

Mentoring/Sponsorship

»» For D&I Staff, Executive Leadership Council, HR Leaders and Business Partners, Resource-Group Leaders, Mentors/Mentees, Sponsors/Protégés

I Formal Mentoring

The most important aspects of a successful mentoring program are that it is formal and cross-cultural, that mentors and mentees be given cultural-competence training, and that there are checkpoints and metrics to assess success.

- **Formal vs. Informal:** All of the DiversityInc Top 50 companies now have formal mentoring (compared with 72 percent in 2005). They have learned that informal mentoring can't be controlled and can lead to employees' getting the wrong messages from disgruntled mentors. [Formal mentoring](#) means the company assigns and monitors pairs, creating cross-cultural (by race, ethnicity, gender, orientation and disability) pairings as much as possible to ensure bidirectional learning. It's also important to reach the maximum number of managers so the program has significant impact.
- **Checkpoints and Metrics:** Without metrics to assess success, your organization has no way to understand what is working and what is not or to make the case for more resources for the initiative. The most successful metrics are engagement, retention and promotions compared with those not participating in the program, broken down by race, ethnicity and gender. For a blueprint of successful metrics, watch this video: [How to Start a Cross-Cultural Mentoring Program With Sodexo](#).
- **Understand Demographics:** It's important to track the demographics of mentees especially to ensure that the groups that need the most promotions are well represented. For a better understanding of how to do this, see [Is Our Mentoring Program Working?](#)

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Guided Questions for Staff

- »» **Does your company understand the differences between formal and informal mentoring?**
Discuss the business benefits of tracking formal mentoring and how informal mentoring, while sometimes beneficial, cannot be controlled by the company.
- »» **What percentage of your managers does your mentoring program reach? Are you able to include virtual mentoring to reach managers in remote locations?**
Assess whether your program has maximum impact or is just affecting a few people. If you have limited mentees, are you ensuring that those who are not invited to participate remain engaged?
- »» **How are you ensuring as many cross-cultural pairings as possible?**
Examine the racial/gender breakdown of your pairings and whether there is sufficient mix. Also factor in orientation and disability if possible. Assess the type of training you are offering and whether it is effectively eliminating cultural barriers. Examine the engagement, retention and promotion rates of mentees versus those who have not participated and share the results with senior management.