs, or anywhere mentees benefit from guidance that's grounded in real, recent experience.

Table of contents
Why is it so hard to recruit mentors?
5 proven methods to recruit mentors
Not enough senior mentors? Try these alternative mentorship models.
How 10KC helps you streamline mentor recruitment and engagement
See how 10KC helps manage mentorship programs:
Get a Demo

How 10KC helps you streamline mentor recruitment and engagement

When you first landed here, chances are you were grappling with one of two familiar challenges:

"We launched a mentorship program...but where are the mentors?"

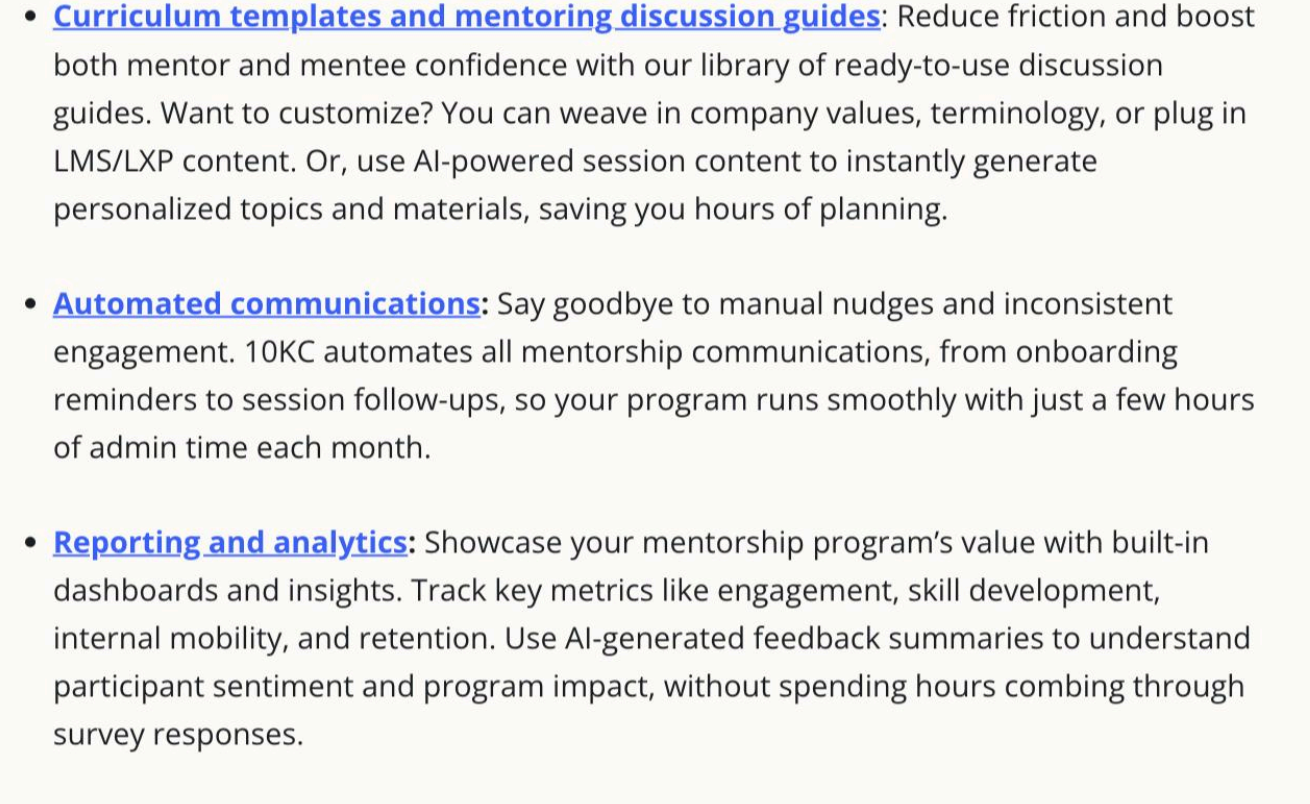
*Or...**"We want to launch a mentorship program, but we're not sure we'll have enough mentors to make it work."***

We've walked through five proven strategies to solve for that, but now you're likely thinking, ***"Great... and now how do I actually execute all of this myself?"***

You don't need hundreds of mentors or a massive internal team to build a high-impact mentorship program. To drive the ROI your stakeholders are counting on, you need the right structure, the right software, and a scalable system to launch, grow, and sustain your mentorship initiatives.

10KC mentorship software **was built to help you do exactly that. Here's how:**

- **Smart-matching algorithm:** Create intentional mentor-mentee matches with our smart-matching algorithm. Match by role, skills, goals, seniority, and more — then personalize it further with AI-generated match explanations that help participants build trust from day one. *Bonus: 10KC integrates with your HRIS so matches reflect real-time employee data, removing manual work and improving accuracy.*
- **10KC Mentoring Pathways:** Ditch the one-size-fits-all approach to employee development. Built for both scale and precision, Pathways support key talent groups across every stage of the career journey, from interns to executives. Easily embed mentorship across levels and functions, and centralize everything in one place. Leverage pre-built templates that combine 1:1 connections, guided content, and group learning to deliver impactful, structured experiences at scale.



Give your talent programs a facelift with 10KC Mentoring Pathways

DOWNLOAD OVERVIEW

10KC
Peer Learning and Mentoring Experiences for Key Talent Segments
10KC MENTORING PATHWAYS

- **Flexible mentorship formats:** 10KC enables a range of mentorship formats that go beyond traditional 1:1 matches — from peer mentorship and group circles to one-off networking, senior-to-junior, and one-to-many models.
- **Curriculum templates and mentoring discussion guides:** Reduce friction and boost both mentor and mentee confidence with our library of ready-to-use discussion guides. Want to customize? You can weave in company values, terminology, or plug in LMS/LXP content. Or, use AI-powered session content to instantly generate personalized topics and materials, saving you hours of planning.
- **Automated communications:** Say goodbye to manual nudges and inconsistent engagement. 10KC automates all mentorship communications, from onboarding reminders to session follow-ups, so your program runs smoothly with just a few hours of admin time each month.
- **Reporting and analytics:** Showcase your mentorship program's value with built-in dashboards and insights. Track key metrics like engagement, skill development, internal mobility, and retention. Use AI-generated feedback summaries to understand participant sentiment and program impact, without spending hours combing through survey responses.

Mentor recruitment doesn't have to be a burden. With 10KC, you can launch a mentorship program that scales, drives results, and requires a fraction of the effort.

Drive performance, retention, and development with 10KC

Book a demo to learn more

First name*

Last name*

Work email*

Company name*

Company size*

GET A DEMO