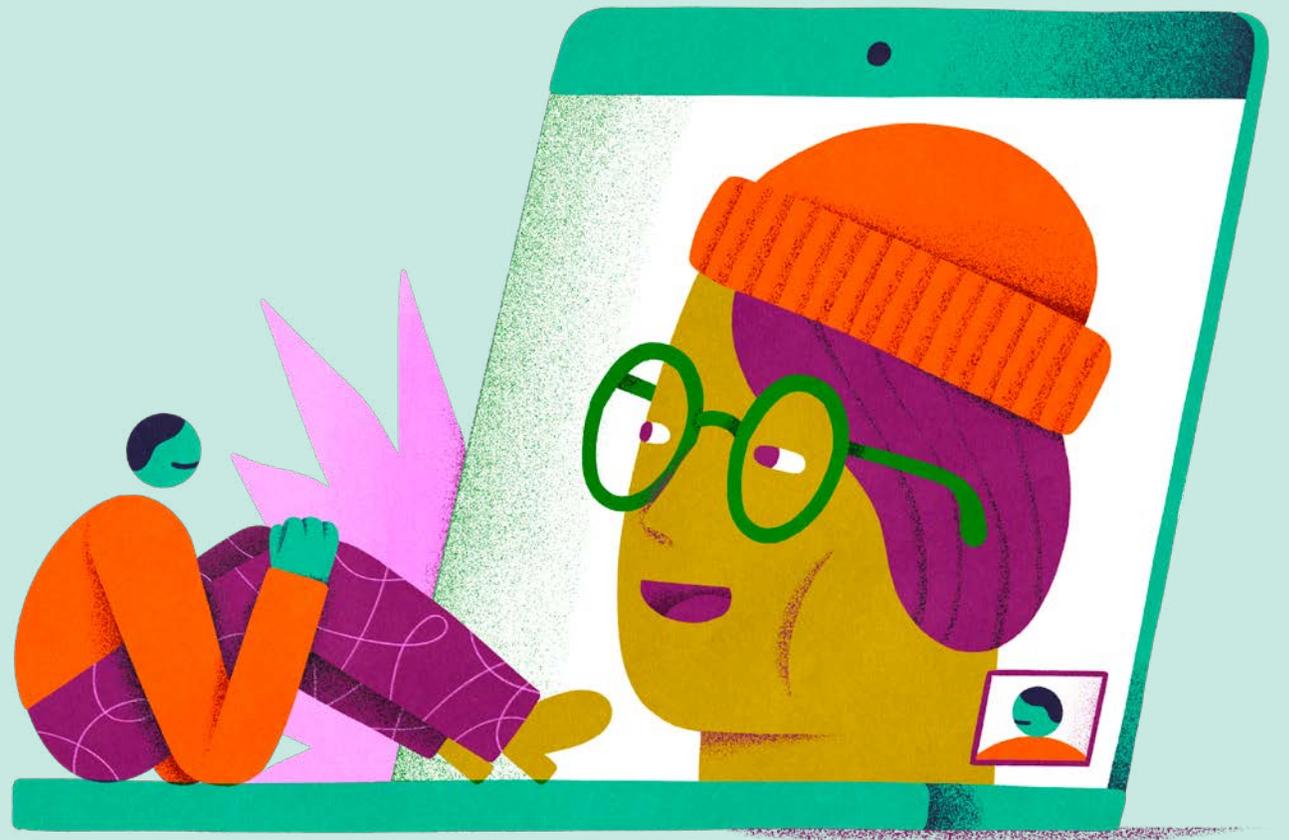


The Science of Effective Mentoring

2021 Research Report



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Introduction



Introduction

In an increasingly competitive climate, organisations need to do more than ever before to ensure they are not only hiring the right people, but also progressing and retaining them, particularly those from underrepresented groups. This means creating a truly inclusive workforce where all have an equal opportunity to succeed which they are not doing now.



William Akerman,
Founder and Managing
Director of Connectr

Sadly, those from underrepresented, and often disadvantaged backgrounds regularly struggle to feel included in the workplace. This often leads to a lack of confidence and networks, which others take for granted. Mentoring is a huge support to talent of all backgrounds and plays a crucial role in building belonging and inclusion. Indeed, mentoring has a crucial role to play with all employees, and given the rise of remote working over the COVID-19 period, has never been more vital.

However, many current mentoring programmes are undervalued, underappreciated and are unconsidered; they seem to have been established as a tick box exercise. These ineffective mentoring programmes ultimately fail, and when they do, they end up causing more harm than good.

By contrast, when mentoring schemes are run effectively, they champion workplace inclusion and ensure people from all backgrounds have an equal opportunity to reach their potential. Considerable commercial gains then follow.

To better quantify these benefits, and to identify the science and best practice behind effective mentoring, we've worked closely with leadership consultant, Rita Symons and behavioural science company, CogCo. The end result is this report, which explores the behavioural science behind mentoring programmes with purpose.

We hope it helps you plan and develop your mentoring strategy so that talent of all backgrounds are set up to thrive.

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What we know so far



What we know so far

The importance of belonging

Our research demonstrates that the UK was facing a belonging crisis even before the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Less than a third of UK employees feel like they completely belong at their current company
- Of those who don't feel they belong, **80% are considering leaving their role within the next 12 months**
- On average, it **takes 5 months for employees to feel like they truly belong** at their company
- Only **40% of HR decision makers believe their organisation cultivates a sense of belonging**
- And only **37% of HR decision makers believe the majority of their employees feel like they belong**

This has huge implications on businesses. In fact, this research shows that the vast majority of those who do not feel as though they belong at their current company are highly likely to leave the business in the next 12 months.

This research was carried out in early 2020. It is very likely that the remote

working climate caused by COVID-19 has worsened this disconnect between employers and employees, putting more businesses at serious risk of losing brilliant and diverse talent due to a lack of belonging.

40%
of HR decision
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organisation cultivates
a sense of belonging

How does mentoring impact belonging?

Purposeful mentoring is a key tool for fostering belonging and human connection, particularly amongst individuals who are working virtually. It is also key in supporting the progression, development, and retention of all talent, regardless of their background.

Research demonstrates just how valuable mentoring is to employees:

94%

of employees would stay longer at their company if it invested in their careers

97%

of those with a mentor say they are valuable

5x

Mentees are promoted 5 times more often than those without mentors

79%

of millennials see mentoring as crucial to their career success, with millennials set to make up over 75% of the workforce by 2025

89%

of those who are mentored will go on to mentor others, creating a cyclical culture of learning and development within the business

Despite this, **just 37% of professionals currently have a mentor.** This demonstrates a clear disconnect between the appetite for mentorships and the opportunities currently provided by UK businesses.

The Behavioural Science of Belonging



The Behavioural Science of Belonging

We understand the importance of building a sense of belonging amongst employees, which is why we worked closely alongside Rita Symons and the team at CogCo to implement a meaning solution and examine more deeply the behavioural science behind belonging in the workplace.

The four principles of human behaviour

Whilst the human race is incredibly diverse, there are some fundamental principles that we have in common:

- 1. Presentation:**
We are heavily influenced by context and framing
- 2. Process:**
We take the path of least resistance
- 3. People:**
We are social animals and tend to follow the herd
- 4. Purpose:**
We are intentional and goal-driven

"A key element of belonging is the ability to clearly distinguish those who are part of a community and those who are not."

The science behind belonging

The creation of businesses and organisations supports principle three, our fundamental tendency to be social and be part of a 'herd', by bringing together a diverse set of individuals. It also links to principle four, purpose, as these individuals are unified around a shared goal. This builds a sense of community and belonging.

This notion of belonging grows as individuals feel more responsibility and obligation towards an organisation. With this in mind, the most effective strategies for fostering an authentic sense of belonging within a business should always focus on:

1. Creating distinctive values and principles

A key element of belonging is the ability to clearly distinguish those who are part of a community and those who are not. Creating a set of values that is easy to understand and identify with is an effective way to build a sense of belonging amongst employees.

2. Creating shared goals and responsibilities

People naturally look to classify themselves into social categories to create order and define themselves with an environment. Strategies like mentoring allow employees to better understand what they share with colleagues, helping them to self-categorise as part of the community.

3. Encouraging positive interactions between colleagues

Building a sense of belonging within a community requires frequent, positive social interactions, and connecting with colleagues from all levels. This leads to satisfaction within the organisation and, in turn, builds belonging.

4. Inviting participation

Self-investment in organisational activities leads to feelings of commitment and solidarity with the rest of the group. This can be achieved by offering employees specific responsibilities to be managed both individually and as part of a group.

Measuring belonging

Belonging impacts how people inhabit, contribute to, and ultimately how long they remain within an organisation. It is therefore critical that organisations measure the impact of belonging strategies in order to ensure that they are effective and authentic for all.

Working with CogCo, MyKindaFuture created a framework for measuring belonging within an organisation; The 'Belonging Index'. This framework is used to measure the efficacy of new belonging strategies, helping organisations to evaluate and improve them over time.

The Belonging Index takes the form of a short set of questions which can be asked of employees to help evaluate their current sense of belonging.

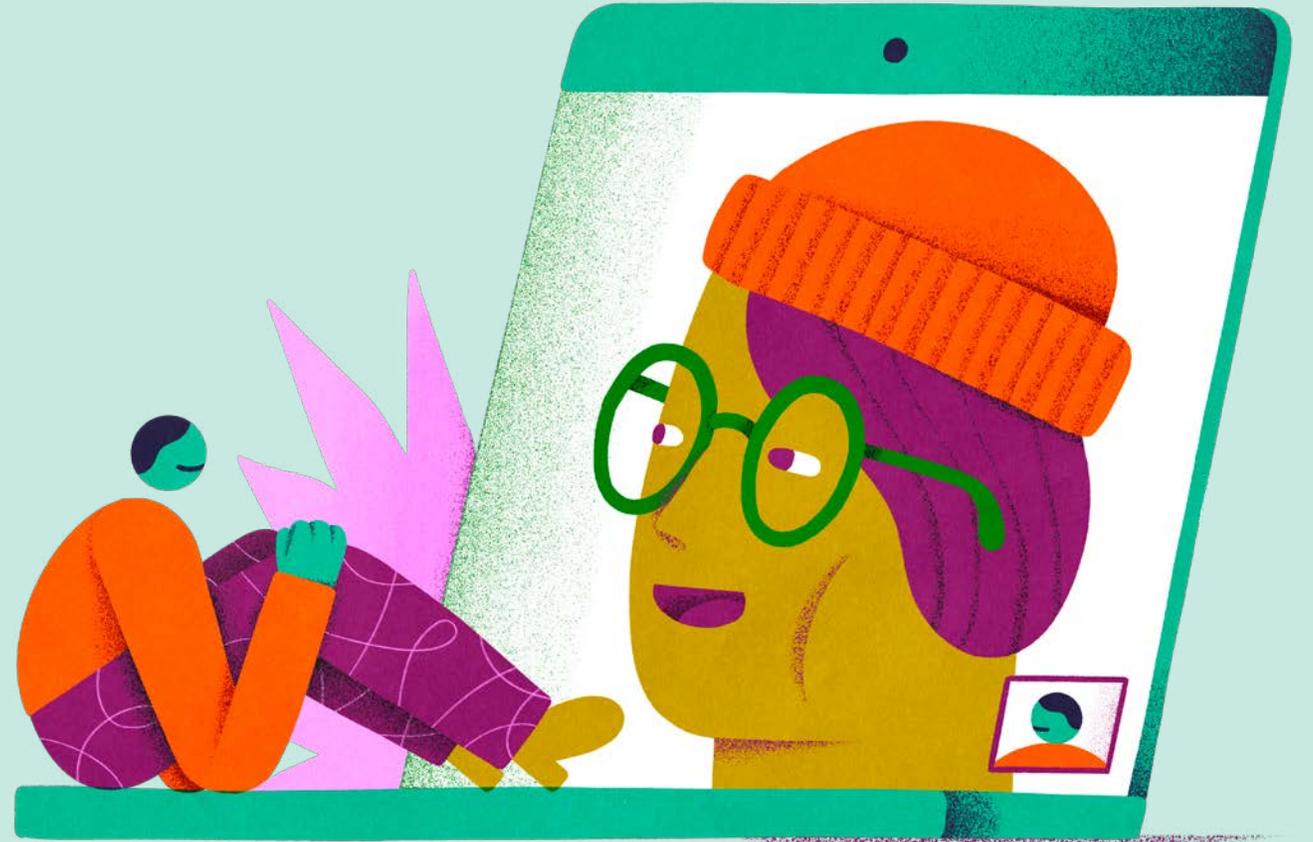
Employees are asked to rate how much they agree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree:

- 1. I believe I am a [insert organisation] type of person**
- 2. What [insert organisation] stands for matters to me**
- 3. I feel a strong connection to [insert organisation]**

The responses to these questions can then be aggregated and used to measure the perceived belonging of an organisation's entire workforce. The Belonging Index also allows organisations to better understand how belonging is changing over time and what is influencing these changes. For example, if an organisation introduces a new mentoring scheme, they can use the index to analyse its impact on employees' sense of belonging.

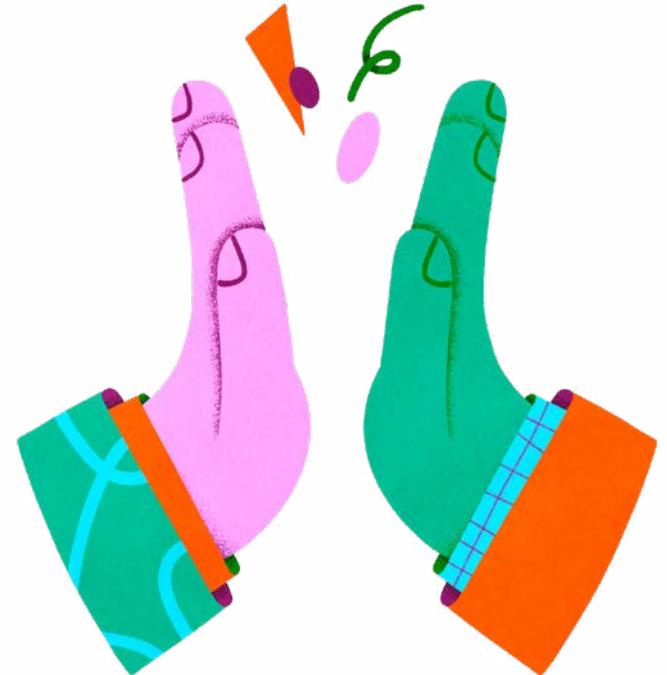
"Self-investment in organisational activities leads to feelings of commitment and solidarity with the rest of the group."

The Behavioural Science of Mentoring



The Behavioural Science of Mentoring

Given that we know businesses need to foster a sense of belonging within the workplace to attract, retain and then progress the very best and most diverse talent, we worked with our partners to further explore the important role mentoring plays in giving employees this crucial sense of purpose.



Mentoring goes way beyond a mentee's personal development, also having a significant effect on the mentors and the wider business too.

For employees, mentoring programmes help them identify and achieve career goals, establish and grow a new network and learn from senior figures they can identify with whilst on the job. The programmes also improve confidence, foster a sense of belonging and give employees access to new perspectives, whilst being able to visualise their career trajectory within the business.

Mentors benefit from giving back to people that need and want their expertise, they become more employable and get the chance to enhance their soft skills. By helping the business grow and be more inclusive, they have greater job satisfaction.

For businesses, effective and purposeful mentoring schemes help to improve their position as a top employer. These mentoring programmes play an active role in retaining top talent, becoming more inclusive, increasing diversity, enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction and fostering a greater sense of belonging. All of this increases productivity and strengthens the bottom line.

“For employees, mentoring programmes help them identify and achieve career goals, establish and grow a new network and learn from senior figures they can identify with whilst on the job.”

The four principles of successful mentoring

1. Having clear objectives

The most successful mentoring programmes set expectations from the outset. Mentees must know what they are getting from the relationship, mentors must drive the conversation towards this end point, and organisations must make sure all decisions align with their purpose and strategy.

2. Having clear lines of interaction

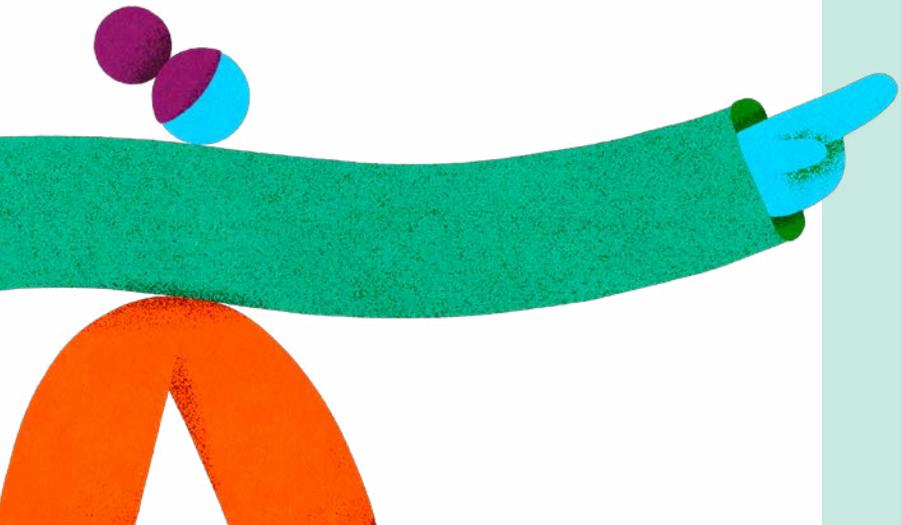
Setting clear-cut lines of communication from the start of the programme ensures everyone understands the extent of the relationship. How much communication is expected each month? Via what means – phone, email or an HR platform? By setting this early, expectations are managed and promises kept.

3. Mentor matching

It is not just a case of putting two people together and considering that 'job done'. Successful and purposeful mentoring relationships should be based on matched aims, experiences and personality traits, whilst still providing the freedom of choice.

4. Measuring outcomes

No thorough process would be complete without an analysis stage. Evaluating the programme is fundamental for assessing whether the programme is genuinely progressing and retaining talent, and for determining its efficiency, identifying areas for improvement and evidencing its effectiveness to decision makers.



The four reasons why mentoring schemes fail

1. Lack of clarity

If the mentoring programme has no purpose and isn't intrinsically linked to the business' strategy, it will very likely fail. There will not be 'buy-in' from within the business, putting interested and ambitious employees off.

2. Incorrect set up

Mentoring is a transactional process, with both sides putting in the same level of effort to get the desired results. If mentors are underprepared or lack the basic skills to manage the process or set objectives for the partnership, it will have no direction and ultimately deliver little to no impact.

3. Lack of choice

Most unsuccessful mentoring programmes don't offer the mentee or mentor any choice about who they are partnered with. In doing this, the business is essentially 'forcing' two people together, ignoring key factors such as values, demographics, personality types, ambitions, objectives or cultural beliefs. This has a detrimental impact on the process which manifests itself from the moment the connection is made.

4. Measuring outcomes

Many companies use mentoring schemes to reinforce a 'this is how we do things around here' ethos. This fundamentally goes against the principles of mentoring, and risks businesses losing quality, diverse and creative talent.



Measuring the impact of mentoring

By now we know that setting expectations before embarking on a mentoring journey is crucial, which means that reviewing these objectives and measuring their successes is equally as important. By doing this, employees and employers can ensure the programme is on track, and adjust the goal posts as necessary.

The two most common measures of success are:

1. **Employee engagement** – this must include retention, productivity, and wellbeing.
2. **Career development** – this must take both progression and mobility into account. This includes achievement of career goals and development of career-related skills.

Assessment throughout each relationship, including at the beginning and end, is imperative if the business is to detect impact. This process will highlight areas for improvement, gauge if the 'mentor match' is producing good results, and identify the mentors who are effective, and also those who are not.



Practical considerations for implementation

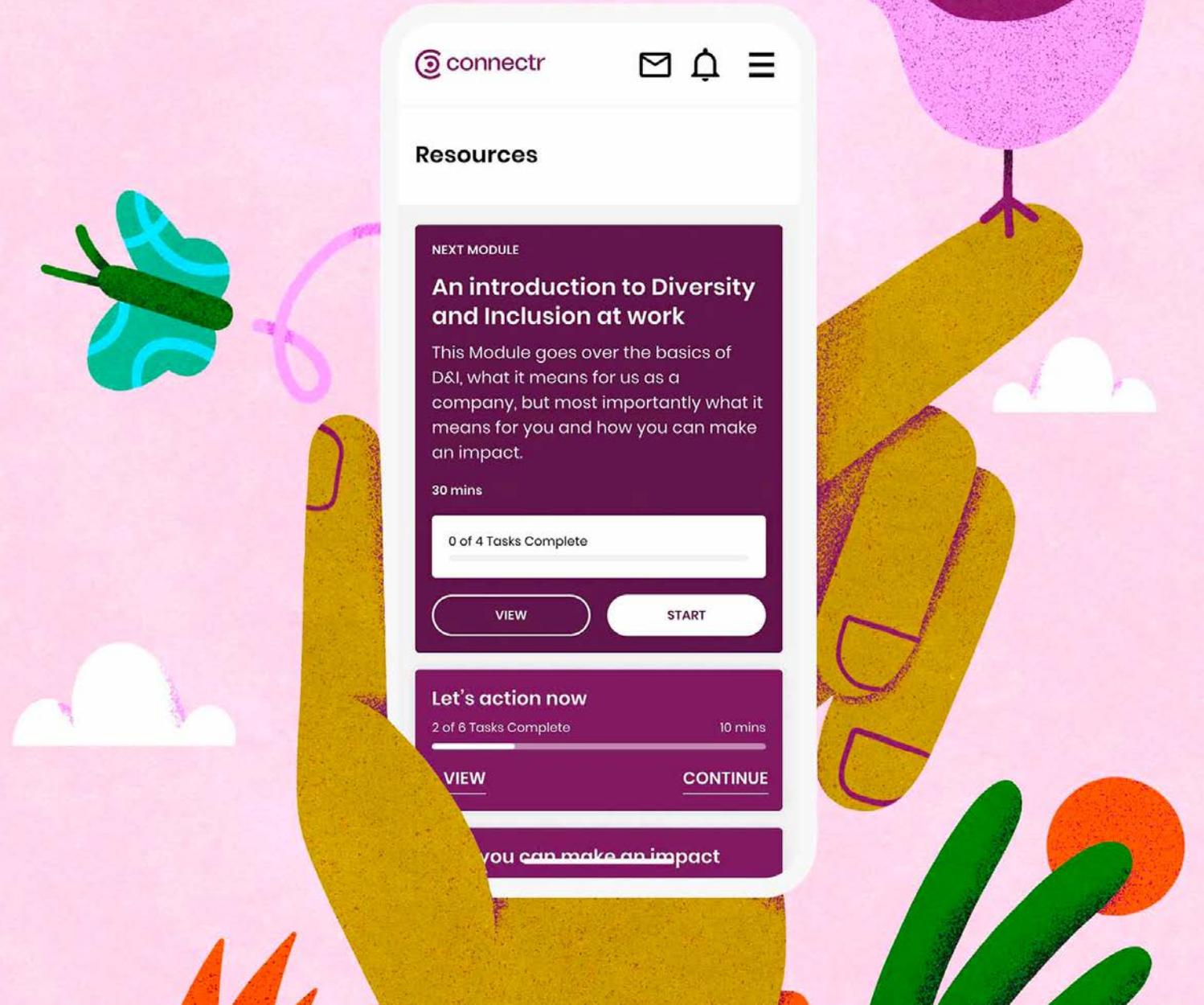


Each business is different, so the way they run an effective mentoring scheme is likely to be unique.

That said, there are some fundamentals that all mentoring programmes must incorporate in order to be successful:

1. **Ensure** the programme aligns with the business' overall strategy
2. **Present** mentoring as a positive extra that employees have access to, not as a tick box exercise that everyone needs to be involved in
3. **Show** employees that the mentoring initiatives are part of a wider strategy to ensure all employees feel an authentic sense of purpose and belonging
4. **Provide** mentors with effective training. The better they are at leading the mentee on the journey, the better it will be for everyone involved
5. **Review** the relationship regularly, often having a central resource involved is beneficial
6. **Don't be afraid** to stop the relationship and start again if it is not working
7. **Be clear** on how to measure success
8. **Have buy-in** from the whole business, top to bottom. If everyone is pulling in the same direction, it makes the journey easier and the results better

Delivering inclusive and purposeful mentoring programmes with Connectr

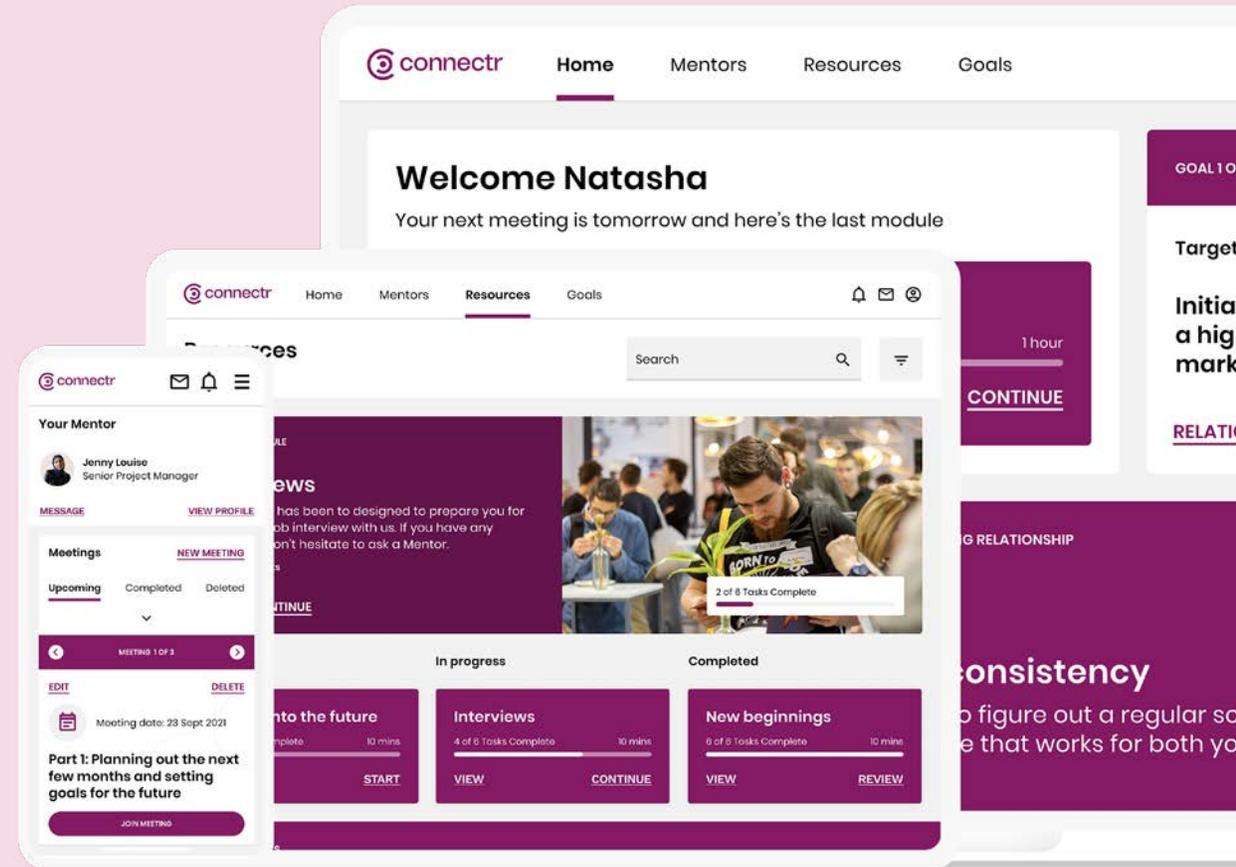


Using Connectr to maximise the impact of mentoring for all

When delivered effectively and with purpose, mentoring can offer real and tangible benefits for both businesses and their talent.

But how can organisations work to deliver mentoring programmes that are truly effective?

MyKindaFuture's employee engagement platform, Connectr, has been developed in partnership with worldclass behavioural scientists to help organisations deliver mentoring programmes with purpose. Through Connectr, employees of all backgrounds are empowered to drive their own development and progression.



Connectr delivers mentoring with purpose through:



- **Fully branded platform** with none of the manual management or delivery of traditional mentoring programmes



- **Smart-matching algorithm** uses data to accurately recommend mentoring options, with mentees able to choose the best match for them



- **Mentor resource hub** provides custom-made content to continually upskill mentors on all aspects of a purposeful mentoring relationship



- **Agile mentoring relationships** allow mentees to easily communicate with mentors through instant, in platform live chat, or set up meetings with video conferencing



- **Real time reporting** to track and measure the scale and impact of your mentoring programme

The Results

Connectr is proven to deliver unrivalled engagement and satisfaction results amongst employees.

To date, the platform has achieved:

93%
user engagement



Average user
rating of

4.7/5



To find out more about how Connectr could benefit your business, please get in touch.



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