

Ask BETTER Questions to Make Great Decisions



Looking in the wrong places: An introduction

In the first days of a Mentoring Pool Launch®, you know you **must** have a high signup rate.

Otherwise, there won't be enough potential partners... word will get around via the water-cooler ... signup rates will plummet ... people sitting on the fence will get cynical and not sign up ... you'll be in damage control mode.

Sounds pretty obvious, doesn't it?

This means your promotion and publicity must have a long pre-Launch timeline, be pervasive, appealing and have lots of "elbow room".

So, a great deal stands and falls on this and other parts of the overall Mentoring Program Design.

Problem is, all too often, Task Force members look in the wrong places and focus on the software and how much it costs. Overlook other, important project facets and you and your Task Force will trigger time, effort and money **costs** in ways you hadn't imagined.

FACT: Unless you have actually used an online mentoring software to run a Mentoring Pool, you can't possibly know what usage or sign up rate to expect and won't know what you've overlooked.

Sounds pretty obvious, doesn't it?

Even seasoned in-house veterans won't know what results you'll get. It might be really high signup or low or slow.

However, a mentoring software expert will have many grounded, strategic insights as to what's a realistic expectation for the Pool and the many cascading factors to be considered and planned for. Read on for some expert insights.

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“Choice has a clear and powerful **value:
it enables people to get
what they need and want in life...
choice reflects another **value**
that might be even more important
[it is] what enables us to tell the world
who we are and what we **care about**.”**

~ The Paradox of Choice B. Schwartz

BETTER questions to ask

1. As a vendor, how often do you advise a prospect to consider approach B for the Pilot (quite small numbers) when the organization feels the Pilot (and therefore the fees) should be quite large – approach A?

Can you suggest why prospects want to opt for A and larger fees when they don't have any experience with mentoring software?

A • less conservative approach: huge blocks of users theoretically at a lower cost per user (e.g., \$1.47) if a large percent access and use software; if a large percent don't use it, the cost will be significant (e.g., \$200 each)	B • more conservative approach: license modest numbers per year at a higher per user cost (e.g., \$3.40); if a large percent don't use it, the cost will be lower (e.g. \$50 each)
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2. Currently, what is the largest block of participants actually in a Mentoring Pool Pilot and using your tools? What's the smallest block of users?

3. Under what software name and in what year did development of your current mentoring software start?

Did your company come up with the mentoring program design (a series of steps) yourselves?

If "yes", at that point, what was your mentoring program experience / background?

If "no", who was responsible and what was their mentoring program background?

Hidden cost scenarios to run past prospective vendors:

4. Other than user licenses, what additional required fees are there (e.g., hosting, Help Desk, training to use the software, etc.)?

5. Imagine my organization wants to use a series of six or seven Demographics to match participants (or to be used in a Self-Directed Mentoring Pool©).

a) Is a fee be charged to have more than a certain number of Demographics appear on screen (e.g., more than 3)?

b) Is there a limit to the number of Demographics actually used for matching? Is a fee charged if our organization wants to use more than this limit (to be used for matching)?

Read on to see one MORE behind-the-scenes story.



Hidden costs – making assumptions

In our White Paper on Time & Money, we analyzed a real case study you can find on the internet to show how various costs can be overlooked. A similar insight is yours if you look more closely at mentoring software descriptions of different types then **ask better questions**.



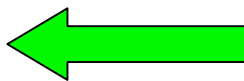
Type A: Software brand developed by a big company. Due to this, there will be multiple entries on the internet. You assume multiple entries means many different organizations have used the software. You might assume more means better. Now look closely – you might notice the same “client testimonial” for the software over and over. Now go to the brands main site – you might discover it either contains no client list or no client list for the software. Ask your questions.

Type B: Some mentoring software vendors have multiple products (because they do not specialize). They mingle all clients together. The unwary assume all those clients have used the mentoring software. Wrong! Ask questions and check. You might discover that of the many clients, only one or two have used the product. Big (company) does not necessarily translate into good product. We all know that.

Type C: Visit a vendor’s site and you might see a claim” “*in business 10 years*”, for example. Well, yes that might be true. They might have taken out a business license 10 years ago to start some sort of non-mentoring business – however, their mentoring experience might be a fraction of that. Do not assume. Ask.

Type D: Read the description of how long it takes to find a match in the software and (hopefully) reach a concrete goal. The vendor’s description might say: “*it will take a user about 20 minutes to completely sign up*”[to use the software]. This means that, at the end of roughly 20 minutes, a user will be matched with a partner and be ready to move on. Yes?

WRONG! Don’t assume.



You could well find hidden time-related costs not disclosed upfront or not immediately clear, that will ADD actual dollar costs to the payment you already made to license the software itself. What to do? We recommend you read the real life example we analyze on the next page to get a more complete picture.

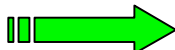
16 Steps & waddaya get? Another day older & deeper in debt...

Our White Paper on Time & Money contained a case study for a program using another software. Out of 26,500 potential participants, not even 150 proteges benefited.

However, let's use that case for new hidden cost calculations. And some new **Better Questions to Ask**.

Hidden Cost #1:

DirthVendor's brand follows a 16-step process. To Register (Step 1) and be matched supposedly takes "about 20 minutes".

 *Hold on! Is that correct?*

We don't think so.

First, participants have to read a 15-page Manual.



Then they move on to Step 2 (of 16).

At Step 2, even though the software is supposed to make the matches, each protégé must now take an extra (suggested) 5-15 minutes time out per mentor to interview 3 prospects. The protégé takes all "match" information from the software and uses it to interview each potential mentor. This is based on lots of text material -- more time for everyone involved to read and figure out.



Here's a sample of what the protégé has to find out from each mentor supposedly in 5-15 minute interviews:

Are you well respected by your peers and management?

Are you secure about your own success?

Do we have similar work style (or not)? – no tool in the software for this purpose

Do we have a similar work ethic? -- no tool in the software for this purpose

What are your qualifications? Text submitted by busy mentors

Do we have a mutual understanding?

Do we have a potential conflict of interest?

What can you help me with? From a list of one, two and three-word phrases

Cost of these interviews:

149 proteges	X 45 minutes (minimum) = 111.75 hours	X \$25 / hour wage	\$2793.75
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Hidden Cost #2:

If DirthVendor limits match-making to only 3 demographics plus several one-, two- or three-word broad headings, obviously that's not much to go on, is it?

- ✓ Not if it's career development at stake!
- ✓ Or improving the competitive edge!
- ✓ Transferring time-sensitive knowledge!
- ✓ Breaking down silos!
- ✓ Improving the Diversity program!
- ✓ Development of next generation leaders...

Sample Demographics:

- location (country)
- years experience
 - department
 - field of study
- gender
- position
- location (city)

Q : What if matching needs to be made on more than 3 demographics? Now what will each protégé have to do?

A : Spend time looking at on-screen information for each mentor in the system to piece together a match. Truly a hidden cost for results that may be biased, and inappropriate.



Again, let's use DirthVendor's own case study but, to be as fair as possible,

- let's imagine only 20% need to do extra searching for matches and
- each protégé looks at information from only 10 mentors....

Cost of extra searching due to Demographic limitations:

149 proteges est. X 20% = 30 proteges	[out of 370 mentors total] = 10 mentors each = 300	Search time = 10 min ea X 300 searches = 50 hrs	X \$25 / hr	\$1250
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It may not sound like much money or time but it adds up. And it's not something the Task Force anticipated.

Why not create mentoring software that earns its keep by

- giving Coordinators and participants more time to focus on the important activities?
- reducing the number of steps leading to success?
- Capturing, sorting and analyzing data?
- reducing the amount of text entry and reading?
- making bias-free, best-fit matches?

Ask about costly expertise claims

Will some vendor claims to “mentoring software expertise” cost you more money? Possibly. Here’s how. There’s an awful lot of inflated language the software world -- puffed up descriptions to make a feature seem more than it really is. Mentoring software, in some cases, is no different. You even need translations to figure out what it means. That’s time consuming. And time is money. We try to keep it straightforward and understandable.

To illustrate how software labels get puffed up, read the example (not ours) in the yellow box. Without looking at the green box explanation, do you know what it means? Bet you don’t.

Mentoring software feature label

“Integrated client-specific
boundary descriptions”

really means

translation

the learner uses radio buttons to indicate what the partners
will talk about or not talk about – boundaries are set

Better Questions to ask:

1. Are features (like the one above) necessary?
If yes, is there an easier, faster way of doing the job? [for the **answer**, see below]
2. Would a Program Coordinator and participants need training to understand labels attached to software features?
3. Will participants have to read 15-page manuals

Answer: use the blanket rule that “*everything we discuss is confidential unless otherwise agreed*”.

Colaboro, our software, is designed for mentoring:

We know people are busy.

People don’t want (or need) to read pages and pages of text (that took time to enter) in order to make choices. Current technology can reduce this, avoid the many hours of text entry and still give rich, complex pinpoint matches. So why consider a text-heavy cumbersome approach that makes users do all the work? It doesn’t make sense. It’s expensive. It’s time consuming. It’s frustrating.

Don’t look in the wrong places any more!

Call Mentoring Solutions today for more details.

1-877-955-0313 or 250-652-0326 or 250-652-0324