

COACHES, MENTORS, AND SPONSORS

Understanding the Differences

*“A coach talks to you, a mentor talks with you, and a sponsor talks about you.”**

* Roles may sometimes overlap

COACH

A coach provides guidance for your development, often focused on soft skills (e.g., active listening) rather than technical skills (e.g., financial acumen).

Who drives the relationship?

You and your coach are responsible for driving the relationship—you can reach out to your coach when you need help, but your coach can also reach out to you.

Actions

Provide development feedback outside the formal performance evaluation process.

MENTOR

A mentor informally or formally helps you navigate your career, providing guidance for career choices and decisions.

Who drives the relationship?

You drive the relationship. Your mentor is reactive and responsive to your needs.

Actions

Help you determine possible career paths to meet specific career goals.

SPONSOR

A sponsor is a senior leader or other person who uses strong influence to help you obtain high-visibility assignments, promotions, or jobs

Who drives the relationship?

The sponsor drives the relationship, advocating for you in many settings, including behind closed doors.

Actions

Advocate for your advancement and champion your work and potential with other senior leaders.