

Mentorship and Sponsorship

Mentors and, increasingly, sponsors (who use political capital to promote a protégé) are invaluable for career advancement; when they are seen as allies as well, they can help diversify workplaces and build inclusiveness.

WHY IT MATTERS

Trained and mindful mentorship and sponsorship can help increase an employee's self-confidence, influence, advancement, compensation, and feelings of safety—contributing to engagement and well-being. Extra attention to members of nondominant groups, who may have more difficulty securing mentors and sponsors, can lead to their greater commitment and more frequent promotion.

MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP ARE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE WHEN...

- mentors and sponsors develop the skills and perspectives of allies and coaches—intercultural competence, listening, empathy, advocacy
- underrepresented employees have at-least-equal access to mentors and sponsors
- mentoring programs support business objectives with goals, metrics, and feedback
- participants balance power dynamics and respect confidentiality

ACT

Design relationships to work for all parties

- Whether through a formal program or informal networking, make thoughtful matches between mentors and mentees, sponsors and protégés.
- Create and revisit an explicit agreement that addresses mutual expectations, ground rules, goals, identity differences, confidentiality, and when to move on.
- When designing a formal mentoring program, confirm leaders' commitment and involve prospective mentees.

Commit to learning

- Form relationships with people who are different from you, and work to expand your intercultural competence and allyship skills.

- Both parties: be open to what you don't know and be receptive to feedback.

Overcome bias

- Mentors and sponsors: move past implicit bias to recognize and support talent beyond the usual suspects.
- Be sensitive to the extra demands that people from underrepresented groups, especially the "onlys," have on their time and attention. Don't expect people from underrepresented groups to educate others.
- Firm leaders: be receptive to the recommendations of sponsors, especially when they are expending their personal political capital.