

Improving the Mentor Experience - From Start to Finish

TRS

x


techstars®

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Problem

Main problems solving:

- There is no automated or efficient system for vetting
- Mentors in Boston do not feel engaged and there is a lack of overall community and communication



Solutions

Our proposed solutions:

- Mentor-founder matching algorithm
- Worldwide communication platform
- Mentor peer groups
- Recruitment chatbots
- Revised mentor applicant form



Outcomes

We're hoping to achieve:

- Increase in mentor engagement during + after the program
- 73% of those who want to build their network will be able to do so
- Save time during the vetting and recruiting process

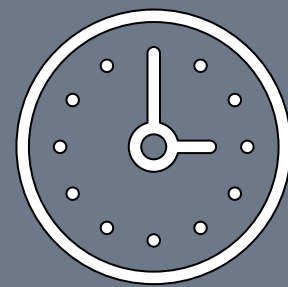


PROBLEMS

What are the main problems we are solving?

THREE MAIN PROBLEMS

The three main problems are: a time consuming inbound mentor pipeline, an efficient mentor-founder pairing process, and a lack of community among mentors.



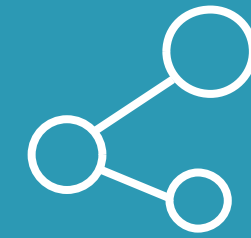
TIME CONSUMING INBOUND MENTOR PIPELINE

Currently 100+ hours to read through application forms and meet with candidates to assess their skills and value add



MENTOR-FOUNDER PAIRING INEFFICIENCY

Currently it takes weeks for founders and mentors to meet and evaluate fit. Both mentors and founders report it being inefficient because of incompatible skill sets

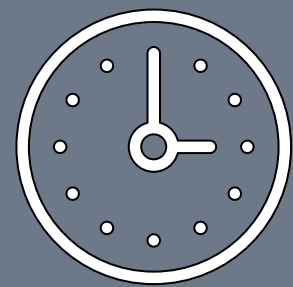


LACK OF MENTOR COMMUNITY

Mentors do not feel actively engaged in the program and request more opportunities to build meaningful relationships

PROBLEMS SOLVING

Problems this particular method for the Traveling Salesman Problem would solve are time, costs, and is an NP-Hard



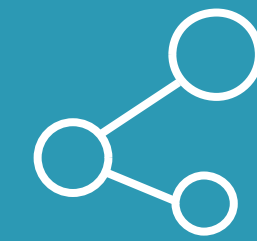
TIME TO FIND EFFICIENT ROUTES

Finding the shortest route to visit a set of locations is an exponentially difficult problem (finding the shortest path for 20 locations is twice as hard as 10 locations).



NP-HARD PROBLEM

TSP is problem in which correct solutions are easy to verify, but there is no efficient way to solve the problem itself.



MINIMIZING COSTS

Can reduce costs in areas including transportation, electronics, and genetics.



techstars



SOLUTIONS

What are the solutions?

OVERVIEW OF SOLUTIONS

Our proposed solutions are: a chatbot to answer questions on the website, a matching algorithm to connect mentors and founders, a global communication platform, and community building activities and mentor groups.

➤ CHATBOTS TO ANSWER APPLICANT QUESTION

A chatbot on the website can help answer applicants questions.

➤ MATCHING ALGORITHM: MENTORS AND FOUNDERS

An easily deployable algorithm to match mentors to founder more efficiently.

➤ COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

A platform to connect the mentors and founders globally to allow for better communication and networking.

➤ COMMUNITY BUILDING

Create opt-in topic based mentor groups for mentors to discuss and connect with other mentors and build a community network. Incorporate team building activities into the program to create cohesion.



1. CHATBOTS

Chatbots can answer questions and review applications

THE PROBLEM IS TIME

A large amount of time (around 100+ hours on the whole process) is spent on communicating with mentors, vetting, matching founders with mentors. This can be solved with simple recruitment/interview or FAQ chatbots.

With these chatbots, the application form process could instead optionally happen via a recruitment chatbot able to:

1. answer basic FAQ's about the mentor position
2. interview applicants to ask background info questions and other open-response questions (why you want to be a mentor, etc.)



BENEFITS OF CHATBOTS

Chatbots provide a dynamic and personal feel to a website. If an applicant is unable to quickly find information they're looking for on the website or just browsing, a chatbot prompting one to ask questions can be really helpful. Chatbots can be easily mocked up and tested for usefulness with a simple "Click here to chat" button that doesn't actually bring up a dialog box (instead says this feature is still being implemented), but can report to you the demand.



100+ HOURS

Currently, it takes Techstars 100+ hours to communicate with mentors, list with the right balance of skill sets, setting up mentor office hours, etc.



2 WEEKS

Is the time it takes to set up a simple chatbot able to answer FAQ's about Techstars, gathering applicant info, conduct simple interviews and rank the applicants



4 HOURS

Is the average time it takes for a company to get back to an applicant on any questions / concerns on a regular business day



INSTANTANEOUS

Is the time between when the applicant sends a question or comment and the chatbot to answer back (can be compared to an in-person conversation)

Insight from other mentoring organizations

A common trend prevalent in many mentoring organizations is the long, slow, and time-consuming process during the selection of mentors process, from gathering basic applicant information to setting up and conducting interviews. This can easily be improved by implementing recruitment chatbots, saving both time and energy in each organization



I spend countless hours during the recruitment process gathering the applicant info while scheduling and conducting interviews. It's extremely frustrating and tedious



Kristin Leutz
FOUNDER OF VALLEY VENTURE
MENTORING



In Silver Line Mentoring, we have a small team in charge of *all* operations, including selecting mentors, which can be a very long process



Nathalie Eugene
SILVER LINE MENTORING

WHY CHATBOTS?

Able to serve hundreds of applicants feeding new and different information into the management system. These functionalities can all be added to a chatbot; 3, 4, and 5 would be secondary additions.

1

GATHERS

applicant information,
such as their resume and
basi background

2

ANSWERS FAQ'S

applicant will get an
answer back instantly +
won't have to directly
contact company

3

CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

Ask screening question on
applicant's knowledge +
skills

4

RANK APPLICANTS

Rank applicants based on
given metrics and
qualifications

5

ELIMINATE

those who don't fit in the
criteria, no additional time
needs to be spent on
them

6

SCHEDULING

Able to schedule
in-person interviews with
a human recruiter or
other events

7

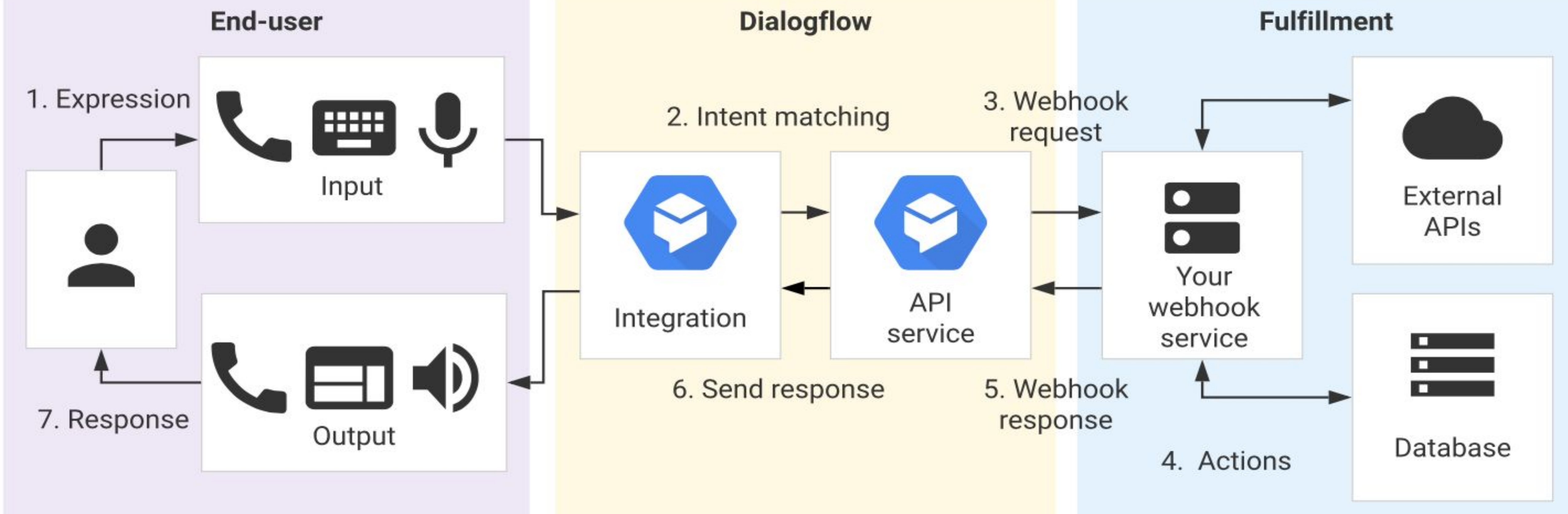
KNOWLEDGE

Provide info and
convey company
culture

8

24/7

Can do all of these actions
at any time and
simultaneously



CHATBOTS WITH DIALOGFLOW OR HIRING DEVELOPER

Dialogflow is an end-to-end, deploy-anywhere development suite for creating conversation interfaces for websites, mobile applications and IoT devices. It utilizes machine learning and NLP in the Google Cloud Platform. [Sign up](#) is free.

Option 2: **Hiring a chatbot developer.**

A list of potential developers to hire can be found [here](#). Typically, a developer will charge around 60-70/hr and have success rates averaging from 94-98%. Hiring a chatbot developer >\$750 and save >10 additional hours during the vetting process

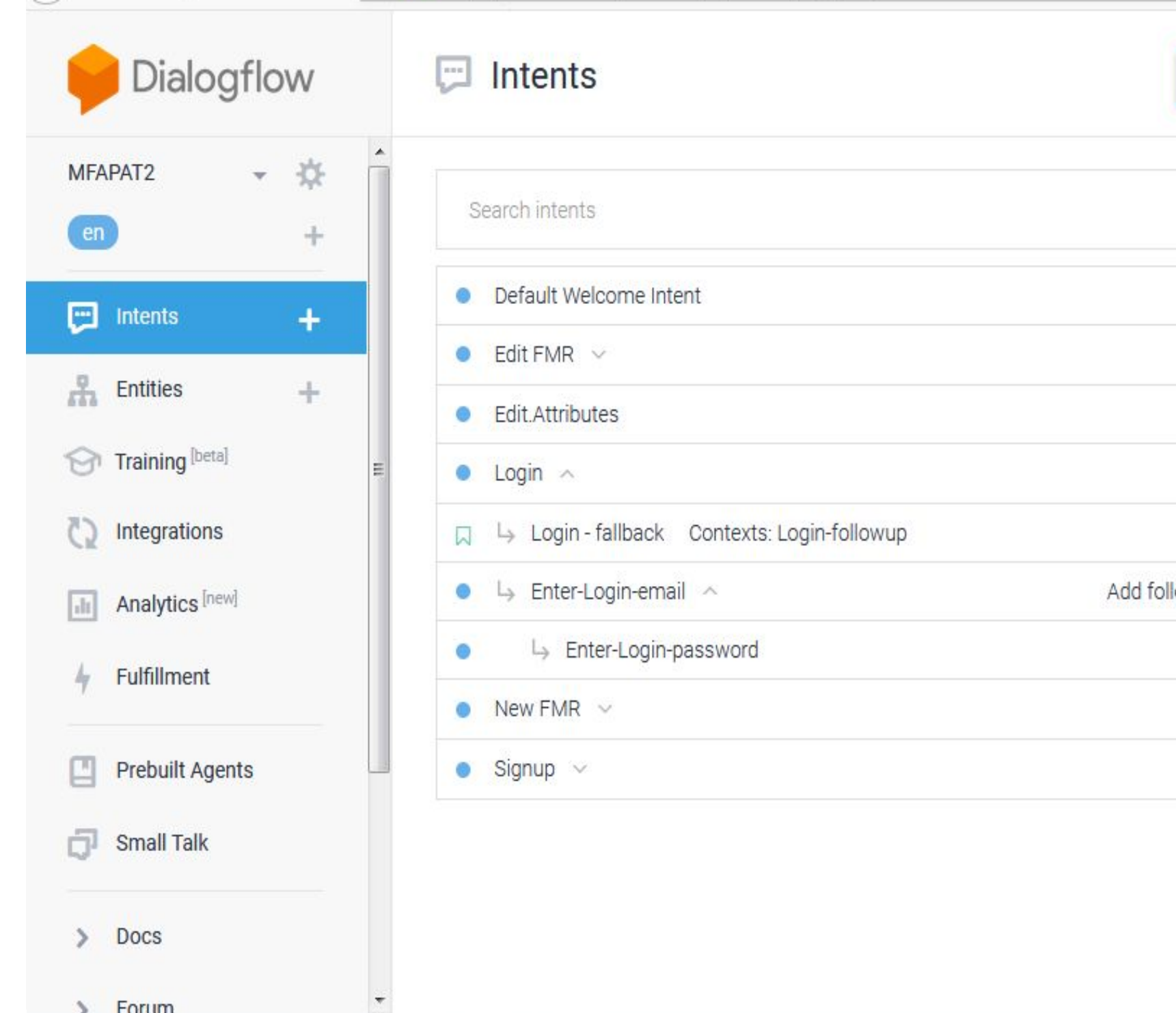


STEP 2

Create Agent

Your Dialogflow agent is a virtual agent using the nuances of human language to handle conversations with your end-users

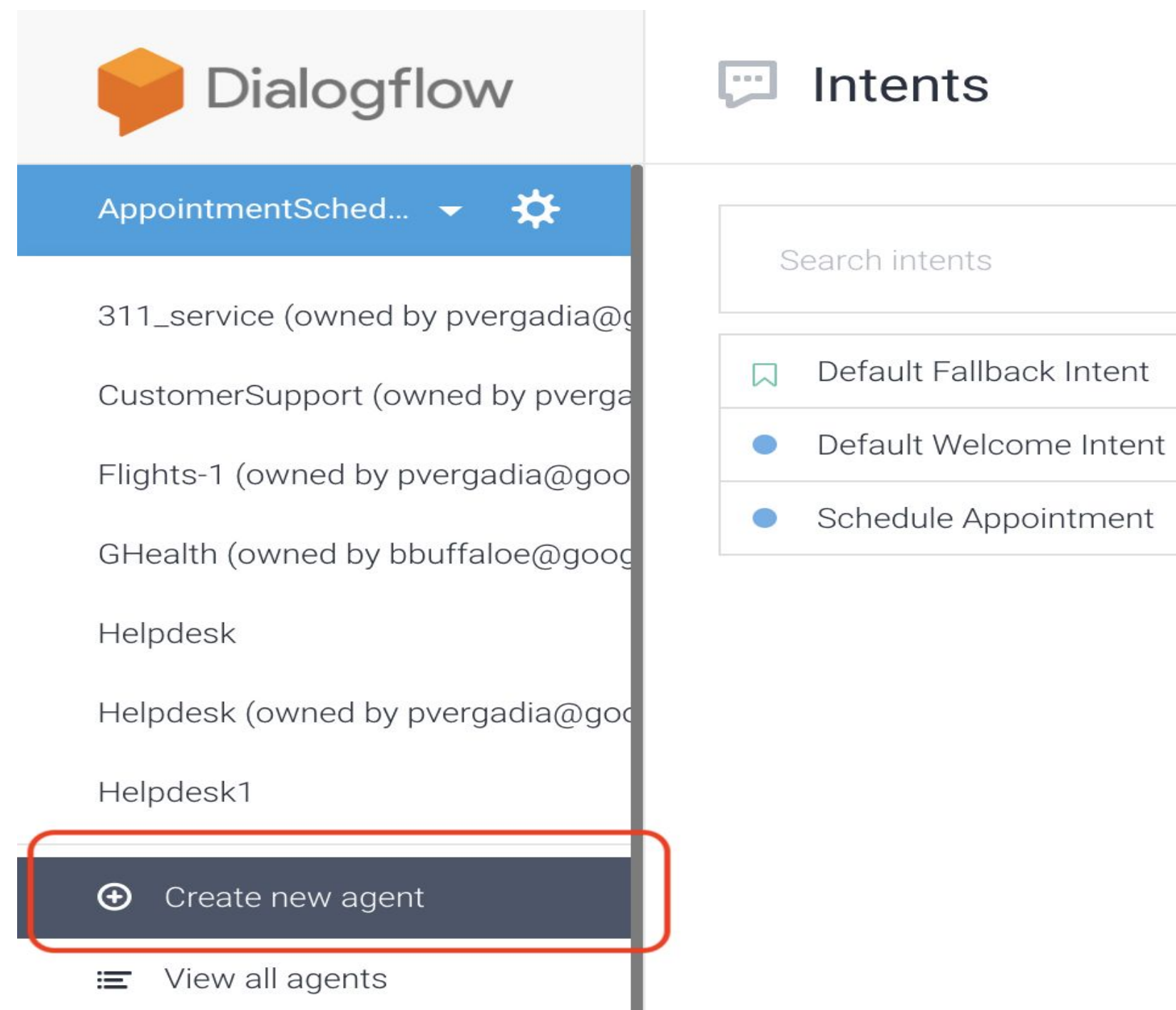
To create one, go to the Dialogflow Console and click Create Agent in the left menu where you can enter the agent's name, default language, etc.



STEP 1

Setting up DialogFlow

Go to [Dialog Flow](#) and click on *Go to Console* to create a new account. You will need API credentials to do this. The Dialogflow account is free.



STEP 3

Create Intent

Your intent categorizes the end-user's intention for one conversation turn. Ex. When answering basic FAQ's, you would define an intent for basic questions about Techstars and creating a FAQ agent that recognizes and responds to this type of end-user questions.

Click the "add" button next to Intents in the sidebar to create your first intent. Training phases, actions and parameters are further added.



Radio

Your users can make radio requests to your app using this agent. General genre search terms can be used to find a...

POWERED BY  Dialogflow

What commitment does it take to be a Techstars mentor?

A mentor must provide support when requested, attend a Pitch Practice for feedback, give a workshop, and make network introductions when possible.

What are the expectations of a Techstars mentor?

These include but are not limited to:

- Clearly separate opinion over fact
- Provide specific actionable advice
- Be challenging and robust, never destructive

FAQ Chatbot

Building this chatbot will allow users to receive answers back instantaneously to basic questions they ask

1) Create Knowledge Base

Knowledge connectors are used to parse specific documents to find automated responses by defining knowledge bases. Each knowledge base will contain info about the FAQ documents used by Dialogflow when looking for specific responses to user requests.

To create knowledge base: Dialogflow Console → Agent → Knowledge → Create Knowledge Base

2) Attach FAQ File

Create a Techstars FAQ document that contains answers to questions including, “what is the time commitment to being a mentor” or “when can I schedule the in-person meeting.”

To attach file using a web UI: select New Document from Knowledge and add the appropriate Mime Type, Knowledge Type, and Data Source.

Examples of questions contained in Knowledge Base: 1) What is the time commitment to being a mentor 2) What benefits and opportunities will I receive 3) What is the program structure for mentors



Radio

Your users can make radio requests to your app using this agent. General genre search terms can be used to find a...

POWERED BY  Dialogflow

What are your skill sets or main areas of expertise?

Data Science. I was a data scientist at Aetna for 4 years and 3 months. I also have some, but limited experience with AI.

Why do you want to be a mentor at Techstars?

I have a passion for helping others and I believe I can not only bring the technical skills into a startup, but also demonstrate how to have necessary leadership and communication skills...

Interview Chatbot

Users are able to be interviewed over the chatbot. The bot can assess candidates that match certain criteria and all pre-screened information is recorded in a database.

1) Open-response questions

Fallback Intents allow the users to reply to open-response questions. The chatbot will ask the user to write if they want to and click the button if they are done, which then takes the user to the next question. Create a new context for the question to be stored and loop the fallback intent.

Create a new Fallback Intent: Intents → Input: context-A, Output: (#iterations) context-A

2) Storing user input

For permanent storage of user's input, integrate Dialogflow with [Firebase's Firestore database](#) (for free).

Setting up Firestore: Dialogflow's Console → Fulfillment → Enable Inline Editor → Deploy Firebase console → View execution logs → Database → Create Database
Running Sample: Dialogflow's Console → go to Dialogflow Simulator and query the Dialogflow Agent

3) Deploy Chatbot into Website

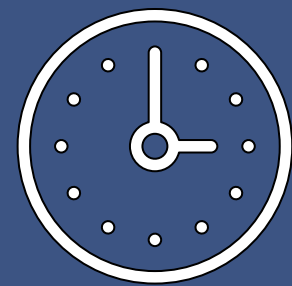
Deploy chatbot into website so any user can access the chatbot. When clicked, it will land on a page where the HR bot resides.

Use [Kommunicate](#), a free powered chat plugin.

Go to the Kommunicate dashboard → Bot → Dialogflow → Integrate Bot
Assign all incoming conversations to bot: Settings → Conversation Rules → Assign new conversations to bot → Select a bot
Dashboard → Settings → Configuration → Install

Cost Analysis

Implementing a chatbot reduces tedious wasted time on your part and saves money.



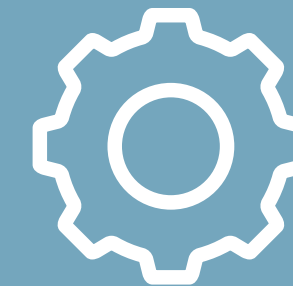
50 HOURS

Is the time it takes to develop a baseline functional chatbot.



\$10,000

Is the average cost to hire a developer to build and deploy the chatbot.



0 HOURS

Is the amount of time it takes to maintain the chatbot.



> \$16,000

Is the minimum amount saved by deploying a chatbot in the first year. This estimate does not even include time that could be saved by making interviewing and vetting processes faster.



TRANSPORTATION

Military, commercial delivery services (ordering and delivering packages or mail), companies scheduling home service calls, bus companies



Implications GENETICS

Following a path through the genome that can return the shortest genetic distance map in order to optimally build genetic maps.



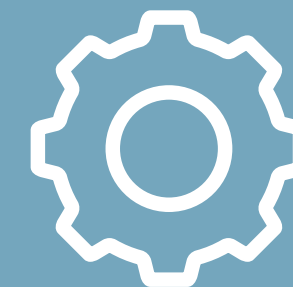
ELECTRONICS

Fiber Optic Network Design: network consisting of optical fibers (roads) connecting all nodes (towns)
Chip Design: ideal chip design needs to hold as many components as possible



\$10,000

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0 HOURS

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> \$16,000

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TRANSPORTATION

Is the time it takes to develop a baseline functional chatbot.



2. MATCHING ALGORITHM

Efficiently pairing mentors and founders

Techstars mentors:

“A one pager on the company ... would really speed up the intro ... and finding a better match”

“There were some companies where I could not add that much value, but others where I could add a lot”

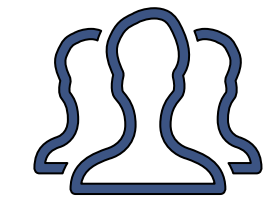
CURRENT STATUS

Currently mentors and mentees spend 1 month meeting the other people in the program and finding the right fit. Often these meetings are very repetitive, simply going over basic information, and the mentors and founders may not have much in common.



10 STARTUPS

In the Boston program



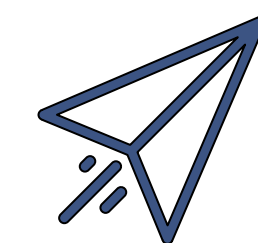
150+ MENTORS

In Boston



1 MONTH

Spent meeting the other people and finding the right mentor-founder fit



43 %

Of 2018 mentors and startups explicitly said this process was inefficient

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS TECHSTARS MENTEES

A common trend seen in the feedback from both mentors and mentees was that mentors were unable to provide the necessary help and advice to the because they weren't in the same industry or things just didn't "click."

“

Not sure if [his] advice was very specific to us...Gives good big picture advice, [but] not sure about details

Jennie

Participant of Techstars Accelerator Program

“

There was not much industry overlap...not sure if we could use him at the moment

Jineesh

Participant of Techstars Accelerator Program

“

I want to make it easier ... to connect my expertise with companies that need it

Anonymous

Participant of Techstars Accelerator Program

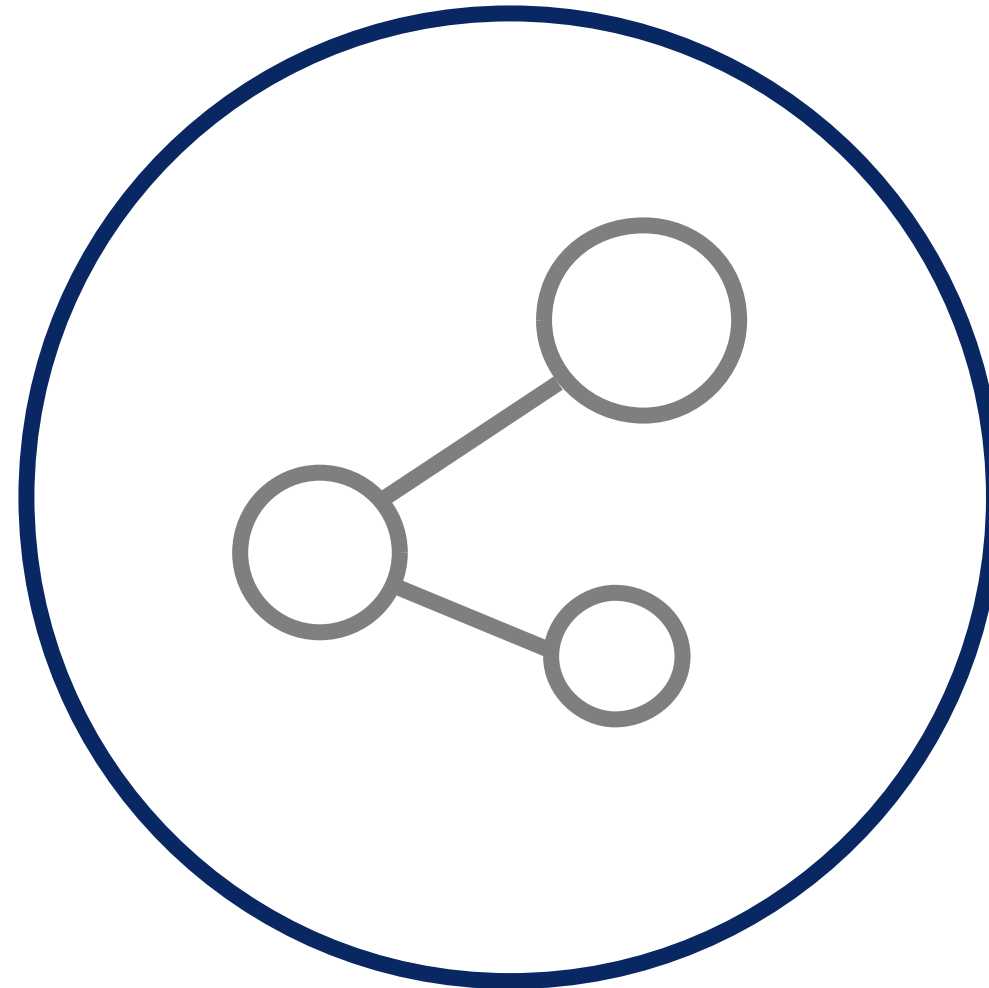
MATCHING PROCESS

Founders select tags for their industry and areas they are especially looking for help in. Mentors submit tags of their domain expertise and skill sets. The algorithm then suggests a list of who might be the best fit - either a mentor with relevant skill sets, or founders the mentor could be especially useful to.



FOUNDER REQUEST

Founders will submit tags of the domain they are working in (health, clothing, etc.) and areas they want guidance in (marketing, tech, etc.)



SMART PAIRING

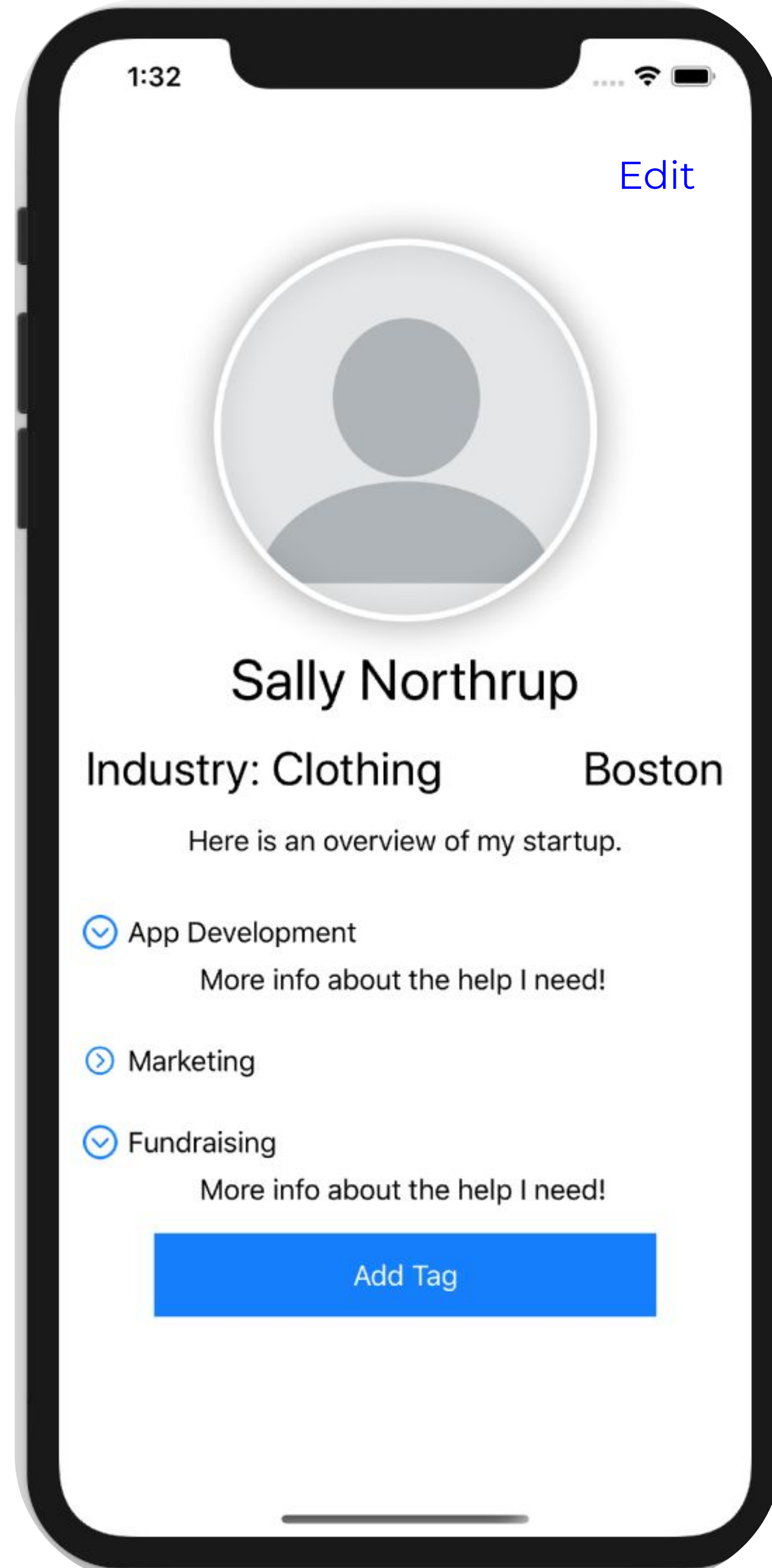
A simple program which can be easily incorporated will create a curated list. This will reduce time spent at the beginning of the program getting to know other mentors and founders.



MENTOR SKILL SET

Mentors will submit tags of their domain experience and areas of skill.

MATCHING ALGORITHM MOCK UP



Reduces repetitive or irrelevant meetings. Everyone comes into the meeting knowing the others' background information and that they have skills/problems to add.

Founder Profile:

Founders (and mentors) would each have a profile with basic information as well as any skills they have or need help with.

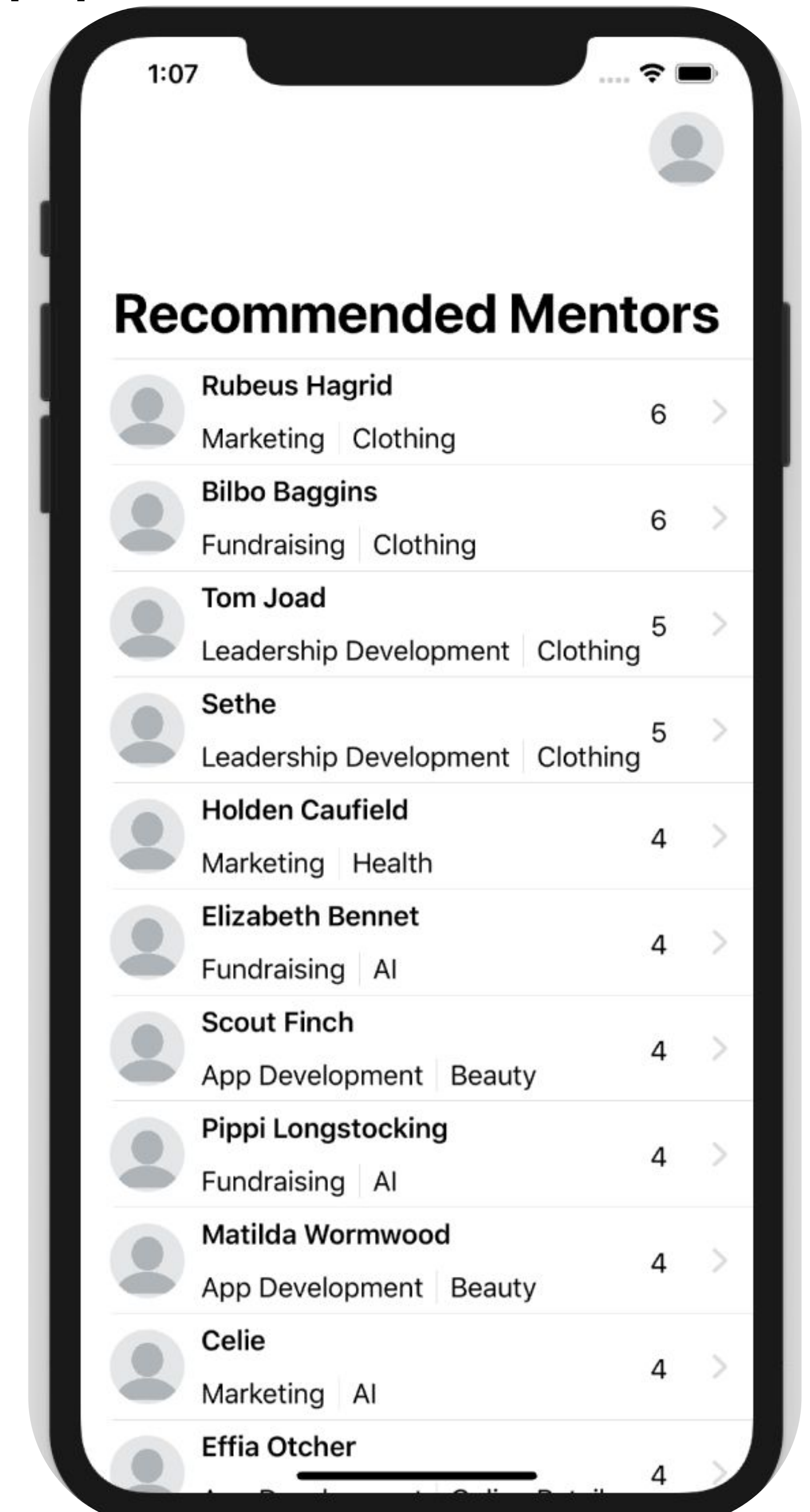
Curated Lists:

Of all of the Techstars mentors, founders can see an ordered list of which ones they share the most in common with. Each preview row navigates to the profile page (similar to left). An easily readable place with common formatting makes the matching process easier and faster.

With further iteration additional search parameters can be added - i.e. search by industry or location.

This took us under 3 hours to prototype. It is easily buildable and deployable. Very rough proof of concept on [GitHub](#).

89% said they would be interested in mentoring in remote programs. This **facilitates global mentorship**.





3. COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

A global communication platform to create a more cohesive mentor network

THE PROBLEM: LACK OF ENGAGEMENT

Currently, around XX% of mentors leave after mentoring at Techstars during a specific time period.

Separate, basic, communication systems exist between mentors and founders, including email and Slack. The Techstars Connect platform is only available for the founders and staff within a startup.

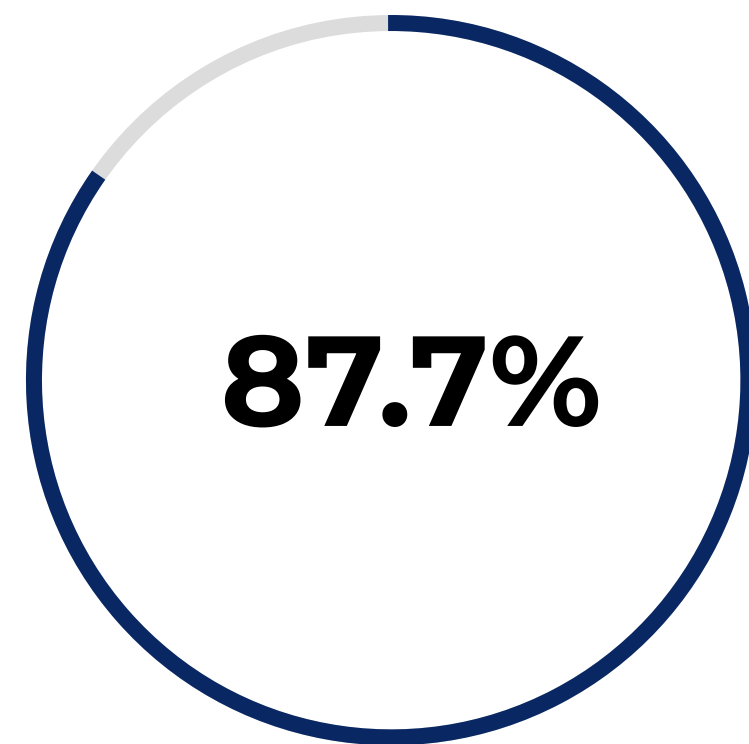
Solution: create an internal, worldwide communication and platform between mentors and startups. Each mentor and startup is given access to this platform during and after the accelerator program. Within this platform:

- 1) Posts and content are listed in the feed: newsletters, planned events, updates, videos, etc.
- 2) Each person's profile can be accessed through a search bar, ex. datascience, with basic info about the industry they're in and contact information.



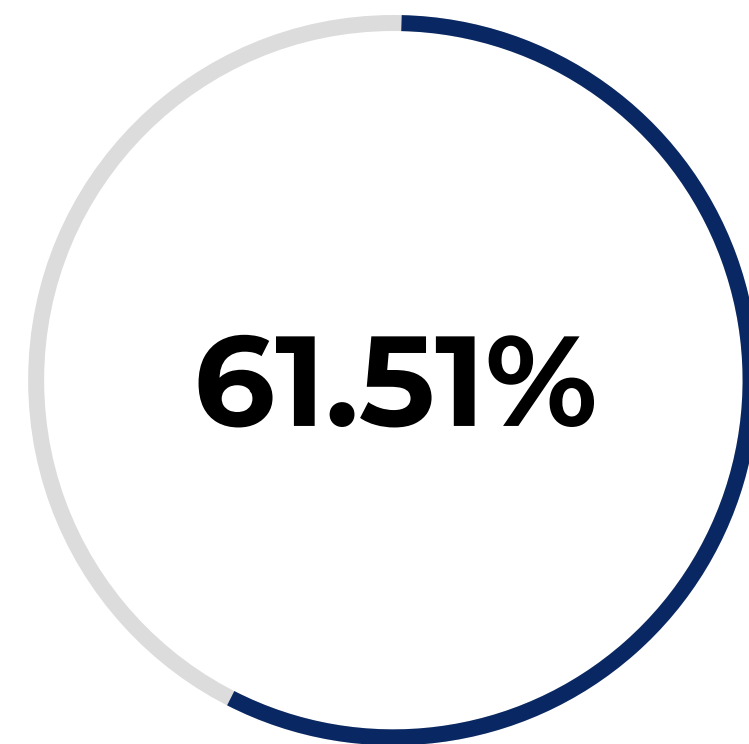
DESIRE + USE FOR A PLATFORM

A large majority of previous Techstars mentors want a better online tool to connect and network.



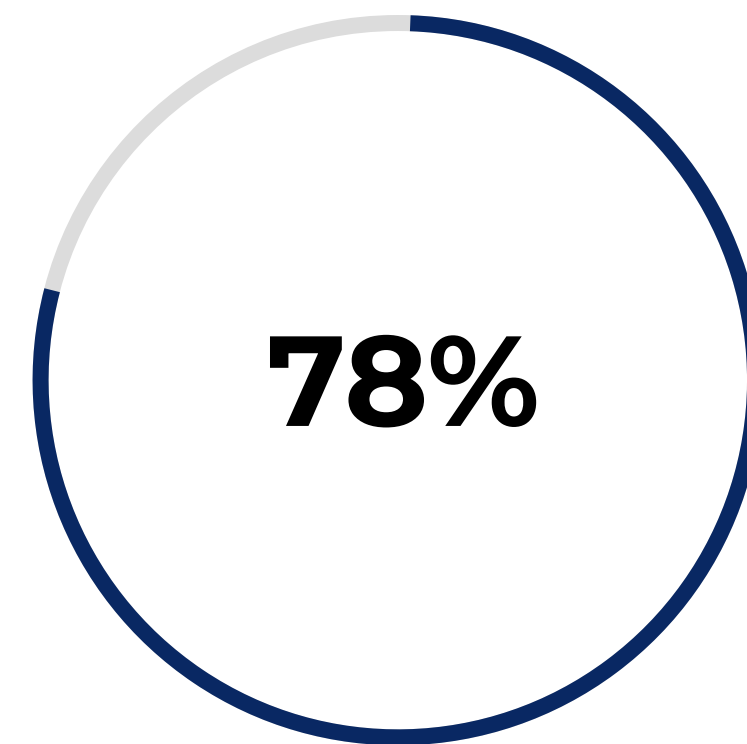
ONLINE TOOL

Of Techstars mentors would use an online tool to connect to others across the global Techstars network



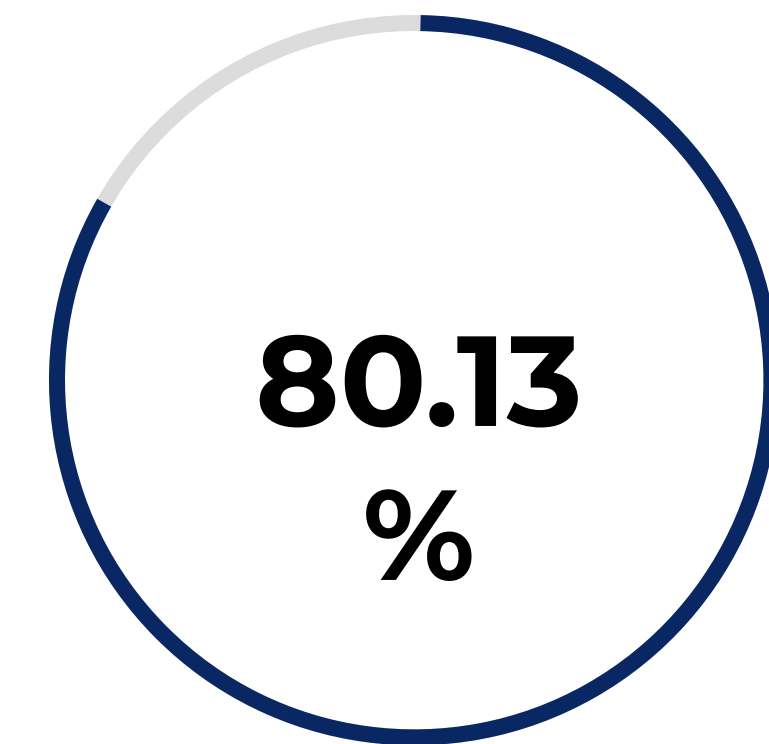
OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT

Of Techstars mentors want opportunities to connect with other mentors



BUILD NETWORK

Of Techstars mentors want to build their network and obtain networking opportunities with other founders, mentors, etc.



UPDATES

Of Techstars mentors want to receive updates from the companies they mentored and Techstars news and other information

TESTIMONIALS ON WHY TECHSTARS NEEDS A BETTER PLATFORM

A unified communication platform where everyone's profiles are accessible creates company wide connection. Currently Techstars has multiple different platforms, however, none induce frequent use or enable all necessary features in one place.



Email and Slack are adequate but it limits the sharing and use of videos and other engaging posts... a collaboration platform would be much more efficient.



Monica Wood
COFOUNDER OF MYXX + TECHSTARS
MENTOR



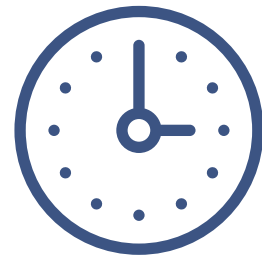
As a mentor myself, it is my passion to help everyone around me...I feel that a more connected, unified platform would enable everyone to give feedback on each other.



Marjorie Radlo-Zandi
ANGEL INVESTOR, MENTOR

COMMUNICATION PLATFORM BENEFITS

The communication will reduce time and effort to network, is convenient, globally deployable, and creates an active community fostering collaboration across cities.



REDUCES TIME

mentees spend searching for mentors, can instead find and contact a specific mentor with tags in a search bar on the platform



CONVENIENT

Everything is in one location - profile, skills, progress, contact + messaging, calendar, task lists, file sharing, photos, workflow, etc.



WORLDWIDE

Can contact other Techstars startups and mentors globally, as well as check out their product and development in their profiles



COMMUNITY

The activity feed and messaging system within the platform, will create a strong global community of mentors and mentees, enabling worldwide connections. The platform also contains event planning features for further engagement.



ENGAGEMENT

Promotes engagement even after the program ends. Mentors can see the progress in their startups as well as track their own growth



COMMUNICATION

The messaging system enables messaging anyone across the world, for advice on a product, general question, etc. Virtual meetings can also be conducted.



Platform: Bitrix24

Bitrix24 is a free collaboration platform and united workspace. In addition to a messaging system and activity feed page, additional features include task management, social media integration and marketing automation

Bitrix Features:

- ✓ Activity Stream intranet center
- ✓ Calendar sharing
- ✓ CRM
- ✓ Daily planner
- ✓ Extranet
- ✓ Instant messages
- ✓ Project groups
- ✓ Simple access assignment
- ✓ Task reporting
- ✓ User profiles
- ✓ Bulk email
- ✓ Company structure
- ✓ CRM reports
- ✓ Email notifications
- ✓ File sharing and versioning
- ✓ Photo albums
- ✓ Sales funnel
- ✓ Tasks
- ✓ Time management
- ✓ Workflow

Why Bitrix?

1) One Platform, Many Tools

Bitrix24 offers over 30 different tools in one interface preventing the need for Techstars to invest in multiple platforms, ex. CRM systems, internal communication tools, etc. You can address the different needs, including activity stream and contact information without the need to implement different software solutions

2) Instant Communication

Bitrix24 serves as your social network, supporting real-time communication to easily get in touch with a mentor or founder. The tool supports various channels of communication, including individual/group messaging and video conferencing

Full-time with a small working team, it is expected to take around **5-7 days** to fully establish the Bitrix24 platform, and has a free plan. Within only **10 minutes**, a founder can search, message and schedule meet-ups with the mentors they're interested in

MESSAGE TASK EVENT POLL MORE

Send message ... New posts: 1

Activity Stream Filter and search


Yana Prokopets > Steven Loyd, Maria Richards, Junieur Sunshine and 1 more recipients

Hello everyone!


These past three months have been absolutely incredible, and I'm so thankful for everyone who helped my team and I along the way! Huge shoutout to all the mentors!

Check out my newsletter and my reflection video!

Techstars: My Journey - Yana Prokopets



Newsletter | November 2019



Add comment 0 Like Unfollow More

today, 11:46 am

Maria Richards > To all employees, Caroline Simon, Paul Young and 1 more recipients


Summer Charity Project

We are honored to open the **Summer Charity Project** this year. 😊

INVITE USERS +

COMPANY PULSE 3 0%

ANNOUNCEMENTS

 **Maria Richards**
Summer Charity Project We are honored to open the Summer Charity Project this year. :) &nb...

Mark as read < 1 / 1 >

UPCOMING EVENTS +

Wed 14 today, from 03:30 pm till 04:30 pm My event

WORKFLOWS

Pending	1
Files	1
My Requests	2

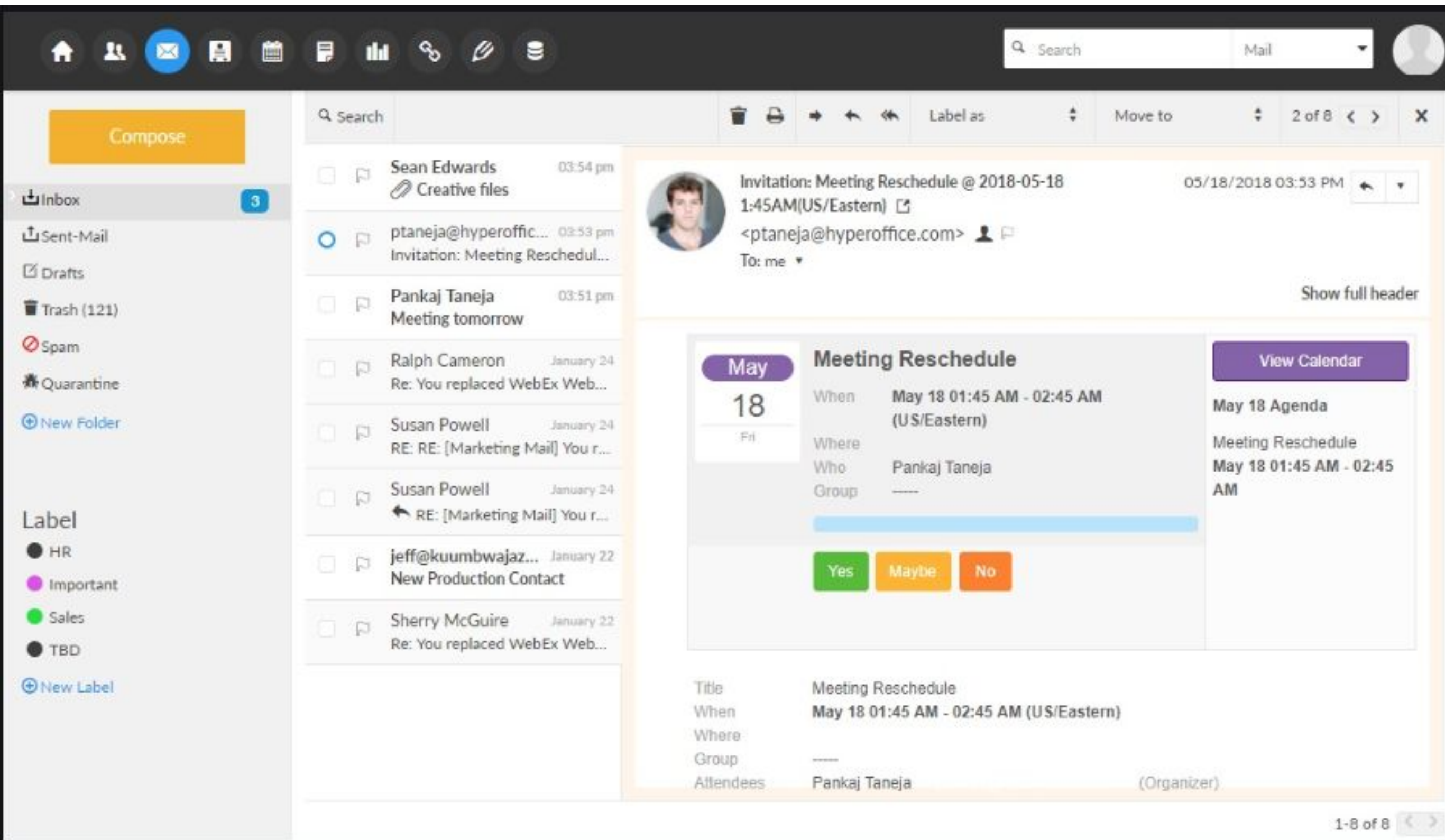
MY TASKS +

CREATING THE PLATFORM BITRIX24

- 1) To start go to Bitrix and create a new Bitrix24 account for free, invite the mentors and startups to your Bitrix24 account.
- 2) You can create your own profile by adding position, contact details, projects done, etc.
- 3) Set your company structure by going to Company and then Company Structure from the main page. Different “departments” including new startups, new mentors, returning mentors, returning mentees can be created.
- 4) Add a message, post or video in the Activity Stream available to see from all users. A message can also be sent through General Chat
- 5) Additional features can be added, including your own tasks, creation of mentor workgroups, schedule events inside the company calendar, and organizing the common document library.



HYPEROFFICE COMMUNICATION FEATURES



Platform: HyperOffice

Hyperoffice is an all-inclusive suite of software tools allowing you to access all the files and information from a company. Offered are web collaboration, online meeting, web conferencing, online databases and email marketing applications.

HyperOffice Features:

API	Collaborative Workspace	Progress Tracking
Activity Dashboard	Commenting	Projections
Anti Virus	Communication Management	Search Functionality
Assignment Management	Customizable Templates	Task Management
Automatic Notifications	Dashboard Creation	Third Party Integration
Calendar Management	Document Management	Two-Factor Authentication
Client Management	Email Integration	Web Forms
Collaboration Tools	File Management	Wiki
Collaborative Review	Knowledge Base Management	Workflow Management

Why HyperOffice?

Intranet Tool: increases workforce productivity by locating and viewing information relevant to their roles and needs, messaging systems for maximized communication, and web publishing for the information to be maintained. The messaging system, CRM, shared calendars, wikis and activity page further promote engagement.

- *Increased collaboration* with document management, team workspaces, tasks
- *Convenient Messaging* using webmail, Outlook sync, shared contacts between mentors/mentees
- *Contact Management & CRM* : online address book, mobile synch
- *Shared Calendars*: group & personal, reminders, color-coding
- *Wikis*: easy, customizable, with notifications & permission
- *Activity Page*: Opinion Polls & Announcements with discussion forums / voting features

With all the features and benefits listed as well as the templates offered in the suite, the HyperOffice Platform will take 1-2 days to fully create. The minimum plan costs \$288,000 per year but will shorten the mentor-mentee meeting process from 1 month to 1 week, and build a stronger, engaged community by 28%

CREATING THE PLATFORM HYPEROFFICE

- 1) Account creation: Go to Hyper Office and create an account for a free trial.
- 2) Intranet Features: Choose a template. Click on the wrench icon to choose a widget, where your first element can be implemented.
- 3) Widget types include Atlas widgets (an agenda, calendar, tasks, files), Object widgets (adding files, adding image, text blocks, contact form, embedding site), and Design widgets (grid, custom panel).
- 4) Creating the menu and pages: Create multiple pages, including Activity, Projects, Members, etc. and contact forms to do requests.
- 5) Creating workspace and users: you can create separate departments within the intranet, including Mentors and Founders by going to the user's "Admin" and clicking on "New Workspace."

Techstars Intranet

Search anything...

techstars

Techstars Home

+
New Widget

MY CUSTOM INTRANET

Atlas let you combine collaboration modules and design elements to create highly customized intranet experiences.

Go on! Drag and drop elements on the homepage, or explore collaboration sections at the top.

Events All Events

Event	Time	
Weekly meeting	2/12/2019	14.02
Christian's birthday	2/12/2019	14.02
Industry conference	2/12/2019	14.02
Company Picnic	2/12/2019	14.02

Important Files All Files

File	Updated	Updated by	Owner
HR Policies	2/12/2019	Thomas Chan	Pankaj Taneja
Marketing Collateral	2/12/2019	Thomas Chan	Pankaj Taneja
Sales Spreadsheet	2/12/2019	Thomas Chan	Pankaj Taneja

New Vacation **New Expense**

Upcoming Projects All Projects

Subject

Launch new website in 02

Links

Google

NYT

Techcrunch

HYPEROFFICE INTRANET HOME PAGE

SAMPLE MENTOR PROFILE STRUCTURE



Alice Liu

Mentor

Subject matter expert

Boston, Massachusetts, United States
Senior Account Manager at Acme

The user's profile includes the skillsets, background information, experience and products/projects that can be accessed to anyone on the platform

Option to conduct virtual meetings, meeting new startups or mentors and messaging for help or advice on a specific area with the product

Skills

About me

Experience

Mentoring

Projects

Areas of expertise

Add area of expertise

Add

Strategic communications

E-learning

Talent management

Internal communications



SCHEDULE A CALL



MESSAGE

Mentors can add tags of areas of expertise or specific skill sets. If a mentee needs help with a specific area, ex. strategic communications, this profile will appear in the search results

SAMPLE ACTIVITY FEED STRUCTURE



Barbara posted an item



November Newsletter

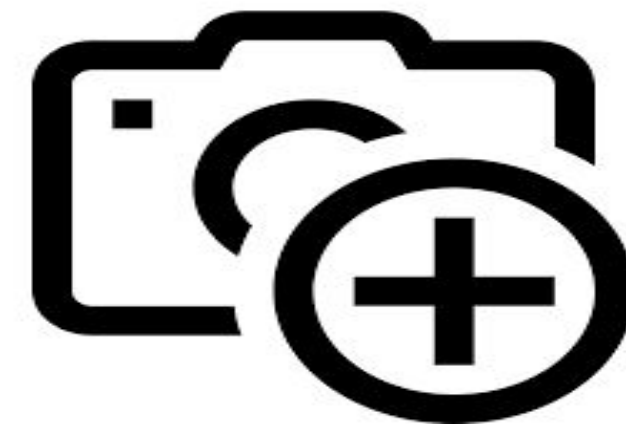
November has been awesome. I feel like I have grown a ton, and have had some incredible experiences.

[3 months ago](#) • [Like](#) • [Read More](#) • [Remove](#)

Users can post updates, reflections and newsletters to the activity channel to track own personal growth and to keep others updated



Barbara posted an item



Introduction Video

Hello! My name is Barbara, I am a founder and looking for...

[3 months ago](#) • [Remove](#)

Users can post videos, papers and other content, which can also be accessed on their profile



Melissa created the event [Open House Day](#)

[Open House Day](#)

[3 months ago](#) • [Like](#) • [Read More](#) • [Comment](#) • [Remove](#)

Upcoming events, activities and gatherings are also posted on the activity channel for further in-person or virtual engagement



4. COMMUNITY

Building a supportive mentor network

“I like to give back to the community and help others not make the same mistakes”

~ Lynn Greenberg and 100%
of mentors interviewed

4a. MENTOR GROUPS

Mentor groups are ongoing small opt-in groups existing year around centered around specific topics. By making them “official” and “sanctioned” it gives legitimacy and will inspire mentors to devote time to things they want to do (e.g. ways to increase diversity) but find it difficult to prioritize and make time for. Small groups keeps people connected and seen.

MENTORS REQUEST



100 %

Of mentors want an active community.



QUESTION

How can we enable them to learn more from each other and feel involved in a community?



70%

Don't feel part of a community or like they have made use of the Techstars network.



REQUEST

They request a way to meet other mentors, share their story, teach, learn, and find opportunities.

MENTOR GROUPS PROVIDE



< 2 HOURS

Is the time per week that would be devoted.



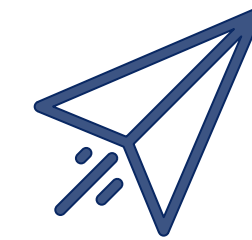
TOPICS

Diversity, tech, marketing, UX, communication, leadership, etc.
KEY: They **add value** to the mentor so they will want to devote the time



8-12 PEOPLE

Is the optimal group size to enable active discussion without having people disappear.



DELIVERABLES

Open ended - could be bringing in a guest speaker, giving a presentation, media, community action item

CREATING COMMUNITY



A community keeps people accountable and celebrates the wins collectively. Others will notice and comment on improvement and that's a big motivator.



TIM NEAR
FOUNDER OF CYBORG



In a smaller group ... everyone is part of the discussion. Everyone can have a voice; ego and politics aside.



Amelia Glickman
FOUNDER OF CLEAN CLEAN



We have various activities that we do for fun that keep the humor and help connect everyone especially because many people are remote.



Elsa Jungman
FOUNDER OF ELSI

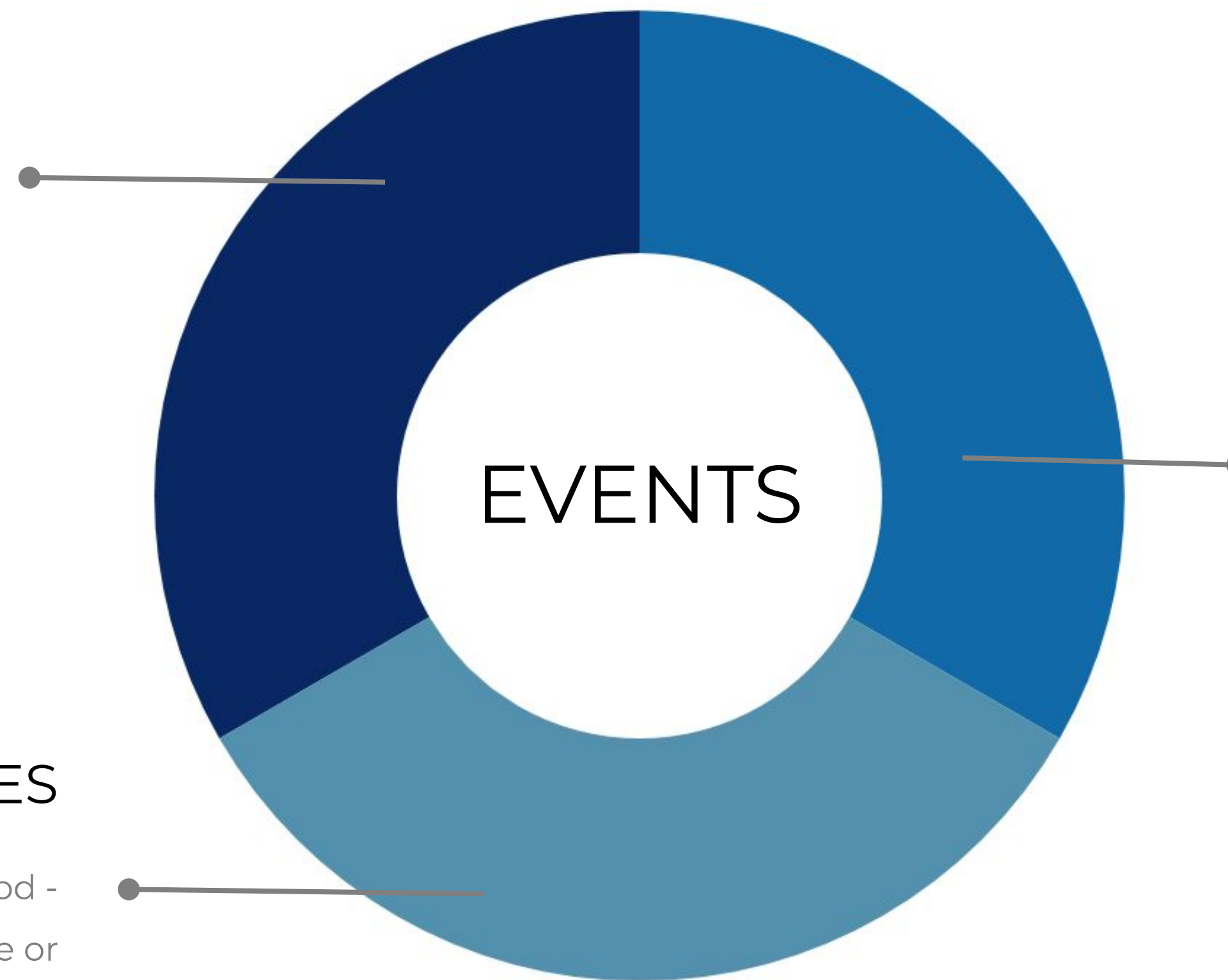
4b. TEAM BONDING ACTIVITIES

ART FOR COMMUNITY EVENTS

In the beginning of the program spend ½ a day creating artwork in groups - designing T-shirts, bags, or paintings. These can be raffled off at other events later in the year. Art is proven to be effective at pushing people outside of their comfort zones and building connections.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

More community gatherings with games and food - e.g trivia nights, . External free outings like a hike or bike ride. Fun activities (non work related) give people a sense of community and are important in providing a well rounded experience.



TEAM BONDING CHALLENGES

Team bonding activities are fun and have been proven to help break the ice, get people out of their comfort zone, forge connections, and develop leadership, time management, product development, and iteration skills. The classic example is the spaghetti and marshmallow challenge, but there are many others [here](#) and [here](#). These are from the program Destination Imagination, a program cultivating creativity and teamwork, and although they are made for children (and often feel very childish or silly), with only mild adaptations they are actually very effective for team bonding. I know from experience that I have gained a lot of value from doing these and professionals that have done them with their teams have also reported success. Materials required are cheap and widely available.

CALENDAR

Includes information on who would participate in these events (mentor groups, art, fun activities, team building challenges), when, the time commitment, and cost.

MENTOR GROUPS	ART	FUN ACTIVITIES	TEAM BUILDING CHALLENGES
<p>Eligibility: all mentors During: entire year</p> <p>Planning time: 4 hrs. once Time: 1-3 hrs. / week Cost: ~free</p>	<p>Eligibility: all in accelerator During: accelerator session 1st month</p> <p>Planning time: 3 hrs./event Time: 3 hrs. 2/month Cost: < \$50/event</p>	<p>Eligibility: all During: entire year</p> <p>Planning time: 5hrs./event Time: 1-4 hrs. 2/month Cost: \$500-2000 depends whether full meals are provided</p>	<p>Eligibility: all in accelerator During: accelerator session ~~ Eligibility: all During: non accelerator session</p> <p>Planning time: 4 hrs./event Time: 1-2 days/month Cost: < \$50/time</p>

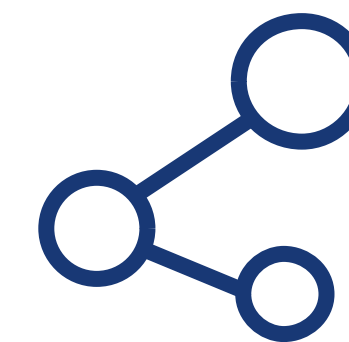
SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS

A summary of the suggestions presented and their implementation process in order of ease and time.



1. COMMUNITY BUILDING

Community building and team bonding activities are both teaching tools and important in creating a common identity and sense of belonging



2. MENTOR-FOUNDER MATCHING

An algorithm can filter people based on similarities or skill sets to reduce inefficient mentor-founder meetings



3. COMMUNICATION PLATFORM

A centralized communication platform can connect all of the mentors and founders globally enabling easier networking and increased communication



4. WEBSITE CHATBOT

A chatbot can help answer applicant questions.

ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE...

Dear Techstars team,

We'd like to personally thank you for the opportunity to contribute to Techstars' goal of improving the inbound mentor pipeline and increasing the sense of community within the Techstars network. Through this project we've learned so much - not only about startups and mentors, but also about research and interviewing. We appreciate your commitment to providing us with the context, data, and feedback throughout this project, and the time you dedicated to enable us to succeed.

We hope we are able to make an impact on your program. Please feel free to reach out via email or LinkedIn if you have any questions about our recommendation. We'd love to hear from you.

We are both excited to see Techstars grow and nurture founders in the coming months and years!

Thank you!

Alice and Kiran

aliceliu2004@gmail.com

kiranamak@gmail.com



Alice Liu



Kiran Mak