

CASE STUDY

MCGRAW HILL PARTNERS WITH CHRONUS TO HELP EMPLOYEES “STRETCH FORWARD” WITH MENTORING

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

In the textbook world, a mistake is a disaster. A single typo tarnishes the entire product and the brand’s reputation, and the only available solution—to reprint and redistribute the edition—is costly. It is no wonder that perfection evolved to become a key cultural attribute of McGraw Hill, a staple of education materials since the late 1800s. Perfection earned the company a world-renowned reputation for high-quality products for over 130 years.

As McGraw Hill transformed from traditional textbook publisher to digital learning technology enterprise, the organization needed to foster its spirit of innovation, encouraging employees to stretch outside their comfort zones and embrace potential failure as a way to learn and iterate.

In that pursuit, the team at McGraw Hill organized and implemented “Stretch Forward,” an award-winning learning initiative designed to reinforce new organizational core values in support of cultural transformation and business strategy. Stretch Forward comprises several different components, building on each other to offer all employees opportunities to challenge their thinking, increase self-awareness, reach outside their comfort zones and partner with a mentor. The program includes webcast presentations, personalized learning plans, a strengths assessment and more. All of the components come together with mentoring as the centerpiece of the Stretch Forward initiative.

“Because we are in the education business, the people we work with are passionate about learning,” said Melissa Janis, Global Head of Leadership and Organizational Development. “Our analysis showed McGraw Hill employees feel most supported and invested in when a leader (in addition to their manager) is dedicated to helping them grow.”

The challenge was how to offer high-quality mentoring at scale to McGraw Hill’s global workforce and reduce the administrative effort to orchestrate matches and monitor partnerships at the same time.



95% of partnerships were successful

In just two years, the mentoring program has served **150%** more mentees than the previous program

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“I knew we needed formal mentoring, and that we couldn’t afford to do it the way it had been done in the past—manually matching mentees to mentors with robust input from HR business partners and business leaders, and high touch partnership check-ins throughout the year” explained Janis. “We needed a platform that could do the heavy lifting for us.”

THE SOLUTION

To create the conditions to scale, McGraw Hill needed to first solve for an ample mentor pool. McGraw Hill devised an innovative approach to the cadence of mentorship: partnerships are just four months long. This enabled mentors to partner with three mentees per year, tripling mentor supply. The tighter timeframe also created a sense of urgency that motivated mentees to prioritize their development.

To ensure a high-quality learning experience within an abbreviated time frame, McGraw Hill designed a focused mentoring journey through the four monthly meetings. Once program participants are matched, the journey begins with a meeting to review and refine a draft of the mentees’ Stretch Forward Learning Plan and to determine the specific learning goal for the partnership. During the three remaining meetings, mentees are guided through a structured “acquire-practice-reflect” cycle that ensures that the learning objective is achieved and builds improved learning habits at the same time.

For McGraw Hill, the Chronus mentoring platform provided the functionality and flexibility needed to implement their unique use case in a way that could be managed as part of just one team member’s workload, in order to meet employee mentoring needs across the organization and around the world.

Customizable Configuration

In addition to supporting the four-month mentoring cadence desired by McGraw Hill, Chronus’ customizable configuration enhanced both the program design and the user experience.

By choosing an option to allow for anytime access, the Stretch Forward Mentoring program was able to pivot from three cohorts per year to “rolling admissions.” With different start dates and each mentor becoming available every four months, mentees apply when it makes sense for them, rather than a specific program start date.

While moving to a platform-based approach, McGraw Hill wanted to maintain the high-touch experience participants enjoyed in traditional annual mentoring, but without the additional labor. This was achieved by customizing dozens of system notifications to align with the notion of “stretching forward” and other McGraw Hill company values. Each notification was tailored to resonate with participants and to convey a consistent tone of support and empowerment at every stage of their learning journey.

Mentoring participation derailments due to workload
and priorities were reduced to less than **5%**

Scalable Deployment

Solving for scale starts with global access and considerations for participant time zones, providing global accessibility. It also entails transferring labor-intensive administrative functions to a platform. By engaging Chronus, the entire application and matching processes were automated and available to McGraw Hill employees around the world.

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The robust dashboard and on-demand reporting in Chronus significantly reduced the time needed to monitor the application, matching and mentoring processes. A data-driven approach made early identification of potential issues possible, making it easy for the program manager to target the few participants who need help moving forward at any stage in the process.

The wide range of notifications available through the platform enabled McGraw Hill to automate messaging throughout the process; well-timed, relevant notifications sent directly to participants' inboxes support a high-touch experience with minimal labor.

Finally, scalability is enhanced by a Chronus configuration that gives mentors a choice in the number of mentees they will take on at any time. More than a quarter of McGraw Hill mentors signed up for multiple mentees, increasing the number of mentees who can be matched.

Intuitive User Experience

For mentoring to be available globally at any point in the year with minimal administrative effort, both the platform and the program needed to be easy to understand. Since McGraw Hill employees work with the company's own digital learning platforms, expectations for ease of use are high.

To create awareness for the program and ensure participants understood the process and expectations, McGraw Hill conducted information sessions when Stretch Forward Mentoring was initially launched. Because the mentoring process within Chronus follows the natural progression from application through completion and the configuration is easy to navigate, they found that creating a digital “one-stop shop” with details for mentors and mentees on McGraw Hill's social enterprise network was all that was needed to explain how the program worked. This digital site supported marketing efforts and year-round access to the program, and provided another time saver for the program manager.

Accepting mentors at any time of the year also meant preparing mentors at any time of the year. In lieu of set trainings, guidance is available on demand and is emailed to both mentors and mentees as they progress through their partnership, providing ample direction and support at the moment of need. This just-in-time, guided learning-by-doing approach has boosted confidence and effectiveness for less-experienced mentors, and has created consistency across the mentor pool.

Optimized Matching

Since the perceived value of the match is integral to the perceived value of the mentoring experience, McGraw Hill found optimized matching to be a game changer.



100% of the
mentors reported positive
changes in their mentees

Mentors found **80%**
of mentees acquired
new knowledge through a
learning action

Mentors indicated **78%**
of mentees increased
ownership of their
development

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Chronus' powerful MatchIQ® algorithm and mentor recommendations facilitated participant matching, offering recommended mentors based on mentee profiles and desired skill development needs.

The flexibility to determine the variables included in the algorithm and their relative weights allows other factors to be included in the matching recommendations. To encourage the widest range of possible matches, McGraw Hill included time zone preferences for mentees to have meetings. Mentees who were willing to meet outside their core work hours accessed a larger pool of mentors.

McGraw Hill found that participant visibility into the reasons for the match recommendations and having choice in the matching process created a high degree of ownership and satisfaction with the matches. Mentors and mentees were excited about their pairings, and had a better understanding of what they could offer to each other before the partnership even began.

Janis noted that using data-based recommendations facilitated mentoring partnerships beyond one's network, helping to break down silos and support the Inclusion and Diversity agenda. "It's not uncommon for mentees to report applying to the program with a particular mentor in mind, only to opt for a mentor they didn't know of thanks to the matching data they received through the platform," said Janis.

Built-in Touchpoints

Making sure partnerships stay on track can be a labor-intensive exercise, and not always a fruitful one. McGraw Hill sought a better way to ensure mentors and mentees were meeting monthly, and that they were highly satisfied with the progress they were making together.

Following the guided journey for participants, customized by McGraw Hill in the Chronus platform, mentees simply check off pre-populated tasks to indicate progress. Missed deadlines trigger gentle reminder notifications to the mentee, who may enter notes in the platform and/or send messages to the program manager. In this way, Chronus helps partnerships maintain momentum more effectively and efficiently than in a traditional mentoring approach, while providing the flex that each unique mentoring connection may need.

Another vital Chronus feature of the Stretch Forward Mentoring program includes feedback surveys. The platform sends surveys to participants at 30 days and again at the end of the four-month mentoring cycle. The 30-day survey acts as an early warning detector. If any survey response isn't 100% positive, the program manager reaches out immediately to explore the underlying reasons and to resolve the issue in order to get the partnership back on track. The closure survey provides data to support continuous program improvement, and to offer additional appreciation to be shared with the mentor.



60% of mentees improved job effectiveness due to mentorship

58% of mentees indicated an improvement in leadership skills

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“I was introduced to multiple new folks within the business that helped me hone in on what areas I am looking to improve upon for myself and my team. My mentor was very much available and willing to help me better understand the aspects of business planning and marketing initiatives that directly correlate to the work my team does.” – Mentee

THE RESULTS

The ultimate objective was to find a scalable, personalized, cost-effective way to move the needle on how McGraw Hill employees feel about how the organization is investing in them. And by that measure, Stretch Forward Mentoring has been extremely successful. The program has been a boon to employees especially looking to develop leadership skills or who may be going through career transitions.

The overall response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive. McGraw Hill’s internal data show mentees value the mentors’ guidance, and saw the impact of mentoring on their day-to-day functioning, as well as the potential for longer-term impacts on their career and professional goals. “Commitment from our mentors has been unbelievable,” said Janis. “They’ve really stepped up, especially during these challenging times. The mindfulness and intentionality of what you put into the program with the support of genuine and engaged mentors pays dividends.

Greater Commitment to Mentoring Partnerships

According to the data, the vast majority of partnerships completed the full cycle; participation derailments due to workload/priorities were reduced to less than 5%. Of the participants who completed the closing survey, 94% of the mentors reported they were satisfied with their mentee (84% were very satisfied) and 99% of mentees reported being satisfied with their mentor (86% were very satisfied).

Increased Personalized Learning

With greater availability of mentors and greater commitment to the partnerships, the Stretch Forward Mentoring program has been able to drive personalized learning outcomes through mentoring with a wider audience than ever before. In just two years, the program has served 150% more mentees than the previous program and continues to grow as mentees convert to mentors. Participants report overwhelmingly positive feedback in closure surveys about their learning experience. In fact, 94% of mentors reported positive changes in their mentees over the course of their partnership, giving insight into the effectiveness of guiding mentees through the learning cycle.

Mentors consistently report high commitment from the mentees, making the partnership valuable for both partners. They found their mentees developed



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“The Stretch Forward Mentoring Program has been a great way to share information and strengthen relationships between McGraw-Hill divisions, functions and geographic regions. I'd especially recommend this program to international team members who may be interested to learn from their cross-regional counterparts.” – Mentor

a greater sense of ownership of their work and used their advice to successfully chart out their career paths and pursue development objectives. Mentors indicated their mentees achieved the following:

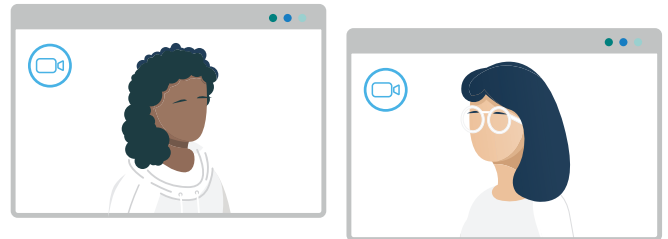
- 82% gleaned new insights by reflecting on learning
- 80% acquired new knowledge through a learning action
- 78% increased ownership of own development
- 74% enhanced the learning goal

Further, mentees indicated improving multiple skills due to the mentoring partnership, in the following categories:

- 68% career guidance
- 60% job effectiveness
- 60% networking
- 58% leadership skills

The initiative has helped shift mindsets around career development, foster team building and boost individualized learning to fuel McGraw Hill's transformation into a renowned and respected learning science company. It has become a powerful way for McGraw Hill to offer personalized support, and drive a learning culture where everyone has the opportunity to participate and grow with the benefit of a mentor.

With personalized attention and a structure in which participants learn how to learn, mentoring partnerships create optimal conditions for further learning, helping employees continue to grow professionally and make greater contributions to McGraw Hill.



Phone: **(800) 515-1206**

Phone: **(425) 629-6327**

Web: **www.chronus.com**

Email: **sales@chronus.com**

Chronus, the leader in mentoring software, helps people connect and learn from one another in the pursuit of growth, development and support. We power hundreds of thousands of successful mentoring connections for some of the world's largest companies, educational institutions, non-profit organizations and professional associations. Our unique MatchIQ® technology, expert support, and exceptional user experience enable mentoring programs to scale and drive impact for organizations while changing lives through the power of mentoring. With a guided experience for participants, a mobile app for people on the go and the most configurable platform in the industry, we work with organizations to support a variety of programs and mentoring formats. In addition to integrations with collaboration tools, like Zoom and Slack, Chronus also includes built-in video and chat capabilities within the platform for more meaningful virtual connections.

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