

# Mentoring/Sponsorship

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

## ▮ Sponsorship

Sponsorship, which is political advocacy, is increasing in popularity these days in corporate America. The debate is whether it can be formalized and whether you can insist executives sponsor people from underrepresented groups.

- **Senior Executives Need to Understand [The Difference Between Mentoring, Coaching and Sponsorship](#).** While an executive can be all three—to the same person—the need for pure advocacy in a sponsor is critical to not always having people from the majority group take executive openings.
- **Maximize Executive Exposure to High-Potentials From Underrepresented Groups:** While you can't assign protégés, companies increasingly are mandating that their senior executives [must sponsor](#) at least one high-potential from an underrepresented group, and linking that to the executives' compensation. The key to this is having formal exposure to potential protégés on a regular basis.
- **Encourage Protégés, Especially Women, to Have More Than One Sponsor:** As Sue Chevins, a Principal at EY, says in [this article](#): “Many women are overmentored and undersponsored. It's important to encourage all people from underrepresented groups to seek out sponsors and learn to brand and market themselves.”

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#### Guided Questions for Staff

#### »» **How are you exposing your potential sponsors to potential protégés from underrepresented groups? Is willingness to sponsor part of their performance review?**

If the case isn't made to senior executives about the benefits of cross-cultural sponsorship, they will informally sponsor people more likely to be of the same demographic group as they are. Since most senior executives are white men, that means protégés most likely will continue to be white men. Both frequent exposure to high-potentials from underrepresented groups and a tie-in to evaluations/compensation make cross-cultural sponsorship more likely.

#### »» **Are you monitoring who gets promoted after sponsorship?**

Are you carefully assessing the pipeline into management and senior management and how diverse it is? If your sponsorship isn't having the desired impact, assess who the sponsors—and the protégés—are.

#### »» **Are you helping protégés be aware of the corporate culture?**

Often, high-potentials from underrepresented groups don't fully understand the nuances of the corporate culture and can make mistakes that hurt their career. For an example of how a company addressed this, see [Kraft Foods' Jump Start Development Training](#).

## NEXT MONTH

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month for all employees and Talent Pipeline for diversity, recruitment, talent development and HR staff, as well as resource-group leaders and diversity-council members.