

2020-04-08 Round-Table:
Mentoring Program Best Practices

Matthew Reeves: Great. Well, thanks, everyone, who's joined. Just a couple of housekeeping rules before I pass it over to Marcus.

First, this session is going to be recorded and we'll be sharing the recording after this, so you'll have that.

If you have any questions, we will be saving time at the end for questions from the attendees to ask the panelists. There's a Q&A functionality in Zoom. We won't be able to hear attendees but if you type in your questions into that feature, we'll be able to answer them at the end.

If you're having any technical issues, you can message me directly through the chat, Mathew Reeves, which you'll see as a panelist in the chat feature.

With that said, I'll pass it over to Marcus to get started.

Marcus Butters: Hey, everyone. Thanks for joining today. We have a great panel set up and hopefully a great opportunity to get some discussion flowing. What we're hoping for today is to have everyone engaging and just kind of sharing their mentorship best practices. So what we've done is compiled a few of our customers to share some ideas and thoughts and best practices that they've used in their mentorship programs.

If any of you have questions, feel free to ask away in the Q&A Portion. But hopefully, there will be some great things that you can learn here and share anything that you've done in your own particular programs as well.

But to get started, I'll give you a little bit of background. My name is Marcus Butters. I'm an Account Executive here at the Together platform. And I'll walk you through a quick agenda here as well. What we'll be doing is introducing, of course, the panelists.

We have Catherine from Rangle.io, Tiffany Futch from First Horizon. And then we have Elizabeth from Lake Trust Credit Union as well as Natalie from the American College of Education. So I guess we'll start now with a little bit of an introduction from each of the panelists themselves.

First up, we have Catherine. Catherine, if you'd like to give your own little introduction here, feel free.

Catherine Marchand: Sure. Hi, everybody. I'm Catherine from Rangle. I work in our People and Culture Team. I focus on learning and development. We've been running our mentorship

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program for only a month now. It's been a really great month. We're doing a mentor-led approach to our mentorship program and it's been really, really great. I love that we selected that approach.

And we're hoping to scale this out to a lot more of our employees. For now, we have about 87 of them enrolled.

Marcus: Great. Thanks so much, Catherine. Next up, we have Tiffany from First Horizon Bank. Feel free to say hello as well.

Tiffany Futch: Hi, everyone. My name is Tiffany Futch and I'm in our Learning and Development Department, which we call the Center for Learning and Performance at the bank. I have just been blessed with the opportunity to run this program. It's about a 10-year-old program. We've been running it on the Together platform for about a year and it's just been going great. So I'm excited to share kind of our secret sauce to how we really got this off the ground and really got people into it this past year.

Marcus: Awesome. Thanks, Tiffany. Next up, we have Elizabeth from Lake Trust Credit Union.

Elizabeth Dickson-Sanders: Hi, everyone. So, yes, I'm Elizabeth. I'm from Lake Trust. I am a learning architect, so we design learning experiences but we're part of our human resources or what we call our Culture and Engagement Department. One of the ways we want to keep people engaged is through mentoring.

I'm on the newer end of the mentoring spectrum. We just launched our program actually, so it's funny, Tiffany, you say you have this experience program, so I'm looking forward to learning from you. But we started a career-focused mentoring program and we're using it to back up some of our strategic marketing initiatives. And so we have lots of thoughts about where we want to take this program moving forward.

Our company is on the smaller side, so actually about less than 500 employees. But we're looking to grow as much as we can.

Marcus: Great. Thanks so much, Elizabeth. Next and lastly we have Natalie. Natalie is from the American College of Education.

Natalie Pelham: Hi, everyone. Happy Thursday or, as I like to call it, Friday Eve. So we've almost made it. We can do it!

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I am Natalie Pelham. As Marcus mentioned, I'm from American College of Education. We are a fully online higher education, so master's and doctoral degrees, anything in education, nursing, healthcare, all sorts of fun stuff.

We actually just launched our Together platform this week, so we are probably the most baby of you. I'm so excited about it.

I run our Training and Development Department at ACE. So how we're using it right now is with leadership development. So they go through our trainings in-house and then the mentoring component is the final awesome piece to it.

So, guys, look forward to talking more and learning from all of you guys today too.

Marcus: Great. Thanks so much. Now that you've had a chance to meet all the panelists, will kick it off with our first prompt for Catherine from Rangle. Of course, everyone I'm sure now is working from home and working remotely so wanted to touch a little bit on remote mentorship due to COVID-19.

Rangle has done a great job of transitioning their program from face-to-face to remote. So, Catherine, we'd love to hear some of the obstacles you've encountered in that transition and how is it really impacting the employee engagement and overall health of your employees?

Catherine: Sorry, forgot to unmute myself.

Our transition was totally seamless. I think the platform just offers it all in one place online. The nature of our work is such that our employees were just able to move to work from home in a really seamless way. So that was really great.

In our current context, I think what the mentorship program really brings to our employees is another avenue to connect with a human being. Multiplying those productive touch points with other people is so critical right now to maintaining morale. So creating that sense of connection and community, for sure, but also having someone they can go to who maybe isn't part of their day-to-day work or the project they're working on or someone who's on their team specifically. Having that person that they can go to create that safe space and talk about anything, right now that's really comforting.

The other aspect I'll highlight is obviously mentorship is you're just so positive. What I've heard from folks in the program is this brings value and it's fun. For a lot of them, I think it has a direct impact on their day-to-day work, and so it's just overall something invigorating

that they look forward to. And it's just positive and we can certainly use a lot more of that these days.

Marcus: Amazing. Thank you so much, Catherine. Did anyone else have anything to add to that? Or if we are all set, we could hop over to the next prompt. This is for Tiffany.

So, Tiffany runs one of the larger programs that together supports over 500 active users, as you saw earlier on in her introduction. But what advice would you give for launching a program of that size? I know it's a lot of participants to manage. I'm sure a lot goes into the marketing and registration of the program. So we'd love to hear a little bit about what you've done to keep that going.

Tiffany: Yeah. As I said before, I inherited this program from someone else. This program has been in place for about 10 years and when I got it, it had roughly 400, maybe 425, already enrolled in it.

But we weren't actively tracking them throughout the year and so, really, what I wanted to do was still get that same set of people, like I wanted that 425 to return but then find more people.

And so with the marketing, I'll be honest, I started using a little bit of guerilla marketing. We do have an official communications team but I would have people, I had testers start talking it up on some of our internal platforms. I was just kind of—in meetings, I talked about it. I presented it to a couple of different groups within the organization, and it really helped.

Now, I'll tell you some of the obstacles. Of course was if you got something that large, people are very used to a particular idea of what mentoring should look like. And so a lot of people saw the program as I want a mentor that's in Y-position because, in five years, I want to be in that position. And so I had to really speak to—let's use this as like eHarmony for work. Let's try to make you well-rounded. Let's get you out there where you're building on all these skills and you're putting tools in your toolbox rather than gunning for a particular position. And I think it gives more satisfaction to the mentors and the mentees because it takes away that pressure.

And so I tell people get your executive leaders behind it. That's why I was so lucky to really get this off the way we did was I had that support. I didn't have a lot of parameters to fill. They really said, "Go for what's right." And so once I told them, they said, "You're the expert. Just run with it."

It's just being growing and growing. I mean, I have people that sign up within their first week of joining the organization.

Marcus: That's amazing. Awesome that you've been able to scale it that large as well, so thanks so much, Tiffany.

Nathan Goldstein: Tiffany, this is Nathan here. What would you say might be some really good tips for kind of parameters around the pairing process that you think would help ensure that people in any mentoring program, whether it's software-enabled or not, get the right match? Is there something related to a seniority change? That you want to keep mentors not too executive for the more junior people. What would you overall recommend there?

Tiffany: Yes. So we do segment out our population. So to give you an idea of the percentage of people involved, we have roughly close to 6,000 employees. So you have an organization that large, you do have to segment out.

And they're spread across the United States. I go as far west as Arizona. And I hit the East Coast. I go all the way up to New York with advisers and all the way down to financial center representatives in Florida. So you do have to say my top two levels of executives, I'm going to have to reserve them for some of our leadership programs and just use them in a way to develop that next kind of like that talent pool you may have.

But then for everyone else, say, hey, do you mind that your mentor is in a whole other state? Does it make sense for your mentor to be in another region? And so I would spend time—

And we joke around. I kind of set up a one-woman call center. So as they were registering, we were talking through this thing and I was like you got to really take some time on your profile. You put in junk, you're going to get out junk.

And so you can't just check all the boxes and go with it. You really need to think about what matters to you. Think about the goals you're trying to achieve, some of the skills you have yet to really master. At that point, then we can narrow down the kind of mentor that you're looking for and the type of relationship that you want.

And that really helps to—for some people it will take their scope from I have a potential for a 5,999 people to maybe only 100 people.

Marcus: So, we have a question from Lille. Actually, Tiffany, I think this is directed at you. So she was wondering if you did more of a manual pairing for the executive segment of your matching. What did that pairing process look like when you're focusing on executives?

Tiffany: Yes. So we have an executive leadership program called our ELP. As they go through this year-long program, they're aware that when they finish, they will get someone within our first two to three layers of leadership. So someone may strike gold and they get the CEO. Someone may get a regional president. Someone may get one of our chief executive officers.

So we did have to do the manual process there. We just kind of had them register and they were scooted into a little corner until we could really take some time and go through their process. But then in conjunction with the profile on the platform, they had a separate paper profile that they filled out along the way during that program.

And so we had a little bit more to go through, not to mention that we use a system called Ultimate and we have all kinds of data. We have people constantly telling us about them and their accomplishments throughout the year and it really helps us to dig into that data more.

Like for example, I had someone with a Sports Medicine degree and they were like, "Maybe I shouldn't be in banking."

What was cool is that I sat down with my leader and I said, "So I have this person with this very unique degree..." And we were able to really dig through that data, there's so many people in the bank in leadership roles with a Sports Medicine degree.

So we were able to really get a match that really made sense to them. It's just the using all the possible data you can get. And even though some may be a bit more of a manual process, for the most part, I'll tell you our system was right on. I mean those algorithms within the Together platform were spot-on for many of those matches.

Marcus: Amazing. Thanks, Tiffany. Next question we have is for Elizabeth. You did a great job of educating your employees before the launch. You had a very robust program in place. I'd love for you to tell the listeners about what you did in order to make sure that all the employees were prepared to enroll both digitally and in-person. I thought it was pretty amazing what you were telling me about the other day and love for you to share that.

Elizabeth: Thanks for the compliment. We just really wanted to make sure that it was a seamless process. I know a big factor in whether or not a process is adapted is how easy it is for people. So we created an orientation with the hopes of making it seamless and easy.

So we had facilitator-led orientations for both mentors and then separate ones for the mentees where we talked about why they chose to participate, why there was value in mentoring, why the organization saw value in mentoring, how to create SMART goals.

I had even created the video where it was like a teaser for the Together platform and they showed a little bit about what they could expect. That way there were no surprises and people were already like, “Yeah, this is easy to use. I'm excited.”

And I intentionally scheduled the orientations for 30 minutes, but I scheduled the orientation sessions for one hour. I knew that the content, I should say, was 30 minutes long but the orientation sessions were one hour. And that left 30 minutes for everyone to focus on building their profile.

So I actually said, “Hey, everyone, bring your laptops to class, if you have them.” And we did the profiles right there in real-time.

The good news is that that allowed them to ask me questions if they needed to, but if there were things they wanted more of, I could help them. So one person said, “Oh, my hobby isn't here.” So I could add it in real time. So that was a nice thing.

And then I knew that moving forward we wanted things to be more organic. Some people may not be able to make the orientation sessions, the live ones. So we have an e-learning that I created and that way if you come in at an off cycle, you can look at the e-learning and still get the information.

There were three different tracks for the mentors, the mentees and people who are doing both mentoring and being a mentee at the same time so you got different information depending on your role.

Then I created a landing page in our learning management system where there was a link to the Together platform, a link to the e-course, a link to the video, along with the information for the requirements for the program, things like that.

Marcus: Amazing. Thanks, Liz. Definitely, super robust. Really gives the ability to the employees to learn about what they're getting into before signing up. Limits a little bit of frustration when adopting a new software there. So I'm glad you're able to prepare them for the best.

Elizabeth: Thanks.

Marcus: No problem. So next we have a question for Natalie. Natalie, like she mentioned in her introduction, the American College of Education is completely remote and she actually had to adjust, of course, all of her agendas to cater to be completely remote. So I'd love to hear a little bit about what adjustments you made, how that kind of impacted the relationships that were being built, and just a couple of the adjustments that you've made general.

Natalie: Yes. So our institution is fully online. So we have faculty and staff and students all over the world. We actually have most of our employees—we're a smaller organization so we have less than 350 employees at our institution, and so we're all over. I'm in Florida. You can tell from the sunny background here. So it's all remote.

So how do you get mentoring to work? I love hearing about the in-person things you guys are doing. I'm like this is so neat! But how do you adjust it to make it online? So when we're going to the agendas, one of them was like meet at your local coffee shop. I'm like that really doesn't work too well for the person in Hawaii and the person in New York. So how do we make it work?

So we went through with a fine-tooth comb and really just dug in. Myself and our department, we dug in and then what we did was we actually solicited some feedback and opinions from those on the executive team.

So we picked a couple folks from our executive team. We said, "Hey, will you go through this questionnaire with us?" You know, take some screenshots. And we said, "What do you think about this?" We were able to kind of ACE-ify it, if you will, to really meet what exactly we needed.

It's fantastic. It's really been—we had a pilot group go through before we launch this weekend. It's really going well. So I found the startup side of it to be super user-friendly, which is really, really nice there.

Now, that's how we've adjusted our agendas. It's really just to say, "Hey, instead of meeting at a local coffee shop, what is your local coffee shop that you enjoy?" Or just a fun little thing that's personal to them yet still is a common ground too.

Marcus: Thanks so much, Natalie. So back over to Catherine. We had discussed that you had managed your own internal mentorship program at Rangle. We'd love to hear about the transition to a software-enabled mentorship program and how that kind of impacted you as the admin and also just your employees enrolled in the program itself. And what really

prompted the switch? Why were you ready to adopt a software to manage everything for you in that sense?

Catherine: Sure. That transition was super impactful both for me, selfishly, as the one who runs the program, but also a couple of other people who are involved in running it with me, but also specifically probably for the employees who are participating.

There's mainly four things I can highlight. The most obvious one is certainly the impact to the logistics of getting people paired up. That process is certainly not too daunting if you have a small pool of participants. Or if you're keeping things simple, you know, matching very much a skill needed and skill offered type of pairing.

That was certainly the case for us in early days, but I think as we grew in size and also as we expand across different functional units in our program, nothing really is that simple anymore. So having the tools to manage that complexity is very, very valuable.

Something else that was a little bit challenging before switching to the platform is reporting on anything, really. Short of saying Person A-Person B are now paired up as of Date X, it kind of ends there. That's not super insightful when you're trying to understand the impact of your program.

So obviously, we're just starting over here. We've been on together for about a month actively. And we're monitoring how things are going. I think the participation in the mentorship program will certainly be coming at another data point when we're looking to better understand employees' career paths, for instance. So that'll be something to look into.

Something else that was really critical for me that I was struggling with quite a bit before switching over to the platform is the entire aspect around security of the information. When you're capturing data that's fairly sensitive about your people and what they consider to be their strengths, there are some gaps in their skill set. That's not something that you want to get out there either accidentally or otherwise.

So knowing that that data is safe in the platform is really important to us. And it's also kind of foundational to make sure that it's a safe space for participants.

And I think the last one, which is a really good segue into this, is the employee experience. With Together, we're able to kind of funnel everyone through a consistent and I guess structured and supportive end-to-end process. That creates _____ [22:34] consistent across the board and that's so important to us.

I think being in a mentorship relationship, it certainly requires vulnerability and trust. We feel that the more the process is reflective of that, the more likely employees will be in that same mindset and will kind of invest in that process.

So yeah, the adopting Together was 100% truly impactful all the way through.

Nathan: Maybe one quick follow-up to that that I have, Catherine, is I think you did a good job of making sure that your program felt kind of customized and really through the voice of a Rangle initiative with edits to different email copy, etcetera. What tips would you have for everyone else on the line around kind of making it feel like an internal initiative and why that's important?

Catherine: That's a really good point. Thanks for bringing that up. I think different companies will have a different culture. And when you're launching something new or rebooting a program, like we were, it's important even though you're on a third-party platform that it still feels like it belongs as part of the overall company experience that you're trying to build. And so having the ability to change the copy on some of those agenda, to use terminology that our employees are familiar with, or to avoid certain terminology that would turn them off, that was a huge, huge bonus for us. It really felt like a product that belonged to us.

Marcus: Amazing. Thanks so much, Catherine. Great question on the follow-up, Nathan.

So another question here for Tiffany. We talked a little bit about it in your last prompt but we'd love to dig into a little bit more on how you engage so many employees to participate in a mentoring program. I know with managing over 500 active users, I'm sure it's easy for people to fall off and not feel like they're being valued a little bit. So what do you do to kind of maintain that engagement and ensure that everyone's still well-invested in a mentorship program?

Tiffany: Well, the first thing that I'd be very honest, I was not expecting—I started getting emails about the program before it even launched. People that were rounding out the previous session were like, “When are we going to get this wrap-up for this year?” And it completely caught me off guard.

So people were waiting. They're like, “I'm ready for my new match.”

I think that just really comes from us having a very strong company culture and it's really based around that accountability, adaptability, integrity and relationships. This is something that people want to be a part of. Like they want to be engaging with others in the bank.

So for me, it was like, okay, people want it so let me make sure that it's consistently moving forward. And so from the very beginning people just kind of jumped in there.

So something that I started doing, I just never turned the dashboard off. Like if you've ever seen me where I share my screen, I have a million tabs open and one of those tabs is the Together dashboard. And I literally just go in there and I poke around and I see what people are saying.

I'll be honest. We are I think like a 3.8 is like an overall rating of people's satisfaction on a scale of 4, and it's been that way from the beginning. We tend to be in the 3.9 but every now and then we'll trickle down to that 3.8, which means there are very few 1s and 2s on that scale.

If there is a 1 or a 2, I call. I just simply ask. And I say, "Hey, you know, I'm just checking the platform and I saw you put in a 1-star for your person. Tell me what's going on."

And every single time they say, "I can't believe anyone reads that."

And I say, "I read it because this is your career. This is something that is important to you so I want to make sure that if it's not a match, if it's not working, let me help you figure out what that is."

And people really like it and I think it's the fact that we tell them from day one. When you come into what we call a newcomer celebration, and I cheat a little bit because I facilitate that, so I spend some time talking through the program, but they're engaged from the day they come in.

It's talked about in various other parts of the organization. So because we're always broadcasting it, that engagement is much easier to get and especially the follow up.

People love the follow up. Just even yesterday, I got a new mentor request. That guy said, one, "I can't believe you called me." He said, "I didn't even know that note would go anywhere."

But, two, "I can't believe you remembered me from a new higher class." It was just I just put it all together.

So people realize that someone is there to help them and so it really makes them kind of dig their heels in and want to be a part of the program.

Marcus: Awesome. I appreciate that, Tiffany. In terms of the feedback, you do get a lot of feedback on your sessions. Is there any way that you adjust your questions or ensure that your employees are providing that feedback to you to kind of have that data to extrapolate?

Tiffany: Yes. So something I have been considering is changing up the questions a little bit. There are people that consistently answer that survey after every session. And so they have gotten a little robotic in their responses and so I do want to consider some additional questions. Especially as we round out the last few months in this relationship to ask them what are you looking for. It's time to kind of do like that partner switcheroo.

So as you start to look at what's next, what's changed? What is it that this mentor may have been great for but you're thinking you could just have another puzzle piece and it would round out the experience for you? So we think that just constantly being mindful of the different things we could be asking. And because we included in other aspects, other surveys within our company, we think that those questions will really help us to understand how we can continue to evolve the program.

Marcus: Amazing. Thanks, Tiffany. So Liz, you mentioned that you're looking to run a longer program and then you're kind of hoping to maintain engagement of course throughout the program's entirety and then also progress on to a new program later on. I'd love to hear a little bit about that and what you're planning on doing to maintain engagement? You had some great ideas, like you were mentioning to me on the phone, so of course we'd love to you to share it with the attendees and the other panelists as well.

Elizabeth: Sure. We started with career-focused mentoring program because we just wanted to make sure that—we figured there would be a lot more energy around that. And so for this first group, we figured that we would do a lunch stipend for their first meeting. We thought that would help to encourage the relationship, keep people engaged. Then, around the six-month mark for this first group, we want to bring people back for a live session so they can celebrate their success and network with other mentoring pairs.

I know that for future groups, it may not feel so much like a cohort or graduating class but we still want to have regular mentoring events throughout the year, maybe more networking events or things of that nature.

Marcus: Amazing. Yeah, we've seen that to be a common theme. A lot of companies are running in-person events. Bringing people face to face of course is a surefire way to promote that engagement and kind of create a community around mentorship and hopefully bring in new mentors and mentees as well.

Of course we have Natalie now. You've gotten a lot of your executive leadership team interested. I know that you've had I think the CFO chomping on the bit too. Some of the presidents are involved, faculty heads, but of course there's some challenges that come with that. So what have you experienced in working with some of the executives as mentors for your program?

Natalie: Yes. It's so interesting. ACE is small but mighty, but our entire executive team—I sent out the email this week, actually, to say, “Hey, I'd love for you to sign up to be a mentor with us,” and literally within a minute, the CFO is like, “I tried clicking the link and it doesn't work.”

And I'm like, “Oh, no. This is never the email you want to get back.” And I'm like, “Oh, no.”

So actually, as I mentioned earlier, we have two members from the executive team already helped develop out the agendas in the sessions and kind of walked through those with us. Then today I checked and the college president has signed up to mentor someone, the CFO, every single person on the executive team has signed up to mentor someone, which is incredible. That's just kind of our work culture, too, is we really are a team.

So the challenges to CFO was totally user error here. I did not remember to put all the users in so that was my fault. And Together was fantastic in helping me troubleshoot that.

That is one thing about Together that I really appreciate is the customer service side of it. You guys jump in and help at any moment and I absolutely appreciate it. It makes my job a lot easier so when I'm panicking and I'm like, “Oh, no, the CFO is trying to get in and he can't,” you guys fixed it in two seconds.

So I guess the challenge is we haven't launched really as an executive paired with a faculty member or staff. And, really, our goal is to have people get outside their comfort zone. I know others are mentioning that as well. So Tiffany, I think it was you who mentioned the eHarmony. I am like, yes, eHarmony for mentoring.

Because we want our CFO to be paired with maybe an academic person or something like that, where it's really outside of their silo that they're used to. I think everyone has leadership qualities they can learn from one another regardless of their current role.

So I'm excited to hear what happens as we start partnering them up. I'm loving all the fantastic information you guys are sharing, especially those who have been using this program for a while.

So I'm excited that the challenges we've experienced are just from me. _____ [33:08] from the administrative error perspective, but everything else has been fantastic.,

Nathan: For everyone else on the panel, maybe just to extend that question, if you have an executive participating, they're obviously busy people. They frequently have personal assistants. Do you have any tips or tricks on how to kind of make sure that logistically they're taken care of so they can just focus on spreading the knowledge?

Natalie: That's a great question. So when we actually went to talk about Together, we went to the executive team and we said, "Hey, there's this great platform that we can use as a partner-up," and kind of got buy-in from them originally, from the executives themselves.

We do have some assistants that do help out, but I will tell you, ACE is very unique that our leaders actually—they do have assistants that help but they do them themselves. And we want to fill out our survey and we want to be part of this.

So I think the platform really does a great job of—one of the things when we're looking at mentoring is the time commitment. It typically takes people to prepare for a mentoring session. And Together really does a great job of reducing that time needed and so our executives are able to jump in and assist personally rather than having someone help them prepare for it, if that makes sense.

I don't know if that answers the question exactly but I think Together does a great job of getting it set up on the front end for all of our executives to jump in.

Tiffany: I would totally piggyback on that. You want to go ahead, Nathan?

Nathan: No, I was going to ask if you had any thoughts.

Tiffany: Yeah. One, I don't think anyone at Together sleeps. I think that they literally just sit around in _____ [34:58] and wait for my people, because, I mean, it's the same exact thing what our executives—even when I started at the bank, I worked on the executive floor. They literally are racing from meeting to meeting to meeting and you know there are M&As every time you blink and so they're always busy.

So we do have a feature that allows their administrative assistants to be able to do some of the scheduling for them, which is pretty standard anyway, but it takes that one more thing to have to login to kind of like feeling away from the executives.

And then I also sell it in a way that you're not to drive this. Like it's not your responsibility to step in and change this person's life through this relationship. So, yes, it can be life-changing but take that weight off of you. So a lot of what we're asking them to do is give some ownership to the mentee. Let them drive it. That's why they have a lot of the agendas.

We have a number of resources within the organization that allows them to really tap into that empowerment to really say, "Hey, I can drive this relationship and really help my mentor out instead of having them have to like pull out all their best tricks at one time a month that we meet."

And then also do it the way you want. If you want to do two 30-minute sessions in a month, go for it. Especially in our technology space, they have what we call touchdowns. They don't even have real meetings. So they have a 15-minute stand-up meeting in a hallway and that's the style you have. Then you have a 15-minute touch-base call on Mondays and just knock it out.

No, don't feel like you have to adapt this really strict set of parameters to participate. You do it the way that it makes sense for you.

Nathan: That's awesome. So it almost sounds like for anyone who gets paired with an executive, a good takeaway is to really let them know that they are going to have to drive a little bit more and not be afraid of that, not be afraid of saying, "Hey, I'm going to put time in the calendar with you." Otherwise, the executive won't necessarily reach out.

Marcus: Great. So I've got a question here from Julie, and this is a question really for any of the panelists so feel free to jump in. But what have you done as a company to ensure that people have the soft skills and behaviors necessary to be a great mentor?

Elizabeth: Well, I can try that one. For us, we have requirements before you can be a mentor. You have to get recommendations from two peers and your supervisor. That's our way of trying to weed out the people who are better fits for that role. And then of course we have the orientation. So we talk a little bit more about the soft skills that are required to build an effective relationship.

Marcus: Amazing.

Natalie: That's awesome, Elizabeth. At our institution, we just opened up some mentoring to just our leadership and executive team. So those who already have a department or are in a leadership role already in a mentoring sort of relationship for their teams.

And then for the mentees we kind of did something very similar to what you're mentioning, Elizabeth, is that we have them go through three internal training programs where they have to learn about leading where they are. They have to learn about creating a company culture focused on growth and success and being a change-maker within the institution. So we have that built in and then they have to get managers sign off to be then enrolled into the program.

So we kind of, on the mentee side we're like, "Okay, if you're going to take part with our executive and leadership team, we really need to make sure you're serious about this before we pair you up."

So, Elizabeth, do you guys do that for the mentees as well? I mean, the mentor, that's fantastic what you've got going.

Elizabeth: Yeah. So we do it for the mentors. The mentees are still going through orientation and they have to get their manager to sign off on it, but we don't get the peer recommendations for the mentees. So the assumption is that if you want the growth, we're willing to develop you if there's the capability or the...

Natalie: That's awesome.

Nathan: That's interesting. One thing that we've definitely mentioned is a good idea is if you add a question to your intake that's really open-ended, that's just something along the lines of why are you joining this program, I think that it's a really great way to just read through it. And kind of the quality of the response tends to be a good indicator of the quality of their participation. I don't know if anyone has had experience with that but that's definitely something I've seen.

Marcus: Amazing. We have another question. So how long do the mentor cycles last? And is there any feedback on how often the pair must meet up or chat during that cycle?

I could kind of give my brief take. We typically suggest a three-to-six month program length with six sessions included. But I'm sure they'd love to hear what you have planned, anyone on the panel, that's looking to have some input. We'd love to hear your advice as well.

Tiffany: So we have a year-long cycle. We start in August and we go August to July. With that, there have been in the past, just where there would be an email that went out where you just filled it out. But with the feedback built into the platform it really helps us and we're gauging along the way.

So since this will be our first calendar year, and we'll wrap here in just a couple of months, it'll be interesting to really kind of see how that experience has evolved, what the feedback looks like from the very start until now. And even kind of in reverse of the people that were really into it. I mean we have people that were not quite into it at first. They really weren't sure. And so I'm looking to see kind of how their feedback moves to a positive side because we've gotten so much of it. So it would interesting.

Something that we can consider, and Natalie, I'm totally going to call you after this, but we briskly moved to a remote kind of like setting for almost our entire organization that's not customer-facing and. So something that we've really been working with Together to create is what I'm going to join as our Work-From-Home Warriors Network. It's going to be a way for us to connect people who are so used to going into the office, so people like me who are struggling a little bit.

While I'm an introvert, I do need someone to chat with when I go get my coffee. So it's just me and that's going to be weird if I only talk to myself for now until eternity. So it will help us really have a shorter-term program that people may be really more engaged in, especially if they're new and if they're not in what we call like the centers or where all the action is right now around SBA and other things to do with the Care Act.

So I'm excited to get it off the ground and, hopefully, we get it done here in just a couple of weeks.

Marcus: Amazing. Sorry, Liz, we have a question for you. Where do you have your employees submit the two recommendations and the supervisor recommendation as well for the mentors? Is it through email or through the platform? What do you do?

Elizabeth: I ended up creating a document in Microsoft Forms. I have people submit it that way, that way I can pull the data. But I guess you could technically use SurveyMonkey or some other platform like that.

Marcus: Awesome. I know we only have about a minute or so left here but we'd love for the attendees to ask any questions, if they have any. If not, we can of course continue through the prompts for the last minute or so here. But I will keep you posted on that.

So we'll take it to the end here. We do have some resources for starting a mentorship program. We did a webinar a couple of weeks ago that helps with launching a remote mentorship program. So we will be sharing this with everyone afterwards. You could click into that webinar.

But we also have a great blog online that we've provided you with links to as well as how to start an effective mentorship program, whether it is remote or in the office.

I just wanted to thank everyone, attendees, for joining us on the call. And the panelists, thanks for doing an amazing job. You answered some great questions and it sounds like you've provided the attendees with some amazing content that hopefully they can run with and, hopefully, provided each other with some new ideas that you can implement in your current or new programs that you're looking to start.

Appreciate everyone joining today. Matt, did you have any closing comments before we end the call?

Nathan: I don't know if Matt is going to say anything, but I definitely like to say one thing which is thank you so much, Marcus, for facilitating. I think that we should just keep it going with the cadence and just have all kinds of people looking to run mentoring programs talking. I think maybe we'll look into potentially having a bit of a chat channel or something like that for everyone to just continue asking each other questions and tips going forward. I think that would be pretty valuable. So thanks, everyone, for contributing.

Elizabeth: Thanks for having us

Tiffany: Thanks for having us.

Natalie: Thank you so much.

Marcus: Of course. Awesome. Well, that's all for today and looking forward to staying in touch with everyone. I will be sharing this with you afterwards. It's recorded right now so keep an eye on your emails and you'll be able to listen back on this. Take down any notes that you found to be a little bit relevant.

Elizabeth: Great. Thank you.

Marcus: Bye, everyone. Thank you.

Natalie: Thank you so much. Bye.