

A [good mentoring relationship](#) is the key to effective mentoring. Humans thrive off interacting with and learning from others. Mentoring connects isolated employees and exposes them to new points of view. But to get there, you first need a powerful mentor matching system!

While [mentoring platforms](#) offer matching using software, which is by far the easiest option if you want to scale your programme, you may be looking to experiment with your own manual matching systems.

Let's look at the questions you need to ask and how to begin building the basis of a successful mentoring relationship.

Type of mentoring program

Before matching mentors and mentees it's important to establish the goals of the mentoring programme. What are the goals for the business? The team? The individual? What do you want the mentor and mentee to achieve from this relationship? Both mentors and mentees benefit from mentoring with increased confidence and promotion potential.

For example, you might want to:

- Improve overall employee retention
- Develop the leadership skills of those on your graduate scheme
- Onboarding new employees and help them settle in to the team

We've put together a list of the different types of mentoring to help you establish a [mentoring programme](#). This will help to inform the questions you'll ask before starting your mentor matching.

Types of mentor matching

Now that you've decided the goals of your mentoring programme, you'll need to decide which matching strategy you'll use to achieve these results. There are different ways to match mentors with mentees:

- **Manual matching** – The programme coordinator asks the mentor and mentee a series of questions and decides who will be matched with who.
- **Self matching** – The mentee finds their own mentor or vice versa.
- **Hybrid matching** – This method of matching matching mentors and mentees requires you to use the questions asked for manual matching. From this you'll create a pool of mentors for the mentee to select from.

Manual mentor matching

Nishma wants to learn how to give effective presentations and improve her self confidence.

She tells the mentoring programme coordinator, who automatically suggests his own colleague Lucy.

Lucy is a senior who has 10 years of experience in management and presenting to senior leaders.

Perfect match, right? Maybe.

This is a quick method of manual matching, but it could lead to more problems down the line. Mentoring is about the personalities as much as it is about the career goals. A great personal connection is one of the keys to a great mentoring relationship, as it allows the mentee to be more comfortable and open with their needs.

Here are some skills based questions you should ask:

- *What's your current position?*
- *How long have you been at the company?*
- *What's your general work experience?*
- *What are your goals?* (Such as improving presentation skills, improving self confidence in meetings, or learning new software).
- *What experience do you have with the above?*
- *Where do you hope to be in 6 months?*
- *Where do you hope to be in 3 years?*
- *What are your goals for this quarter?*
- *What are your strengths?*
- *What are your weaknesses?*

And some personality questions:

- *What soft skills would you like to develop?*
- *Tell us about your personal hobbies and interests*
- *Have you ever participated in a mentoring relationship before? How did you find it?*
- *The top 3 things you struggle with at work?*
- *The top 3 things you do well at work?*
- *What values and qualities do you consider important for a mentor/mentee?*
- *What do you hope to achieve by the end of the programme?*

You should also find out their preferences for communication (e.g phone or zoom) and their availability. These questions will help you to understand the mentee's goals, what the mentor can offer, and a glimpse into their personalities.

Manual matching can be effective but also time consuming, especially if your mentoring programme is open to anyone or you allow mentees to have more than one mentor. Manual matching

might be best suited for invite only mentoring programmes where you decide who's able to sign up.

Self mentee matching

Another option is to allow the mentee to find their own mentor (and vice versa) from within the company. This works well as if they already know the employee, it reduces the initial "getting to know you" barriers, particularly for less confident employees, allowing them to get started quicker.

However, just as the experience of the mentor isn't the only important part of mentoring, the social aspect also isn't the only important part of mentoring. Are they picking someone who's skilled and experienced enough in what they're looking for, or have they gone for someone they're simply friends with? This is problematic for diversity and inclusion, as you run the risk of only certain groups benefitting from mentoring. For example, senior leaders may end up only mentoring those who are similar to them, or those who are confident will find a mentor leaving those who are shy without. The great thing about mentoring is connecting people with different experiences and perspectives to learn from each other, so you want your matches to allow for this.

Another issue is that asking a mentor can be nerve wracking for many, especially if the mentee doesn't have a wide pool of options leading to a lower engagement with the programme or a poor choice in mentor.

Hybrid matching

Mixing manual and self matching can be an effective option in matching mentors and mentees. Mentees who participate in the selection process are more likely to engage in mentoring and see more positive results. You ask both the mentees and mentors the

questions established in manual matching, select the best profiles for the mentee, and allow the mentee to select from a pool.

This is the method we prefer at [Guider](#). We ask the questions, and our algorithm matches the mentee with a shortlist of top mentors. Mentees can then read different profiles and select the ones they find best for them. It also allows mentors and mentees to adjust their preferences, as things change during their time at the company.

Provide Guidance and Monitoring

Now you're on your way to beginning a successful mentoring programme!

After mentor matching, the initial meeting should be stress free. Instead of jumping straight into mentoring, give them an opportunity to get to know each other and their goals. If things don't go well or they simply feel that they're not the right fit, there should be an opportunity to re-enter the matching process.

With a mentoring platform, the mentees are able to return to their list of matches and reselect a new or second mentor. You should hold formal meetings or quick check-ins to allow mentees and mentors to discuss their progress and iron out any issues.