

# Best Practices & Resources for Mentors, Mentees, Sponsors & Sponsees

## Fireside Chat Companion Guide

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## Sponsors

### What is the role of a sponsor?

A sponsor's role is to identify and help promote high performers inside the company. It is an active position that someone takes to help you get promoted. Sponsorships personally benefit both parties involved. The sponsor has a personal stake in advancing their sponsee's career as it reflects well on them. In turn, a sponsee can find opportunities for promotion being opened up by the actions of their sponsor.

### Benefits of workplace sponsorship:

- Faster advancement to higher career levels
- Improve representation
- Increase employee morale
- Business growth, and employee retention

Sponsorships can be particularly beneficial for those who struggle to rise through the ranks of an organization, such as women or people of color. Having someone actively promoting you within your company means you're more likely to get noticed and be able to advance.

When looking to find a sponsor to advocate for you, work towards building a good reputation at your company. Sponsors will seek out high-potential employees who show initiative, hard work, and determination to succeed. Demonstrate that you're a high performer by asking to be on projects that showcase your strongest skills. Taking on extra voluntary roles in your organization, such as getting involved with an ERG, can also help you meet potential sponsors.

Source: <https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/mentorship-sponsorship-differences>

### What the Best Sponsors Do

- a. Use their reputation and credibility to advocate for their sponsees to produce positive career results or opportunities.
- b. Publicly endorse sponsee's qualifications and take risks on their behalf.

- c. Champion for the sponsee's next promotion, development opportunity, or higher compensation.
- d. Provide visibility and exposure for the sponsee, using personal influence on the sponsee's behalf.

Source: <https://www.focus-forward-consulting.com/blog/what-is-a-sponsor-and-why-is-it-critical-to-have-one>

## Mentors

Mentors are crucial to helping you navigate the political landscape and work-related challenges you face daily. You've heard the saying, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." There's truth to that statement—although I would add that *what you know* will buy you staying power. A mentor is someone with experience and seniority who, ideally, is aware in some way of your industry or field, and who also is familiar with the types of challenges you face regularly. You may already have mentors. If you do, lean on them for support and guidance. Your mentors should be people you trust and who genuinely have your best interests at heart.

### What is the role of a mentor?

Great mentors can help you navigate the landmines and mirror back to you what you sometimes can't see for yourself and connects you to various resources within his or her own network. For the mentor relationship to be the most effective, it's important for mentors to give you objective and open feedback, not sugarcoat things for you. Let your mentors know you welcome their frank and honest feedback; show them you have thick skin. Do not get upset when they give you feedback or argue and become defensive.

**Source:** Book, [Fearless Women at Work: Five Powerful Strategies to Thrive in Career and Life!](#) Dr. Ginny A. Baro

Mentors develop trust, safety, and honesty by listening mindfully, being impeccable with their word, not judging, but instead seeking to understand others' perspectives and challenging points of view curiously and respectfully.

As *healing leaders*, we value, uplift, and mentor others; lead, engage, and influence them toward constructive action with empathy, respect, and conviction. These kinds of transformations occur when you build relationships with your centers of influence.

**Source:** Book, [Healing Leadership: How to Lead, Love, and Thrive in Business and Life!](#)\_Dr. Ginny A. Baro

## What the Best Mentors Do

“At its highest level, mentorship means committing to helping others become fuller versions of themselves.” Anthony K. Tjan. Tjan, Harvard Business Review

- Build a relationship before the mentorship. No amount of mentorship training outweighs the value of an authentic connection between mentor and mentee.
- Focus on developing your mentee’s character and not just their job skills. Invest in your mentee’s self-awareness, empathy, and capacity for respect.
- Share your optimism much more than your cynicism. If your mentee shares an idea that seems unrealistic, try the 24 x 3 rule: spend 24 seconds, 24 minutes, or a day thinking about all the reasons that the idea is good before you criticize any aspect of it.
- Finally, be more loyal to your mentee than you are to your company. If your mentee’s passions and skills are not a good fit for their job, or if your company has limited opportunities for your mentee to move up, you should help them move on.

Source: <https://hbr.org/2017/02/what-the-best-mentors-do>

## Mentoring Matters: Three Essential Elements of Success

The Mentoring Relationship must be managed and nurtured [*GB: refers to an “official” mentor/mentee program*]. It is a joint venture that requires both parties to actively attend to its care and feeding. The chances of creating and sustaining a successful mentoring relationship are enhanced by adopting a few simple best practices:

1. **Design The Alliance.** Take the time to discuss the structure of the relationship. Both parties need to have a shared understanding of the relationship process. This means discussing and articulating things like:

- a. Contact and response times: Who contacts whom? How? What are acceptable response times?
  - b. Meetings: Where, when, how often?
  - c. Confidentiality: What's shareable and what isn't?
  - d. Focus: What are the parameters of the mentoring? What's in and out of bounds?
  - e. Feedback: What are the expectations around giving and receiving feedback?
  - f. Goals and accountability: What would each party want from this experience? How does the mentee want the mentor to hold her accountable? How does the mentor want the mentee to hold her accountable?
2. **Get To Know Each Other.** A mentoring relationship takes time to develop. It will grow faster and stronger if both parties take the time to get to know each other as people. Resist the temptation to dive headfirst into career problem solving and advising. Build trust by learning about each other!
  3. **Set The Agenda.** Both parties need to be clear about the purpose and focus of the mentoring. Additionally, the mentor and mentee should articulate what they hope to get out of the experience.
  4. **Reflect And Evaluate.** Every few meetings, one (or both) of the parties should ask: "How is this going for you? What's been helpful? What hasn't? What could I do differently to make this a more rewarding experience?" Initiating evaluative conversations will keep the relationship working for both of you.
  5. **Closeout.** If you are part of a formal mentoring relationship or have negotiated a specific number of mentoring meetings, take the time to close out. This is when each party should reflect and appreciate. What was most rewarding? What did you find the most valuable? What are you most grateful for?

Source: Mary Abbajay - Forbes.com

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryabbajay/2019/01/20/mentoring-matters-three-essential-element-of-success/?sh=5648124045a9>

## Best Practices for Mentees

### Build Your Mentoring Action Plan (MAP)

1. What are the skill(s) you want to develop?
2. What type of organizational knowledge do you need to develop?
3. How will you know when you have successfully enhanced a skill or competency?
4. What developmental activities would help you to develop the most? (Brainstorm a list of possibilities and options.)
5. Of all the ways you might develop, which are most feasible?
6. How will you apply your learning on the job?

Source: <https://your.yale.edu/work-yale/learn-and-grow/career-development/mentoring/mentee-best-practices>

## Mentors vs. Sponsors

### Why having both is key for your career

#### What successful sponsorship looks like:

1. According to The Sponsor Dividend report from Coqual, 71% of sponsors are of the same gender or race as their primary sponsee. This is because people gravitate toward others who look like them. However, this can sometimes cause an issue since men predominantly hold positions of power as senior leaders in organizations. For instance, for every one Fortune 500 company run by a woman, there are 13 companies run by men. So, if sponsors are only working with people who look like them and have similar backgrounds, there may not be much diversity in sponsorship programs.
2. The focus should be on placing sponsees with potential sponsors who can help them advance their careers. By sponsoring diverse people, leaders in organizations can work to improve the diversity and inclusivity of their leadership team since sponsorships can give opportunities to advance careers.
3. Next, the sponsor needs to be in a position that can help their sponsee based on their goals. If the sponsor doesn't have any influence to help the sponsee, then

the relationship is closer to a mentorship. That's why sponsors usually hold leadership roles.

4. Sponsees need to show some promise and high potential. Successful sponsorships work best when the sponsor truly believes in the sponsee. This is important because a sponsorship can also have repercussions on a sponsor's career. If a sponsor makes recommendations and the sponsee falls through, this reflects badly on the sponsor.
5. Similar to a mentorship, honesty is important in a sponsorship relationship. Sponsees need to be willing to receive feedback and make the most of what they are learning. While sponsors need to be honest with their sponsees if they want to see them succeed. Shying away from feedback will only stop sponsees from achieving their full potential.

Source: Maggie Wooll- BetterUp, <https://www.betterup.com/blog/mentor-vs-sponsor#:~:text=While%20mentors%20may%20help%20you,invested%20in%20your%20professional%20development>

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**Dr. Ginny Baro** immigrated to the U.S. at age 14 with nothing more than a dream. Today, she is an award-winning international transformational speaker & leadership coach, career strategist, and #1 bestselling author of [Healing Leadership and Fearless Women at Work](#). Named one of the Top 100 Global Thought Leaders, Dr. Baro has successfully delivered leadership training and coaching programs for Fortune 500 companies and keynotes impacting global audiences. She has been a leadership coach for **McKinsey&Company's Hispanic/Latino Executive Leadership Program** since 2021.

In 2020, Dr. Baro created the [Fearless Leadership Mastermind™](#). Since then, the program has successfully helped talented female leaders in STEM fields, financial services, and Fortune 500 companies gain critical leadership skills to lead, engage, influence their teams, and advance in their roles. How? By design, it strategically leverages experiential, virtual mastermind circles within cohorts of up to 10 talented female peers for six months, executive group and individual coaching, mobile-friendly leadership training modules, personalized tools and assessments, accountability, community, and ongoing support for 12 months total.

Dr. Baro earned a Ph.D. in Information Systems, an MS in Computer Science, an MBA in Management, and a BA in Computer Science and Economics. She is a Certified Professional Coach (CPC) accredited by the International Coach Federation and is fluent in Spanish. To connect and learn more, please visit [www.executivebound.com](http://www.executivebound.com).

