

A's

Now. New. Next

Talent & The Future of Work

4 How Mentoring, Sponsoring, Advocating
and Coaching Changes The Game



TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY TAKEAWAYS	03
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTORS AND SPONSORS	04
FIVE TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPONSORSHIP	07
FIVE TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING MENTORSHIP	10
HOW REVERSE MENTORING SUPPORTS DEIB	13
ADVOCACY: THE CAREER BOOSTER	14
LEADERSHIP COACHING IN THE ORGANIZATION	16
GLOSSARY & RESOURCES	18

Edition Four: How Mentoring, Sponsoring, Advocating and Coaching Changes The Game

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Understanding the difference between sponsors and mentors is critical. Sponsors use influence to help employees obtain high-visibility assignments and promotions. Mentors provide guidance for career choices and decisions.
- Before you begin your sponsorship program, step back and look at your organization's overall talent strategy and the results you've achieved so far. How could sponsorship fit into your overall strategy and who would benefit most?
- When planning your sponsorship program, ask yourself:
 - Does your company have protocols in place to identify high potential employees?
 - What programs do you currently offer to nurture rising talent?
 - How can you use your sponsorship program as part of an overall strategy to develop and nurture a diverse, high-performing talent pipeline?
- In most best-practice mentoring programs, each partnership begins with mentors and mentees agreeing on a set of learning objectives that they will pursue together. Setting clear goals for activities and outcomes establishes the pair's priorities from day one, guiding their agenda and providing a shared sense of purpose.
- Reverse mentoring fosters a sense of belonging and supports each participant's growth. Allowing junior staff to share their ideas with leadership directly builds their confidence. In addition, it nurtures a collaborative and equitable workforce making them feel valued and encourages them to express their views. As a result, employees start to believe they are working for an organization they want to be a part of for the long term.
- Advocates bridge the gap between mentors, sponsors and colleagues. An advocate knows and respects you and your work, in depth. They speak positively about you to others. They can be former or current peers, managers, or direct reports. Colleagues on high-visibility project teams, or people with whom you worked closely to solve a difficult problem make great advocates. Their first-hand experience with your work style and performance gives them instant credibility.
- Leadership coaching is one of the most effective tools available to take leadership development to a deeper and more sustainable level — whether focused on the individual or on your entire organization



MENTORS GIVE YOU
PERSPECTIVE.
SPONSORS GIVE
YOU
OPPORTUNITIES.

NOW. NEW. NEXT - TALENT & THE FUTURE OF WORK



THE DEFINITIONS

LET'S UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTORS AND SPONSORS:

A mentor is an advisor who provides guidance and support to help someone develop, understand, and navigate their role, the organization, and their career. A mentor is typically an experienced individual who helps someone who is less experienced. A mentor may (or may not) also be a sponsor.

A sponsor is a specific type of mentor who goes above and beyond giving advice. A sponsor is an advocate in a position of power who helps create opportunities for another person and champions their potential. This includes off-the-record or closed-door meetings with other executives.

	MENTOR	SPONSOR
Role	Experienced person at any level	Senior leader in the organization
Goal	Provide guidance for career choices and decisions	Use influence to help employee obtain high-visibility assignments & promotions
Who Drives The Relationship?	Both mentee and mentor; requires mentor to be responsive to the needs of the mentee	The sponsor, who chooses to advocate for the protégé, including behind closed doors with other leaders
Actions	Helps mentee determine paths to meet specific career goals	Advocates for protégés advancement; champions their potential

Some other differences between mentorship and sponsorship include:

- Sponsors have something to gain from the relationship. They may be looking for someone who can further the revenue and growth of the company or strengthen a particular team.
- In sponsorship, the performance of the protégé reflects on the sponsor.
- If a sponsor works at a different organization than the protégé, it may be easier to access outside opportunities.

FINDING A MENTOR OR SPONSOR

Successful leaders don't go it alone. They have a network of friends, colleagues, coaches, mentors, and sponsors who, over the years, play various roles in helping them learn and advance in their careers. But establishing those key relationships requires intention and effort.

It can feel awkward for an employee to say, "Will you be my mentor?" or "Will you sponsor me?" when they don't know someone well. And a potentially great mentor might hesitate or decline to commit if they're unclear about what is expected from them.

It is helpful to have a specific request or clear connection first by building relationship and not focusing on labels.

THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP VS. SPONSORSHIP

BOTH MENTOR AND SPONSOR RELATIONSHIPS HAVE A POWERFUL IMPACT ON ALL PARTIES:

Let's break down what impact looks like for mentors, mentees, sponsors and sponsees.
(Source: BetterUp)

IMPACT ON MENTORS

Here are some ways that mentorship impacts a mentor:

- Learn how to become a more effective leader
- Help shape the next generation of leaders
- Get new perspectives from their mentees
- Improve emotional intelligence

IMPACT ON MENTEES

Here are some ways that mentorship impacts a mentee:

- See a concrete example of what it takes to achieve their professional goals
- Have a place to turn to in times of uncertainty
- Have increased self-worth and personal growth
- Develop and evolve ideas by sharing them with their mentor
- Achieve professional goals faster by following guidance and learning from the mentor's experience
- Receive constructive feedback to keep improving

IMPACT ON SPONSORS

Here are some ways that sponsorship impacts a sponsor:

- Build a team with a better skill set
- Gain their trust and increase ability to delegate
- Gain recognition from higher-ups by showing how they can help develop leaders
- Receive satisfaction from their work and their team
- Build a professional legacy they're proud of

IMPACT ON PROTÉGÉ

Here are some ways that sponsorship impacts a protégé:

- Build their network faster and with more key people for career improvement
- Open doors for career advancement
- Expose to new opportunities to showcase their skills
- Get honest feedback from sponsors to improve at work
- Increase self-confidence
- Get noticed for good work



SPONSORSHIP HAS A
TREMENDOUS IMPACT
ON AN ORGANIZATION,
ESPECIALLY IN
CULTIVATING DIVERSITY,
RETAINING TALENT AND
TRAINING LEADERS.

NOW. NEW. NEXT - TALENT & THE FUTURE OF WORK

A's

FIVE TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

RESULTING IN MORE EFFECTIVE LEADERS AND TEAMS:

1. BEGIN WITH EVALUATING YOUR COMPANY'S CURRENT TALENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

Before you begin your sponsorship program, step back and look at your organization's overall talent strategy and the results you've achieved so far. How could sponsorship fit into your overall strategy and who would benefit most?

When planning your sponsorship program, ask yourself:

- Does your company have protocols in place to identify high potential employees?
- What programs do you currently offer to nurture rising talent?
- How can you use your sponsorship program as part of an overall strategy to develop and nurture a diverse, high-performing talent pipeline?

2. SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS.

According to HBR, "When women are mentored by men, they make more money, get more promotions and have better career outcomes – not because men are better mentors but because they have more power."

However, research from the Center for Talent Innovation found that 71% of sponsors have protégés whose gender and race match their own. This is an example of the similarity bias at work. Due to this phenomenon, you should take an intentional approach to pairing sponsors and protégés, to avoid perpetuating the status quo and to ensure that those who need support the most are not excluded. This is particularly important with people of color, women and underrepresented populations.

3. SHOW EXECUTIVES WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM.

To help build the commitment of senior leaders, communicate that this is an investment with worthwhile returns not only for their protégés, but also for them.

By participating, sponsors gain insight into different levels of the business that they may not observe on a day-to-day basis; receive valuable feedback; and are exposed to diverse perspectives allowing them to lead more effectively and strategically.

Additionally, successful sponsors are more highly regarded within their organization due to their demonstrated commitment to recognizing and developing talent.

4. GIVE EVERYONE A VOICE IN THE MATCH-MAKING PROCESS.

The foundation of a successful sponsorship is trust. Many sponsorship programs fail because senior leaders sometimes feel they are being forced to put their reputation on the line to vouch for someone who they don't know well or fully believe in. Protégés must also trust that their sponsors have their best interests in mind and are truly invested in their success.

It's best to focus on sponsoring employees who have been identified as high potential so make sure your organization has a bias-free process to identify who can move up. While it takes time and experience to build trust, a proven track record of success will help establish the protégé's credibility with their sponsor from the start. Then create opportunities for these high-potential employees to interact with senior executives so they can begin to build relationships and identify future opportunities for growth and advancement.

The strongest relationships are typically voluntary. By involving sponsors, managers and high potential employees in the match-making process, you greatly increase the odds of a successful sponsorship.

5. PROVIDE SPONSORS AND PROTÉGÉS WITH A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS.

It's important to remember that your role doesn't end once the pairing is done. It's your responsibility to equip both sponsors and protégés with the tools and resources they need to excel in their roles.

Don't assume that sponsors know how to approach their role just because they are executives. Senior leaders already have a lot on their plate and may feel they don't have the extra resources to dedicate to navigating this new relationship. So, make it easy for them! Provide tools and coaching to educate the sponsor on how to be effective in their role. Similarly, protégés need to be equipped with the right skills and resources to make the most of their relationship with their sponsor. Many successful sponsorship programs include training for protégés to set expectations and fill any skill gaps.

Sponsorship is high stakes for all involved, but the benefits far outweigh the challenges. By bringing intention to your organization's approach to sponsorship, you can accelerate the advancement of underrepresented leaders and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

A black and white photograph of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing glasses and a white sleeveless top with a black bow at the neck. She is sitting at a desk, looking at a computer monitor while her hands are on the keyboard. The background is a blurred office space with shelves and papers.

A MENTOR EMPOWERS
A PERSON TO SEE A
POSSIBLE FUTURE,
AND BELIEVE IT CAN
BE OBTAINED.

NOW. NEW. NEXT - TALENT & THE FUTURE OF WORK

A's

FIVE TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM

EACH ORGANIZATION IS DIFFERENT, BUT THESE FIVE ACTIONS ARE BEST-IN-CLASS:

1. COMPEL MENTORING PAIRS TO DEFINE LEARNING OBJECTIVES.

In most best-practice mentoring programs, each partnership begins with mentors and mentees agreeing on a set of learning objectives that they will pursue together. Setting clear goals for activities and outcomes establishes the pair's priorities from day one, guiding their agenda and providing a shared sense of purpose.

With a target to aim for, mentoring pairs can begin a frank discussion from a common starting point. Defining learning objectives up front also gives mentors a chance to verify that they have the knowledge and commitment to teach what mentees want or need to learn. If they don't, it's better to know before both parties become deeply invested in the pairing.

2. SET CLEAR TIMELINES.

Rather than encouraging open-ended relationships, most organizations establish timelines for pairs to meet their stated objectives. The timelines include not only progress milestones, but defined end points, which tend to keep pairs focused and create a sense of "deadline" urgency.

For career counseling mentorships, the focus tends to be on long-term career development and relationship building. These relationships tend to require a minimum timeframe of six months for partners to establish rapport and trust. When mentoring is intended to impart role-based skills, the appropriate timeline may be shorter or longer, depending on the complexity of the knowledge being transferred from mentor to mentee.

3. HAVE MENTORS AND MENTEES CLARIFY THEIR GROUND RULES.

At best-practice organizations, mentoring pairs are encouraged to set their own ground rules for interaction, including each partner's responsibilities to the other and how they will work together toward their stated goals. Clear ground rules can help prevent misunderstandings since both mentors and mentees know what is expected of them.

Giving participants control over the process helps ensure their buy-in and makes it easier for them to fit mentoring into their schedules. Most organizations encourage pairs to clearly define their respective roles in sustaining the relationship as well as the logistical details of when and where to meet. A single agreement document can house these details as well as learning objectives which helps align actions with objectives.

4. Train Mentors and Mentees

Successful organizations help set the stage for mentorship by training mentors and mentees on their roles and expectations, effective communication strategies, and relationship-building techniques.

For mentors, training tends to focus on ways to talk to and build trust with mentees. For mentees, it's often about how to ask the right questions and learn from their mentors.

5. Provide Tools and Resources

Most organizations give mentors and mentees process-related tools and templates to support productive interactions, walk participants through the steps of their interactions, track goals and progress, and jump-start conversations.

In some cases, mentoring pairs use standard templates to guide and document their relationships. The templates cover many different aspects of mentorship, including meeting plans and records, career and life goals, personal development planning, personal inventory, and quarterly or final reviews.

**A MENTOR IS SOMEONE WHO
ALLOWS YOU TO SEE THE HOPE
INSIDE YOURSELF.**

HOW REVERSE MENTORING SUPPORTS DEIB

FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING:

In a typical reverse mentoring program, young employees' mentor older, more seasoned employees. This isn't just about young workers teaching senior business professionals the ins and outs of TikTok. Instead, this format encourages mutual learning and gives each participant the belief that their perspective matters at an organizational level.

This can increase retention, promote advancement, and help senior executives become more aware of cultural and systemic issues within their own organization. By having a younger employee mentor an older one, senior leaders are exposed to more diverse perspectives to help them become aware of and better understand cultural differences, business challenges, and evolving customer needs.

Feeling isolated or unseen can directly affect diverse populations within any organization. Employee retention and productivity are at a higher risk when these feelings begin to creep into your employees' day-to-day. [Research from EY](#) shows that when people feel they belong, they are more productive, motivated, and engaged.


Reverse mentoring [fosters a sense of belonging](#) and supports each participant's growth. Allowing junior staff to share their ideas with leadership directly builds their confidence. In addition, it nurtures a collaborative and equitable workforce which makes them feel like they are valued and encourages them to express their views. As a result, employees start to believe they are working for an organization they want to be a part of for the long term.

Blending cultural and organizational bonds through mentoring is a practice that's invaluable as each participant is encouraged to share insight despite any cultural, professional, or administrative barriers.

Innovation is a product of creativity. Creativity is born through freedom of expression. To foster a culture where the freedom to share perspectives is encouraged, employers must think of new ways to build relationships with their people.

Because of its unorthodox format, reverse mentoring is a vessel for disrupting the norm. This mentoring format ignites participants to get outside of their comfort zones and share their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. From here, organizations are given granular data that can help them identify the blockers that impede their people from performing their best and recognizing others' talents. As a result, traditional power structures that once impeded innovation can be diminished or dismantled.

If done right, reverse mentoring can [enable diverse perspectives to permeate the organization](#). Cultivating progressive innovation is imperative within the workplace because of its ability to drive new and previously overlooked perspectives.

A man in a dark suit and white shirt, wearing glasses, is sitting at a desk in an office. He is looking towards the right of the frame with a thoughtful expression. A laptop is open in front of him, and his hands are resting on it. The background shows a window with a blurred view of a city skyline. The entire image has a teal color cast.

ADVOCACY AT IT'S
CORE IS AN EXERCISE
IN EMPATHY.

NOW. NEW. NEXT - TALENT & THE FUTURE OF WORK

A's

THE CAREER BOOSTER: THE ADVOCATE

THE LITTLE-KNOWN HIDDEN GEM:

Advocates bridge the gap between mentors, sponsors and colleagues. An advocate knows and respects you and your work, in depth. They speak positively about you to others.

They can be former or current peers, managers, or direct reports. Colleagues on high-visibility project teams or people with whom you worked closely to solve a difficult problem make great advocates. Their first-hand experience with your work style and performance gives them instant credibility.

Advocates are members of your network's inner circle. They help you get credit for your work, are wonderful references, and believe in your ability. Sponsors often find potential protégés through their advocates.

ASKING SOMEONE TO ADVOCATE FOR YOU IS IMPORTANT. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THERE ARE OTHERS IN YOUR "CIRCLE" THAT KNOW YOUR INTERESTS AND STRENGTHS IN TERMS OF YOUR COMPETENCIES. ADVOCATES CAN SUPPORT YOU IN SITUATIONS WHEN YOU AREN'T THERE PERSONALLY.

We all have opportunities for advocates, sponsors, and mentors in our lives. They are distinct roles and require different parts depending on the situation and the growth you are seeking. Don't assume you currently have these people in your lives.

- Be purposeful about who you have advocating for you, sponsoring you and mentoring you.
- Be purposeful about asking for these leaders to be in your life by specific people that demonstrate skills and opportunities that align with your needs.
- Set up conversations and be specific regarding your intent and what you are seeking and go out and set them in motion.



**BOTH LEADERSHIP
COACHING AND
BUILDING COACHING
SKILLS CAN HAVE A
LASTING IMPACT ON
THE ECOSYSTEM OF
LEADERSHIP.**

NOW. NEW. NEXT - TALENT & THE FUTURE OF WORK

A's

LEADERSHIP COACHING DRIVES TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

CREATES SELF-AWARENESS AND PROVIDES CRITICAL CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT:

Leadership coaching is one of the most effective tools available to take leadership development to a deeper and more sustainable level — whether focused on the individual or on your entire organization. Coaches expand perspective, inspire, and provide challenge and support like no one else. Leadership development coaching can help an individual leader, a team workgroup, or an entire workforce to unlock their full potential.

From personalized executive coaching for individuals as well as coaching integrated into a development program to building conversational skills and scaling a culture of feedback across the enterprise, coaching helps to fundamentally change the ecosystem of an organization and its leaders.

Research repeatedly finds that leaders who receive coaching are viewed as significantly more effective and tend to be more satisfied in their jobs. Coaching also leads to increased self-awareness, improved critical thinking skills, accelerated learning, better team performance, and sustainable organizational change.

EXECUTIVE COACHING

- Coaching can help uncover blind spots, strengthen leadership skills, and change behaviors that can directly impact business results. Executive coaching helps support and grow leaders, especially as they transition into new roles, face new challenges, or prepare to take on more responsibilities.

INTEGRATED COACHING

- Combining coaching and leadership training helps make learning stick. Impactful behavioral change takes time. By packaging coaching with training, you can reinforce and reaffirm new strategies and skills.

TEAM COACHING

- So much goes into teamwork. Team members' relationships, shared experiences, and interpersonal awareness all affect the effectiveness of team collaboration. Workplace team coaching increases self-awareness of behaviors and their impact on team dynamics equipping teams to collaborate more effectively and take on complex challenges, together.

GLOSSARY & RESOURCES

JP Morgan Chase

[The importance of mentors and sponsors in career development](#)

Together

[Mentorship vs Sponsorship, why both are important](#)

Center For Creative Leadership

[Mentoring and Sponsoring Guide Book](#)

The Muse

[How to get a sponsor](#)

Torch

[Mentoring in the workplace, building better leaders](#)

BetterUp

[Find a mentor today](#)

Mentoring Complete

[The benefits of mentoring](#)

ATD - Association for Talent Development

[Mentorship & Sponsorship Advice and Guidance](#)

IMD - International Institute for Management Development

[Leadership coaching: Fact vs Fiction](#)

4's