



Maximizing Mentoring and Securing Sponsorship



Relationships are an important aspect of any work culture. Cultivating a strong network and ensuring you have one or more advocates are critical steps for advancement and development, especially for women, who are often left out of more informal activities. While mentoring is vital for employee development and advancement—so that the employee can gain skills, feedback, and knowledge about the [unwritten rules](#) in preparation for his or her next role—mentoring alone without the benefit of sponsorship may not be enough to propel high-potential employees to the next level.

Sponsorship—typically by a senior-level partner or individual that has the power/position to open doors and uses it in your favor, advocates for you, and helps you get projects and assignments that can enhance your position and visibility—is often recognized as having a career-, job-, or opportunity-related purpose with some inherent degree of accountability on the sponsor's part for the protégé's career trajectory.

Mentors help prepare employees to act on their own behalf, while sponsors advocate for employees when they are not in the position do so themselves. The importance of this distinction and the differential findings regarding the benefits women and men gain from mentoring relationships is discussed in a *Harvard Business Review* article [Why Men Still Get More Promotions than Women](#).

How to Use This Tool

- **In Their Own Words**—Most business leaders recognize the important role that influential mentors or sponsors have played in their careers. In Their Own Words offers quotes and links to audio and video clips that lend a bird's eye view into the perspectives of CEOs', senior leaders', and high-potential employees' firsthand experiences with the challenges and successes that mark the sponsorship relationship.
- **In Practice**¹—What are innovative organizations doing? To help you conceive and implement new or refine existing mentoring and sponsorship programs in your own organization, In Practice offers thumbnail sketches that illustrate Catalyst member organizations' real-life practices that directly relate to women's sponsorship and the impact of such initiatives in the workplace.

¹ denotes member-only content, including full-length versions of the In Practice summaries available on the Catalyst [website](#) as a benefit of membership.



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INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

In successful companies and firms, advancement is a partnership between the employee and the organization. You must take initiative to aid in your career progression and be direct with your mentors and sponsors about what you want and need. Asking for what you want and risk-taking are important strategies for getting you where you want to go.

On the Importance of Asking for What You Want

The saying, "You don't ask, you don't get," holds true as much at work as elsewhere in life. It's essential that you formulate a clear understanding of what you want and be able to voice those desires to the people who are acting on your behalf.



In Their Own Words: *Nicky Holt*, Principal, Tax, Deloitte LLP, describes her personal strategies for communicating with her mentors and sponsors, as well as the importance of asking for explicit help, guidance, and actions to be your own best advocate.

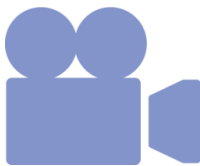


In Their Own Words: *Rohini Anand*, Senior Vice President and Global Chief Diversity Officer, Sodexo, talks about how women need to be active participants in their mentoring and sponsorship relationships and take charge of their careers by being bold and direct.

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On Risk-Taking

Catalyst research shows that women feel they consistently need to exceed performance expectations to advance.² However, taking some calculated risks when you may not yet possess the entire skill set needed for that next level or opportunity is necessary to further your experience and career. Leaders also need to take risks placing their talent in appropriate positions to help employees develop and move forward.



In Their Own Words: *Indra K. Nooyi, Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo, Inc.*, discusses with Ilene H. Lang, President & CEO, Catalyst how, at the urging of her mentor, she accepted the challenge of juggling two full-time jobs to gain valuable experience that would ultimately position her to successfully take the reins and transform PepsiCo.



In Their Own Words: *Doug Conant, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Soup Company*, observes that men sometimes are reluctant to take a chance on women for a key role, which is quite short-sighted and reinforces stereotypes but not strategic thinking.



In Their Own Words: *Andrea Grant, Group Managing Director, Telstra Corporation Limited*, shares the difference leaders can make by taking a chance, accepting risks, and allowing employees to meet their true potential.

² Catalyst, *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* (Catalyst, 2004).

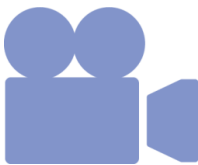
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ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

Organizations must also play their part in supporting employee advancement by ensuring mechanisms are in place to hold leaders accountable for developing talent through mentoring and sponsorship.

On Providing Strategic Guidance and Advice

An important part of furthering employees' careers is sharing honest, constructive feedback and strategic advice that translates into action. Sponsors and mentors provide an outside perspective of an employee's skill set and reputation that is unique and particularly valuable when it comes to advancement.



In Their Own Words: *Anne M. Mulcahy*, Retired Chairman & CEO, Xerox Corporation, discusses with Ilene H. Lang, President & CEO, Catalyst the importance of mentors speaking honestly with mentees when things go off track, the value of having a group of mentors, and, most importantly, the necessity of sponsorship.



In Their Own Words: *Doug Conant*, Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Soup Company, talks about the importance of listening and trying to understand what mentees need, removing roadblocks to success, and being patient—mentoring can be a life-long commitment.



In Their Own Words: *Yvette Holt*, Vice President, Commercial Financial Services, Halton, Canadian Banking, RBC, talks about the power of peer-to-peer mentoring and the contagious "pay it forward" nature of successful mentoring relationships.



In Practice: Ernst & Young LLP's *Career Watch* [®] program helps high-potential women and visible minorities reach their full career potential in the organization. Senior leaders ("watchers") serve as advocates for employee participants ("watchees"). Senior leaders are expected to challenge assumptions and provide advocacy for the optimal development of their assigned employees. Additionally, senior leaders provide career advice, make sure the employee is known by other leaders in the firm, and help the employee develop and implement an action plan to achieve his or her career goals.

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On Ensuring Accountability and Outcomes

An important component to mentoring and sponsorship is accountability. It is essential that these efforts be championed by senior leaders, and that supporting others' career advancement is an expected leadership behavior. By making these behaviors transparent and visible, the organization creates a supportive environment.



In Their Own Words: *Rohini Anand*, Senior Vice President and Global Chief Diversity Officer, Sodexo, discusses the importance of holding leaders accountable for mentoring and sponsoring in order to ensure the success of formal programs.



In Practice: Sodexo, Inc.'s *Using Return on Investment Results to Measure Executive Mentoring Success*™ program was launched in response to strong empirical evidence regarding the importance—to both employee development and business success—of linking corporate mentoring programs to a positive return on investment (ROI). Sodexo's initiative comprises three mentoring opportunities; one of these opportunities, IMPACT, is a year-long structured mentoring program for mid-level managers and above, including the C-suite, who serve as mentors. Many members of Sodexo's executive leadership team are involved with IMPACT. In addition to the quantitative ROI results, Sodexo has compelling evidence of intangible gains resulting from IMPACT: both mentors and mentees demonstrate increased job satisfaction and increased organizational commitment.



In Practice: The Chubb Corporation's Catalyst Award-winning *Reach Up, Reach Out, and Reach Down*™ initiative meets broad organizational goals through its comprehensive collection of strategies, programs, and policies that support the advancement and retention of a diverse workforce. These efforts prepare high-potential women and people of color for leadership positions, while charging them with coaching and mentoring their colleagues. As such, each Chubb manager is accountable for incorporating People Management into their goals. While this mentoring can be formal or informal, managers are evaluated on this activity in the annual reviews. The activity is directly tied to People Management, one of the three main categories on managers' scorecards.

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On Understanding Gender Differences

It is important to understand the impact of potential gender differences in the workplace—around work style, the ways in which people talk about their failures and achievements, and decision-making styles. By being cognizant of these differences, both women and men can begin to understand how to work together as colleagues to achieve the best outcomes.



In Their Own Words: *Male Champion, Catalyst Board of Advisors* says, “Mentorship is important. Men don’t look for mentors, they look for sponsors, and that must be factored into this. I believe over time men are more active in pursuing people to champion them, for active support. Women have to be overtly invited to ask for support, [a] nuance you can push on to take specific action.”



In Their Own Words: *Paul Silverglate, Strategic Client Services Partner, Deloitte & Touche LLP*, discusses the importance of recognizing the differences in the way women and men present their successes and failures and the impact those different styles have, for better or worse, on women’s promotability.



In Their Own Words: *Andrea Grant, Group Managing Director, Telstra Corporation Limited*, discusses how women and men often view their accomplishments differently and may have varying expectations of their own achievements.

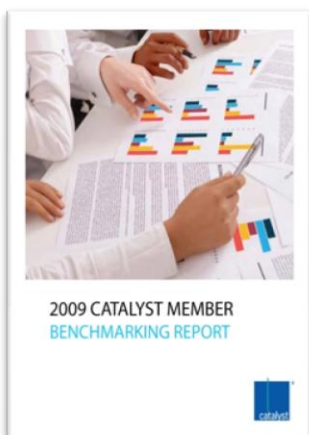


In Practice: The mission of Deloitte LLP’s Catalyst Award-winning *The Women’s Initiative: Living the Lattice* [®] is to drive marketplace growth and create a culture where the best talent chooses to work. Launched in 1993, the Women’s Initiative (WIN) addresses two related issues: a high rate of female attrition and under-representation of women in leadership positions. Deloitte uses WIN as an engine for innovation by creating various programs that positively affect the women and men at Deloitte as well as the business. In addition to other efforts, nationally led Women As Buyers workshops address the distinctive communication and decision-making styles of women. Built on research as to how women executives make corporate buying decisions, these workshops address the distinctive communication and decision-making styles of women and recognize that women are client decision-makers and have different purchasing patterns than men.

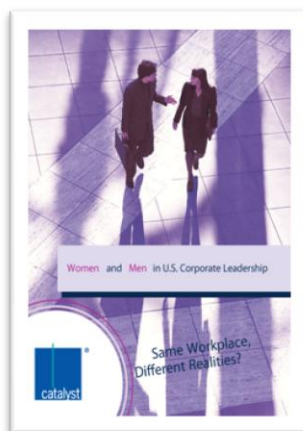
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RESEARCH RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

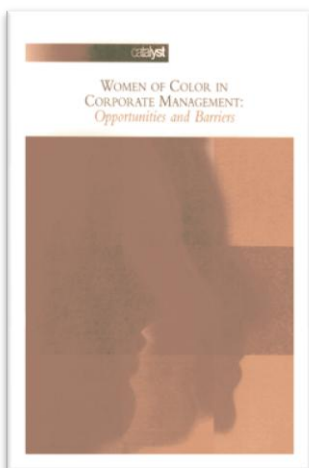
Formal mentoring programs are prevalent within companies and firms today. It's a good thing they are, because they're important, particularly for women: those women who found mentors through *formal* mentoring programs received more promotions than women who had *informally* found mentors on their own.³ Other Catalyst data showing the importance of mentoring and sponsorship include:



The *2009 Catalyst Member Benchmarking Report* found that 76 percent of participating organizations had a formal mentoring program in place. Among those organizations with mentoring programs, mentoring high-potential employees and women was most common.



Catalyst's *Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same Workplace, Different Realities?* reports that having an influential mentor was among the top career advancement strategies for senior women executives.



Catalyst's *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers* reports that not having an influential mentor or sponsor is the top advancement barrier for women of color.

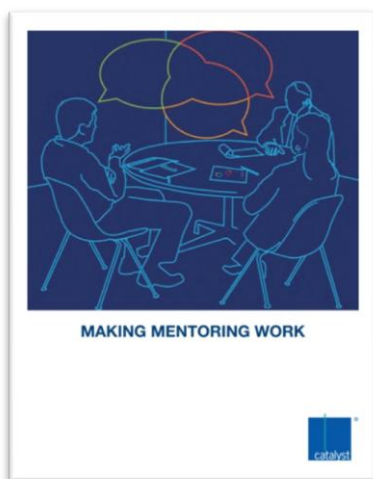


Catalyst's *Women of Color in U.S. Securities Firms—Women of Color in Professional Services Series* report cites that women of color face an exclusionary workplace, which leads to difficulties connecting with mentors and results in fewer business development opportunities.

³ Herminia Ibarra, Nancy M. Carter, and Christine Silva, "Why Men Still Get More Promotions Than Women," *Harvard Business Review* (September 2010).

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Though many organizations have a formal mentoring program in place, many also don't take advantage of what they can truly offer to promote career advancement. Catalyst has found that strategic, well-planned mentoring programs focus on career growth, development, and progression in ways that ensure positive outcomes.



For more information on designing a program geared to take talent to the next level, see Catalyst's [Making Mentoring Work](#). This publication offers resources and key questions organizations need to consider on the topics of career development, measurement, and accountability. Additionally, an accompanying [Career Development Action Plan](#) [®] tool helps mentors and mentees plan the necessary steps to position employees for the next move in their careers and reinforces that open communication, checkpoints, and timelines are essential for women to attain advancement goals and receive promotions to more senior positions.

CONCLUSION

All in all, it's important for the employee and the organization to partner to maximize mentoring and sponsorship relationships. When done correctly and strategically, all talent are able to reach their full potential—and give back to others by paying it forward, which benefits individuals and the business.