

Absorbie 2025 **winner**

Absorbies
awards **25**



&

**CDM
Smith®**

Customer story



Industry

Engineering & construction

Use case

Smart matching & structured mentorship, scalable program management, data-driven analytics, employee development & retention

Solution

[Together Mentoring Software](#)

Absorbies awards 25

Challenge

- Fragmented, manual training platform.
- Limited visibility creates compliance risks.
- Rapid growth outpacing education infrastructure.

Solution

- Absorb LMS to manage onboarding, training, and compliance workflows at scale.
- Absorb Create to transform content into interactive SCORM modules.
- Observation Checklists to track competency and progress for compliance.

Results

- Major improvements in engagement and training activity.
- 100% compliance with national board registration tracking and documentation.
- Significant revenue growth in nursing partner-run clinics.
- Scaled to national training delivery without increased admin headcount.



&



Summary

Full-service engineering and construction firm CDM Smith prioritizes mentorship to support employee productivity, performance, and retention. Employees were growing increasingly geographically diverse, yet participation in the firm's Career Compass program was limited to one business unit and coordinated manually. To expand structured mentorship to all employees and streamline program management, the firm integrated Career Compass with the Together mentoring platform in a phased rollout. By integrating Together's algorithm-based matching and analytics, CDM Smith expanded participation in mentoring program participation and improved employee retention, supporting career development and saving talent replacement costs.



Jason Beck

Manager of Learning Systems

“

By integrating Together’s smart matching and analytics into our Career Compass program, we transformed mentorship from a manual, limited initiative into a scalable, data-driven experience that doubled participation, improved retention, and saved the firm \$3.2 million. It’s not just a platform—it’s a catalyst for career growth, connection, and culture.



CDM Smith expands mentorship program with **smart matching and scalable mentorship technology**

[CDM Smith](#) is a full-service engineering and construction firm that provides water, environment, transportation, and energy solutions to clients around the world. The company stays ahead of the curve to meet changing needs and deliver lasting impacts for its clients.

One of the ways CDM Smith keeps its employees delivering quality results and enduring value is through its culture of mentorship.

“We hire for careers, not jobs,” says Carlos Echalar, Chief Human Resources Officer at CDM Smith. “By strengthening mentor-mentee relationships, we’ve seen measurable gains in individual productivity and firmwide performance, reinforcing our firm’s commitment to professional development.”

Mentoring for dispersed geographies

CDM Smith's workforce was growing increasingly geographically dispersed and its mentoring program needed to evolve in tandem. The company's legacy mentoring program, Career Compass, was impactful but limited in scale, as it primarily served one business unit.

Managers matched mentors and mentees manually, which **lacked structure and constrained opportunities**. "Matching opportunities extended only as far as the manager's network," says Sarah Wehren Kooiker, Director of Unit Communications and mentoring program advisor at CDM Smith. Tracking was also manual, making Career Compass activity, performance, and outcomes difficult to assess.

Inconsistent mentoring experiences, limited access, and minimal visibility into program performance prompted a change. "We needed a **scalable, data-driven solution** to expand access, improve matching quality, and enable real-time program oversight," says Wehren Kooiker.





Transition to Together

To modernize, elevate, and scale Career Compass, the company decided to transition to the Together mentoring platform, letting all employees benefit from structured mentorship.

The shift transformed the manually coordinated initiative into a structured, data-driven experience. Integrating the Together platform in July of 2024 enabled **algorithm-based matching**, while guided agendas and digital badges added **consistency and recognition**.

“We wanted algorithm-based matching to assist in the pairing of mentors and mentees based on **job criteria and goals, as well as experience and interests**, while still relying on their manager’s guidance to maintain the people connection” says Jason Beck, Manager of Learning Systems at CDM Smith. “This would help broaden the pool of potential matches and help the new pairing get off on the right foot with the structure of **guided agendas and session planning tools**.”

The strategic integration aimed to make mentorship more **accessible, personalized, and impactful** across the firm, supporting employee growth and improving talent development and retention.

A layered and **human-centered** rollout

The implementation process took a phased, collaborative, and feedback-driven approach.

The first step was organizational. A steering committee was formed in November of 2024 to provide strategic direction and governance and had representatives from each of CDM Smith's business units. Members were tasked with guiding engagement in their respective business units by enhancing programs, assessing impact, and driving participation. With the program scaling across the firm, Beck was designated program owner and oversaw registrations, matches, and session activity.

The committee prioritized strategic configuration and customization. "We started out by aligning the platform's capabilities with our mentoring goals," says Beck. This was achieved by **configuring Together's smart matching engine with CDM Smith's job levels, skills, and development goals.**"

Change management and communication were critical at program launch to introduce employees to the program and ensure enrollment. "We used **onboarding webinars, help guides, and targeted emails** to support users through registration and profile setup," says Beck. These resources highlighted the broader access, structured support, and personalized matching of the new program. Executive leadership and managers were recruited to reinforce the program's value and encourage enrollment.

A robust infrastructure supported the user experience at every step and provided rapid responses times when assistance was needed. A dedicated intranet page, a Career Compass email address, and a Viva Engage community put peer learning front and center, making access seamless and inviting. Those venues shared user success stories and celebrated mentoring across the firm.



Real-time monitoring to improve and innovate

The phased rollout ensured smooth adoption across business units and oversight was informed at every step by real-time analytics.

“Our Career Compass administrators gained real-time access to registration, pairing, session frequency, and engagement trends,” says Beck. “That **engagement data** let them be proactive in supporting participants and identifying gaps and empowered them to **continuously improve the program.**”

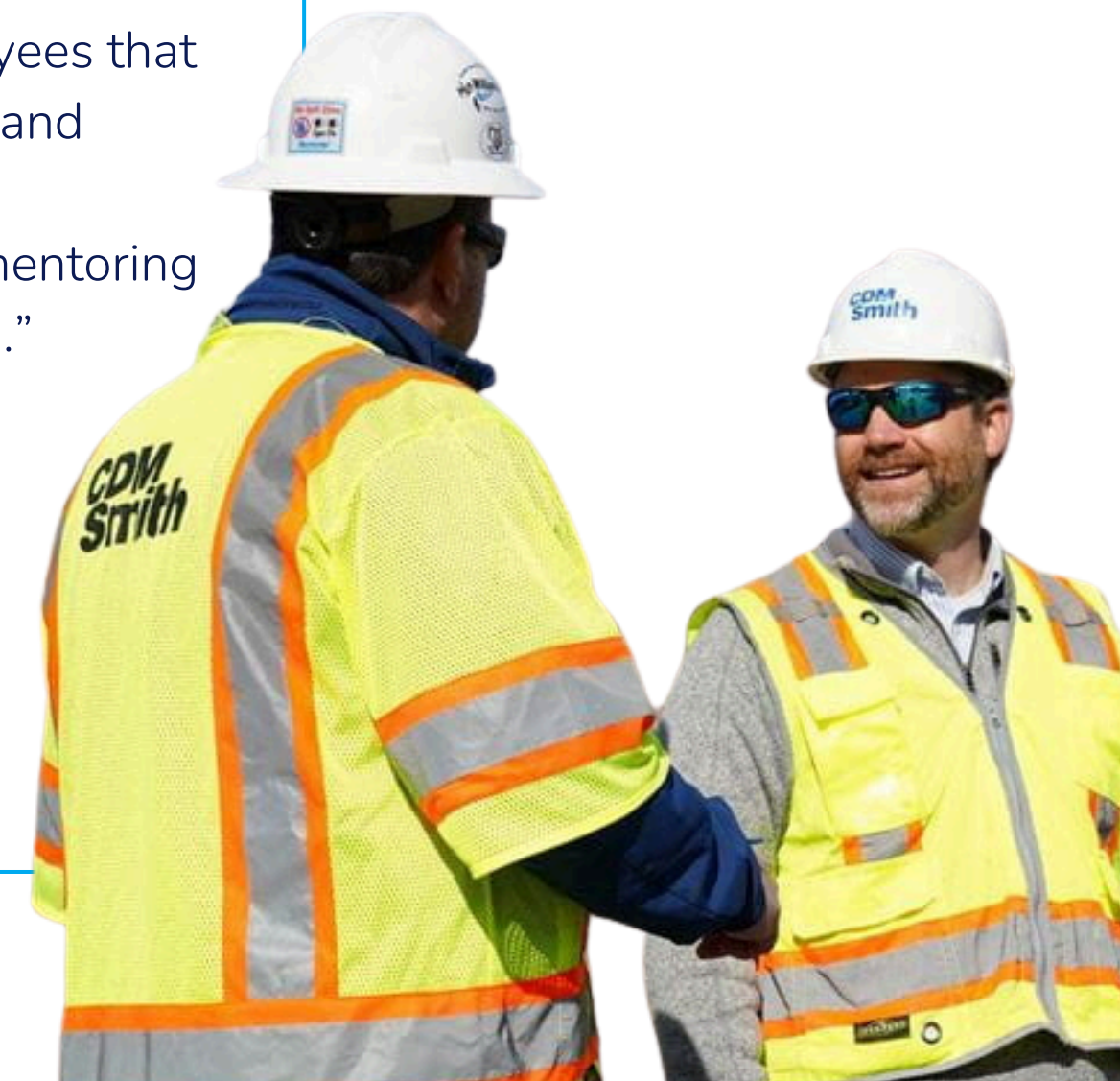
A framework for **sustained success**

A layered communication strategy founded in human-centered design made mentoring **visible, personalized, accessible, and actionable**.

Storytelling content on Viva Engage, quarterly live “drop-in” meetings, and targeted emails to managers cultivated a **dynamic environment of connection and sparked engagement**.

CDM Smith’s unique “Hum, Sing, Shout” framework calibrated visibility and impact to support mentoring in action daily, quarterly, and annually. Hum provides day-to-day needs and culture building support through baseline actions, Sing builds on those efforts with reinforcement efforts, and Shout consists of larger, long-term engagement drivers and celebrations of success.

“An example of hums are monthly communications meant to reinforce CDM Smith’s culture of mentorship. This includes posts with tips for impactful mentorship and sharing of success stories,” says Beck. “Sing are action-oriented communications and includes quarterly webinars for new or tenured employees that have yet to participate as well as registration and pairing pushes. And our Shout layer includes celebratory communications like our annual mentoring award during our Enterprise Awards program.”



An extraordinary jump in mentoring accessibility

Within one year of launching Career Compass powered by Together, CDM Smith **doubled program participation**. Before the platform integration, only 25 of mentors and mentees came from outside CDM Smith's primary business unit. Within one year, participation outside that unit **grew to nearly 1,100**, demonstrating growth where it was desired at an unexpected and extraordinary rate.

Engagement metrics showed that **60% of the target population registered**, with 62% of those participants successfully matched.

"Mentees felt that Career Compass **positively influenced their job performance**," says Beck. On a scale of 1 to 5 from not at all to extremely valuable, they rated their experience 4.51. For mentors, the experience was rated nearly as high, at 4.40.

With **96% of respondents reporting new gains in confidence, responsibilities, and leadership capabilities**, the improved mentoring program met its objectives for organizational performance.

The program's structured approach has helped employees track progress and take ownership of their **professional development**. "It gives employees clear direction for career advancement," says Beck. Employees report setting **actionable goals, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and aligning daily work with long-term aspirations**.

Their mentorship program also helped employees **build networks and develop workplace relationships, inspiring cross-functional collaboration** and giving employees a deeper sense of belonging. Mentees appreciated having mentors to confide in and seek advice from, while mentors enjoyed the leadership role and providing guidance to junior engineers.

"Serving as a mentor helped individuals develop active listening, feedback, and coaching skills," says Beck. These soft skills made employees more effective at adapting to new challenges and become more effective team members and leaders

Enormous business impact

Promotions data drove home the impact of mentorship on employee development. Among mentees, **34% received promotions**,” says Beck, “compared to 13% of non-participants.”

Career Compass powered by Together had a significant impact on employee retention resulting in **\$3.2 million in cost savings**.

Data from September 2024 to July 2025 showed a **5% higher retention rate** for program participants and 157 fewer staff losses. “Employee turnovers cost \$20,584 per employee in offboarding, lost productivity, hiring and interviewing, onboarding, and ramp-up costs,” says Beck. “Those retentions saved the firm millions.”

With 3,400 registered mentees and 1,950 registered mentors, the program saw **strong adoption and engagement metrics**. Success at this scale sparked some new challenges that CDM Smith is addressing through enrollment adjustments and data filters.

34%

mentees received promotions

\$3.2M

cost savings

5%

higher retention rate



For instance, with so many participants, mentees are often provided with multiple 100% matches. That makes mentor selection difficult for mentees, especially when they're new to the firm.

To better manage the number of matches, the Career Compass team narrowed the number of skills and challenges mentees could select during initial registration, an adjustment that enabled the matching algorithm to make better matches.

“Our next step is to discuss expanded filtering options with our Together customer success manager to customize and optimize the solution even more,” says Beck. Employees want to filter on data fields such as job title, grade, and primary practice to tailor mentoring matches.

Data-driven program management is helping Beck and team innovate and improve. “The platform features help us stay proactive to continuously improve the program and streamline its administration.”

Absorbies
awards 25



Empowering learners to enrich their
lives, workplaces and communities.

Schedule demo